

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

2026-27 Waterfowl Hunting Regulations and Dates

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is part of the Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex. It is one of over 570 NWRs in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The primary objective of the System is to provide habitat for the conservation and protection of wildlife.

The regulations listed here supplement the general regulations which govern hunting on NWRs set forth in [Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations](#). Failure to abide by any laws or regulations may result in the revocation of the permit and hunting privileges.

REFUGE REGULATIONS

- Hunters may only access hunt sites by boat; the use of air boats, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), or amphibious vehicles of any type (including Argos), is prohibited.
- Dogs must be controlled while on refuge property when not actively retrieving.
- Use or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.
- The removal or cutting of any vegetation on the refuge is prohibited.
- Use of natural vegetation in any manner is strictly prohibited.
- All hunt blind materials and decoys must be removed at the end of each hunting day.
- All hunters in a hunt party may only hunt within their assigned hunt unit.
- Hunters may only use temporary blinds and blind materials.
- Commercial guiding is prohibited.
- Hunters may not access the refuge before 4 a.m.
- **Legal hunting hours are one half hour before sunrise to 2:00 p.m. (ET).**

PERMIT LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Each hunter must have the following in his/her possession and display them upon request of any FWS employee or MD Natural Resources Police officer:

1. Valid Maryland State Hunting License, Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp), Maryland Migratory Game Bird Stamp, and HIP certification.
2. Valid government issued photo identification.
3. Electronic or signed hard copy of the refuge hunt permit.

PERMIT GUIDELINES

- Reservations are made through the [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) website.
- The maximum hunt party size is four.
- The individual whose name is on the permit must be present in the hunt party on the day of the hunt.
- An individual may only purchase one permit per reservation but can reserve up to two units per week if available.
- The hunter who made the reservation may have an electronic refuge permit on their phone. All additional hunters in the party must print, read, and sign the permit of the hunter who made the reservation.
- The permit will only be valid for that specific unit and day.
- All waterfowl hunt related information must be obtained from [Hunting Page of the Blackwater NWR website](#).

HUNTING DAYS

Wednesdays and Saturdays only.

Resident Goose Season	September 2 nd , 5 th , 9 th , 12 th , 2026
Early Teal Season	September 19 th , 23 rd , 26 th , 2026
First Split	October 10 th , 14 th , 17 th , 2026
Second Split	November 14 th , 18 th , 21 st , 25 th , 2026
Third Split	December 16 th , 19 th , 23 rd , 26 th , 30 th , 2026 January 2 nd , 6 th , 9 th , 13 th , 16 th , 20 th , 23 rd , 27 th , 30 th , 2027
Youth, Veteran, and Military Hunt Days	Nov. 7 th , 2026 and Feb. 6 th , 2027

HUNT UNIT RESERVATION

Reservations for hunt units open at 10 a.m. ET, the Monday prior to the week of the hunt on [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) (see below). The system will close at 3 p.m. ET on the last hunt day of that week. If offered and available, you may select up to two units per week. Each unit selected will be a separate reservation fee of \$6.00.

Reservation opens on this date:	For this date(s):
Aug. 24	Sept. 2 and 5
Aug. 31	Sept. 9 and 12
Sept. 7	Sept. 19
Sept. 14	Sept. 23 and 26
Sept. 28	Oct. 10
Oct. 5	Oct. 14 and 17
Nov. 2	Nov. 14
Nov. 9	Nov. 18 and 21
Nov. 16	Nov. 25
Dec. 7	Dec. 16 and 19
Dec. 14	Dec. 23 and 26
Dec. 21	Dec. 30 and Jan. 2
Dec. 28	Jan. 6 and 9
Jan. 4	Jan. 13 and 16
Jan. 11	Jan. 20 and 23
Jan. 18	Jan. 27 and 30
Youth, Veteran, and Military Waterfowl Hunt Days	
Reservation opens on this date:	For this date:
Oct. 26	Nov. 7
Jan. 25	Feb. 6

AVAILABLE HUNT UNITS

Refuge Interior Units	Chesapeake Bay Units	Nanticoke River Units
Blackwater River East	Spring Island East	Nanticoke 1
Blackwater River Central	Spring Island West	Nanticoke 2
Blackwater River West	Bishop's Head East	Nanticoke 3
Beaverdam Creek East	Bishop's Head West	Nanticoke 4
Beaverdam Creek West		Nanticoke 5
Goose Dam Creek North		Marshyhope 1
Goose Dam Creek South		Marshyhope 2

Scout dates are the following Sundays:

Aug. 30th, Sept. 6th and 13th, Oct. 4th and 11th, Nov. 8th and 15th, Dec. 6th and 13th, and Jan. 3rd.

Hunters must meet the Permit License Requirements for scouting.

ACCESS

Hunt units are only permitted to be accessed by boat. Hunters are strongly encouraged to scout hunt units on designated scout dates. Scouting may only be done from a boat. Individuals scouting the Goose Dam Creek hunt units will be allowed on land at the Parsons Creek dam only for the purpose of portaging their boat.

In the event that ice, low water, or any other natural events prohibit access to hunt areas, no alternate hunt unit or hunt day will be made available.

Waterfowl hunting maps and photos of access points can be found on [Blackwater NWR's Library Page](#).

ACCESS POINTS

- The Blackwater River hunt units are accessed from the refuge car top boat launch on Route 335.
- The Beaverdam Creek hunt units are accessed from the east side of Smithville Road near the Smithville Public Boat Launch.
- The Goose Dam Creek hunt units are accessed from the southwest side of the Route 16 Bridge at Parsons Creek (please note that boats must be portaged over a small dam to reach the blind locations). Canoes/kayaks are recommended due to shallow water and tree stumps in the creek.
- The Nanticoke and Marshyhope units can be accessed with a trailered boat from the Cherry Beach Park boat launch in Sharptown, MD or the public boat launch in Vienna, MD.
- The Spring Island and Bishop's Head hunt units are Chesapeake Bay island sites and can be accessed with a larger boat from a launch of your choice.

Report illegal activity or related information to: USFWS Law Enforcement 443-737-7678.