

2026 Eastern Neck NWR Deer Hunt Regulations

Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge

Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge (refuge) is part of the Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex and is one of over 570 National Wildlife Refuges in the United States. The primary objective of a National Wildlife Refuge is to provide habitat for the conservation and protection of wildlife. Carefully managed hunts maintain wildlife populations at a level compatible with the environment, provide recreational opportunities, and permit the use of a valuable renewable resource.

Your hunt permit authorizes you to take deer only. Coyotes may also be harvested incidentally during the refuge deer hunts. Taking and/or collecting any other wildlife or plants, including shed antlers, is a violation of refuge regulations. Harming or needlessly disturbing any other wildlife is a violation of refuge regulations and is cause for prosecution. The regulations listed on this page supplement the general regulations which govern hunting on national wildlife refuges set forth in [Title 50: Part 32, Code of Federal Regulations](#). Hunting will be in accordance with [State regulations](#) and subject to the following conditions and regulations. Failure to abide by any Federal laws, State laws, or the terms and conditions under which a hunt permit is issued may result in the revocation of the permit and hunting privileges.

Application Guidelines

- Beginning August 11, 2026, applications will be available online at www.recreation.gov or by phone (877) 444-6777 through Recreation.Gov.
- We require anyone who applies to hunt the Disabled Hunt to provide their Federal Interagency Access Pass (formerly known as the Golden Access Pass) when applying. Passes can be obtained at the Blackwater NWR visitor center and other select federal visitor centers, or online at the following links: <https://store.usgs.gov/access-pass> or <https://www.recreation.gov/interagency-pass/types/access>
- All permits are non-transferable.

General Conditions and Regulations

Required Documents

Hunters are required to possess an electronic or printed copy of a valid Maryland hunting license and all required stamps, an original valid government-issued photo identification (no copies or photos), and a valid hunting permit (electronic or paper copy) issued by Recreation.gov on their person at all times during refuge hunting and scouting days. The corresponding State stamps are required to participate in the archery and muzzleloader hunts. Hunters hunting from a vehicle must possess a MD DNR issued [Universal Disability Pass](#) (formerly a “hunt from vehicle” permit).

Hunting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset. There are no check-in or check-out stations.

Accessing the Refuge

- Only participants who possess an authorized hunt permit will be allowed to enter the hunt areas.
- Hunters are prohibited from entering the refuge (including parking lots) between 9:00 pm & 4:00 am.
- Vehicles may only be operated on designated roads and parking areas indicated on the [hunt map](#).
- Vehicles may not exceed 15 MPH on any refuge road.
- Parking in front of gates or impeding traffic is prohibited; all wheels must be off the roadway.

- We prohibit the use of boats, flotation devices, ATVs, motorized off-road vehicles, and amphibious vehicles to access the Refuge unless authorized by the Refuge Manager (see Disabled Hunt). Bicycles, including electric bicycles (e-bikes), are authorized to access hunting areas; operating bicycles off designated roads and trails is prohibited. Operators of e-bikes may not exceed 15 mph on refuge trails, and must obey speed limits on public roads ([More information on e-bikes](#) can be found on the refuge Deer Hunting web page).
- Weather and tides may compromise roadways. Roads may be closed as needed.
- All hunters must enter and leave the refuge by State Road 445.
- The closed area depicted on the map is closed to ALL entry.

Scouting

Hunters possessing a hunt permit issued by Recreation.gov are permitted to scout on designated refuge scout days: September 27, October 4, 11 & 18, 2026 from 7:30 am to ½ hour after sunset. We require hunters to possess a valid Maryland hunting license and all required stamps, and valid government-issued photo identification, and a refuge hunt permit on their person during refuge scout days and refuge hunt days.

Hunting Methods

Refuge hunting dates fall outside of the regular state season, therefore the type of weapon (archery, muzzleloader, firearm) permitted is specified for each day. Hunters must use the weapon specified for each hunt or a lesser weapon as established by Maryland law.

Youth Hunt (October 3, 2026)

- All applicants must be no older than 16 years of age on the day of the hunt.
- Youth must be accompanied in the field by one individual who is 21 years old or older and possesses a valid Maryland hunting license or is exempt from hunting license requirements; and is not engaged in hunting. Youth hunters and those accompanying them must wear blaze orange or daylight fluorescent pink in accordance with State law.
- A maximum of fifty permits will be issued for the Youth Deer Hunt.

Disabled Hunt (October 8, 2026)

Only hunters with permanent disabilities may hunt on this day. We require all hunters to provide certification of their disability by providing their Federal Interagency Access Pass number. Passes can be obtained at the Blackwater NWR visitor center or online at: <https://store.usgs.gov/access-pass> or <https://www.recreation.gov/interagency-pass/types/access> .

- Disabled hunters are encouraged to bring along a non-hunting partner during the hunt. Persons assisting hunters with disabilities must obey all Refuge, State, and Federal laws and regulations. Assistants must adhere to State blaze orange or daylight fluorescent pink requirements during applicable hunts.
- The use of ATVs are permitted for this special hunt; however all vehicles including ATVs must stay on established roads and trails or field edges. Hunters may shoot from stationary vehicles only if they possess a [Maryland Universal Disability Pass](#). A DOT approved helmet and eye protection must be worn at all times while operating or riding an ATV. ATVs may not be operated above 10 MPH on the refuge.
- A maximum of fifty permits will be issued for the Disabled Hunt.

Tree Stands, Blinds, and Trail Markers

- We only allow portable or temporary tree stands and blinds to be used while hunting.
- Stands and blinds must be carried in and out each day.
- Tree stands **MAY NOT** be pre-installed during scout days.
- We prohibit hunting from a permanently constructed tree stand or blind.
- We prohibit paint or any other permanent marker to mark trails and the use of tacks, screw-in steps, spikes, or other objects that may damage trees.
- We require hunters to remove marking devices, including flagging or tape immediately following their last hunt.

Other Regulations:

- The distribution of or hunting over bait is not permitted.
- Straight wall cartridge rifles will be allowed during the firearm hunt days. All other rimfire or centerfire rifles and all handguns including muzzleloading pistols are not allowed.
- Bicycles or any other equipment or property may not be left on the refuge between 9:00 pm and 4:00 am.
- We prohibit leaving deer organs or other deer waste within 50 feet of any trail, road, or refuge structure.
- Camping and campfires are not permitted. All cooking devices must be self-contained.
- Guiding, outfitting, advertising, and/or audio productions for commercial purposes are prohibited.
- Use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.
- Automatic, motion-activated, game, or trail cameras are prohibited on the refuge.
- Shooting or hunting within 150 yards of any occupied structure is prohibited.
- Shooting from, across or down any designated refuge road is prohibited. An open gate designates a refuge road.
- All property, except for trail markers, must be removed at the end of each hunting day. Littering is strictly prohibited.
- Blaze Orange or Daylight Fluorescent Pink must be used or worn as established by the laws and regulations established by the State of Maryland for the youth, disabled, muzzleloader, and shotgun hunts. This requirement also applies to hunter companions.
- Pruning or cutting trees, plants, or use of natural vegetation is prohibited.

Tagging and Checking Regulations

- Deer taken at Eastern Neck NWR **WILL** count against the Maryland state bag limit.
- All deer harvested must be field-tagged, recorded and checked in accordance with State regulations.
- All hunters must check all deer with the state of Maryland by phone or internet. The public land code for Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge is **376**.
- Hunters should indicate the actual hunting device used to take the deer when checking in their harvested animal.
- USFWS Law Enforcement: 443-737-7678

Hunt Dates/Bag Limits

<u>Hunt</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Daily Bag/Season Bag Limit</u>
Youth	October 3, 2026	See MD DNR Deer Hunting Regulations Youth harvests are checked in as youth season.
Archery	October 7, 2026	See MD DNR Deer Hunting Regulations
Disabled	October 8, 2026	See MD DNR Deer Hunting Regulations Antlered deer may be taken during muzzleloader. All shotgun/straight wall cartridge hunts must be checked in as firearms.
Muzzleloader (1)	October 14, 2026	
Muzzleloader (2)	October 15, 2026	
Firearm (1)	October 21, 2026	
Firearm (2)	October 22, 2026	

**Hunting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset.