



2026 – 2027 Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge Quota Hunt Permit Process

The Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge’s (Refuge) Quota Hunt Permits are available for purchase from August 13, 2026 to April 25, 2027 through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) licensing website [https:// gooutdoorsflorida.com/](https://gooutdoorsflorida.com/); [https://myfwc.com/ license/limited- entry/](https://myfwc.com/license/limited-entry/). There are 2,500 permits available, they are on a first-come, first-served basis at 10:00 AM on August 13, 2026. Once a permit is purchased you are legal to hunt any scheduled Refuge hunt for the 2026-2027 season. You do not need a separate permit for each hunt.

The Annual Hunter Working Group meeting will be held at Refuge Headquarters on the third Thursday in April, at 2 pm. Contact the Refuge (352.493.0238) to attend. Hunters can voluntarily provide their contact info for periodic updates at: <https://www.friendsofrefuges.org/hunter-signup.html>.

General Information

<https://www.friendsofrefuges.org/>

The Refuge’s 53,000 acres along the Suwannee River in Dixie and Levy Counties has over 200 miles of roads and trails that provide vehicle, foot, bicycle, and e-bike access to many habitat types open to a variety of public hunting and recreation opportunities.

All general Refuge and State regulations, mapped restrictions, and mapped designations apply unless specifically addressed in this leaflet. Please note that forest management/maintenance activities, including prescribed burns, mowing, and logging operations may occur at any time during the year. The Refuge reserves the right to temporarily close roads or land areas for any management reason without prior notification. Share the woods, the Refuge is always open to other public uses during hunt seasons.

The following regulations supplement Florida state hunting regulations and general regulations governing hunting on the Refuge that are set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations.

Permit Requirements

Every adult hunter (16 and older) must be a legal hunter with the State of Florida, carry the appropriate license and relevant permits or be exempt, buy and carry a current “NWR-Lower Suwannee-

Hunt” Hunt Permit, and have a current Refuge Hunt Regulations Brochure on their person, hard copy or electronic. Each hunter is responsible for everything in this regulations brochure.

Youth hunters 15 and under are not required to possess a NWR-Lower Suwannee- Hunt Permit. Unless otherwise exempt, hunters are required to have appropriate archery and crossbow, muzzleloader, deer, and turkey stamps/permits. Unless exempt, waterfowl hunters are required to have appropriate State Migratory Bird permit, State, and Federal waterfowl stamps. Exemptions from Florida hunting licenses (including furbearer licenses) and permits (such as for waterfowl, migratory birds, deer, turkey, and various hunting seasons) include Florida residents aged 65 or older with proof of age and residency, those possessing a Florida Resident Persons with Disabilities Hunting and Fishing License, Florida residents in the U.S. Armed Services on temporary leave, and children under 16.

Youth hunters must share a single daily bag limit with their accompanying adult hunter. The adult hunter cannot hunt/carry a weapon unless they have a Refuge Quota Hunt Permit.

Hunter safety requirement; anyone born on or after June 1, 1975 must complete a hunter safety course before purchasing a hunting license enabling them to hunt without supervision. Minors Under 16 — Florida law states anyone under 16 years of age can hunt with an air gun (air or gas-operated) or firearm only when supervised by a parent or an adult who is acting with consent of the minor’s parent or guardian. See Florida Statute 790.22. Children under 16 may hunt with adult supervision without having to take a hunter safety course. The supervising adult must remain within sight and normal voice contact of the youth hunter.

Successful hunters are required to report their bag to the FWC’s Harvest Reporting System within 24 hours of harvest. The FWC’s Florida Hunting Regulations handbook is available for deer harvest reporting; instructions at [https://myfwc.com/media/21998/ deer-harvest-log.pdf](https://myfwc.com/media/21998/deer-harvest-log.pdf). These reports allow us to better determine population health, numbers, and stability.

NOTE: Failure to report deer or turkey harvested on LSNWR will result in a notice of violation from law enforcement.

General Hunting Regulations

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuges must comply with all provisions of state and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with Refuge regulations.

All motorized land vehicles must have a current license plate and are restricted to designated primary roads shown on the map. Vehicles must park so they do not block roads or gates. If gates are closed, you may always walk or bike in. Note, caution and courtesy should be used when entering a gate where a vehicle is parked during hunting season, likely indicating that someone is actively hunting on or near that trail. Interference of someone legally hunting can result in a notice of violation by law enforcement. All-terrain vehicle use (ATV/UTV, etc.) is prohibited, except for individuals granted a special use handicap hunting permit.

It is unlawful to hunt or to accompany another person hunting on LSNWR unless each person is wearing a minimum of 500 square inches of daylight fluorescent orange material as an outer garment worn above the waistline and can include a head covering. If you are moving while hunting, you must be wearing the prescribed hunter orange. Turkey, archery, and crossbow hunters may remove their hunter’s orange while in their blind or stand. Hunter orange is not required from September 12 - October 11, 2026 (Archery/ Crossbow Season).

Dogs may only be used as an aid to take raccoons during the raccoon night-hunting season and for waterfowl season. Otherwise, dogs must always be leashed under the direct control of the handler. The use of tracking dogs to locate wounded animals must be permitted by refuge staff or law enforcement (call 352-493-0238).

Hunters using the Refuge are subject to inspection of licenses, permits, hunting equipment, bag limits, vehicles and their contents, during compliance checks by a law enforcement officer.

Designated gates will be opened on August 13, 2026, before Archery and crossbow season and will be closed at the end of Spring turkey season.

Temporary tree stands and game cameras may be left on the Refuge starting August 13, 2026 before Archery and crossbow and crossbow Season and must be removed after the end of Spring Turkey Season. Gates will then be closed. All tree stands and game cameras left on the refuge must display the hunter’s name and phone number legibly written on or attached to the stand or camera. Tree stands or cameras not in compliance may be confiscated and disposed of according to Federal Regulation. The Refuge is not responsible for damage to or theft of stands or game cameras.

Flagging, reflective markers, paint, litter, or pins may NOT be used for marking in any manner on refuge property. Clothes-type pins or removable clips with reflective or colored markings can be used for the temporary marking of vegetation to identify a route of travel to or from a tree stand. These pins must be removed by the end of turkey season.

Hunters may enter no earlier than 1 and 1/2 hours before legal sunrise and must be out of the woods no later than 1 and 1/2 hours after legal sunset. If you are actively tracking a wounded animal and need more time contact the refuge staff at 352-493-0238.

Special use permits are considered for people with disabilities; in most cases hunters or fishermen will be required to show a disabled hunter or angler license from any state, contact matthew_mcdonald@fws.gov or call the refuge office at 352-493-0238

Legal and Illegal Methods and Means:

Hunters may use a variety of weapons to take game mammals and resident game birds, including rifles, shotguns, pistols, air guns, longbows, compound bows, recurve bows, and crossbows. Arrows or bolts for deer or wild turkeys must have broadheads with a minimum width of 7/8 inch. Only pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) air guns firing arrows or single bullets can be used for deer and turkey hunting, with calibers of at least .30 for deer and .20 for turkey. Muzzleloading guns must be .30 caliber or larger for single bullets and 20-gauge or larger for multiple balls, with breech-loading models allowed during specific seasons.

Certain methods and equipment are prohibited for taking game mammals and resident game birds. These include centerfire semi-automatic rifles with magazine capacities over five rounds, nonexpanding full metal case ammunition for deer, rimfire cartridge firearms for deer, fully automatic firearms, and non-PCP air guns for deer or wild turkey. Other prohibited items include PCP air guns with bullets below the required caliber, explosive or drug-injecting arrows, and several forms of hunting such as using live decoys, recorded calls, set guns, artificial lights, nets, traps, snares, drugs, poisons, shooting from moving vehicles or boats, herding with vehicles or aircraft, taking turkeys on the roost, taking spotted fawn or swimming deer, and using dogs without proper identification collars.

Prohibited Actions

- All commercial activities including guiding or participating in a guided hunt are prohibited.
- Target practice or any non-hunting discharge of a weapon is prohibited.
- Use of organized drives for hunting to take or attempting to take game is prohibited.
- Marking any tree, or other Refuge feature with carving, flagging, litter, paint, or blaze is prohibited.
- Entering or remaining on the refuge under the influence alcohol or intoxicating substance is prohibited.
- Camping, fires, littering, and horses are prohibited.
- Collecting or harvesting any articles of antiquity, plants, animals or parts thereof is prohibited unless specifically authorized by a Refuge permit.
- Cutting trees, removing wood or other plant matter from the Refuge is prohibited.
- Hunting or shooting from within 150-feet of Refuge roads, open to public vehicle travel, is prohibited. Hunters are responsible for knowing their target and what is beyond. Extreme caution must be used when shooting at an animal on a trail.
- Hunting from a tree in which a metal object has been inserted is prohibited.
- Discarding an animal carcass or parts thereof within 100 feet of any gate, road, or trail, open to the public, is prohibited.
- Construction of permanent blinds or stands is prohibited; temporary blinds must not impede the right of way on any road or trail.
- The placing of or hunting with the aid of ingestible attractants (feed, bait, salt, oil) is prohibited.
- Driving any vehicle or boat on marshes or emergent aquatic vegetation, or through the forest off public driving roads is prohibited.
- Shooting from vehicles, powerboats or sailboats, moving under power. Motors must be shut off or sails furled, and progress must cease from such motor or sail before taking game.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Lower Suwannee

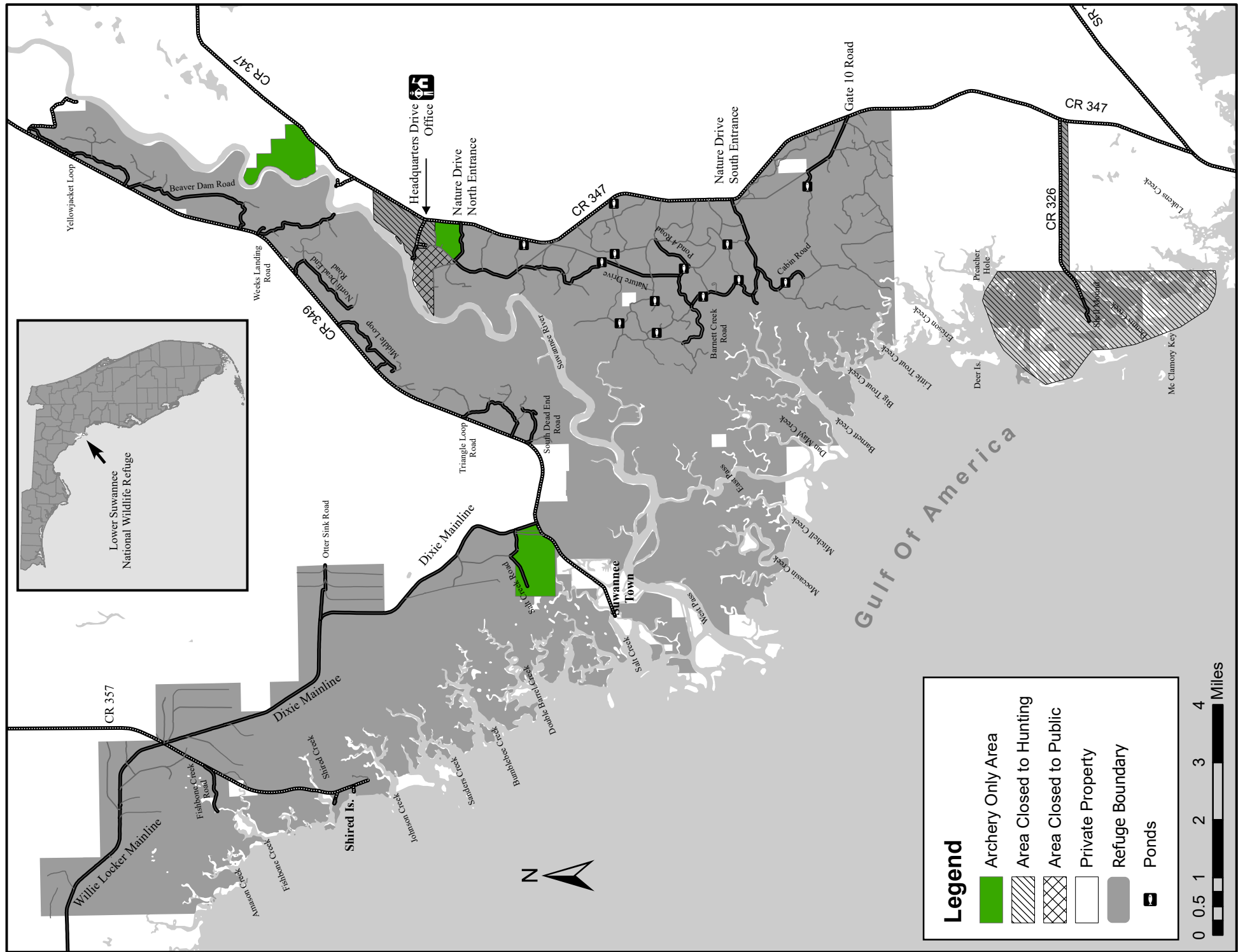
National Wildlife Refuge Hunting Regulations 2026–2027



Lower Suwanee National Wildlife Refuge Hunting Permit 2026—2027

When signed and carried, this serves as your permit for all refuge hunts and acknowledges your understanding of the regulations contained herein.
Expires May 2027

Signature (permits are not transferable)



Specific Hunt Regulations, Seasons, Bag Limits, Dates:

Hogs and Coyotes: May be hunted from the beginning of Archery and crossbow Deer Season until the end of Spring Turkey season. NO SIZE OR BAG LIMIT FOR HOGS or COYOTES. Hogs and Coyotes may not be hunted at night or in closed areas. Hogs and Coyotes must be hunted with archery and crossbow equipment during archery and crossbow deer season and muzzle loaders during muzzle loader deer season. Rifles and all other legal methods and means may be used to hunt hogs and Coyotes following muzzle loader deer season until the end of Spring Turkey season.

In designated Archery and crossbow Only Areas (see map), only bows and crossbows are allowed.

Legal Deer

Legal deer must have an antler with at least 2 points, 1 inch or more in length. Hunters 16 years of age and older may not take, during any season or by any method, an antlered deer not meeting this criterion. Youth 15-years-old and younger may harvest 1 deer annually not meeting antler criteria but having at least 1 antler 5 inches or more in length. Antlerless deer are deer that do not have antlers or have antlers less than 5 inches in length. It is illegal to take spotted fawns.

Waterfowl

Waterfowl hunting season dates and bag limits, will be consistent with the State of Florida waterfowl seasons. Hunters hunting along the coast, hunting below the mean high-water mark are not required to possess a Lower Suwannee permit whereas hunters hunting above the mean high-water mark (ponds and tilde pools) must have a permit. Permit release date is August 13, 2026. Decoys and boats must be removed daily. Hunters must use and possess only shells containing non-toxic shot; <https://myfwc.com/hunting/regulations/birds/>

Archery and crossbow

September 12 - October 11, 2026. Permit release date is August 13, 2026.

Archery and crossbow equipment are allowed. Legal to take antlered or antlerless deer, wild hog, coyote, and small game. Archery and crossbow hunters can hunt all refuge lands open to hunting and during any season. Archery and crossbow Only Areas (see map) are open during all hunts with approved archery and crossbow equipment only.

Muzzleloader

October 15 – 28, 2026. Permit release date is August 13, 2026

Muzzleloader firearms, archery, and crossbow equipment only; legal to take antlered deer, coyote, and hogs.

General Gun (GG)

GG No. 1: November 1 - 30, 2026. GG permit release date is August 13, 2026, Legal to take antlered deer, coyote, and hogs. Antlerless deer may be taken from November 21-30, 2026.

General Gun (GG)

GG No. 2: December 6-19, 2026. GG permit release date is August 13, 2026, Legal to take antlered deer, coyote, and hogs.

General Gun (GG)

GG No. 3: January 3-17, 2026. GG permit release date is August 13, 2026, Legal to take antlered deer, coyote, and hogs.

Small Game

Gray Squirrels, Rabbits, Raccoons, Opossums, Skunks, Nutrias, and Beavers

September 13, 2026 - April 25, 2027. During Archery and crossbow Season small game may be taken with archery/ crossbow equipment and air rifle. During muzzle loader season until the beginning of General Gun No. 1, small game may be taken with muzzleloaders, archery/ crossbows, or air rifles. After the beginning of General Gun No. 1 until the end of Spring Turkey Season small game may be taken with rim-fire rifle, shotgun, pistol, muzzleloader, air gun, crossbow or bow. Daily bag limits: 12 gray squirrels; 12 rabbits; all other species no more than two per day.

Small game night hunting season: January 3-17, 2027. Permit release date is August 13, 2026, dog hunting only, from sunset until sunrise. No more than two opossums or racoons per night. State regulations, weapons, and ammunition requirements apply.

Youth Spring Gobbler Hunt

March 12-14, 2027. Permit release date is August 13, 2026. Only youth under 16 years of age may hunt and must be under the supervision and in the presence of an adult 18 years of age or older. The youth hunter must carry the firearm. Accompanying adults must have required licenses and permits for the Refuge but may not harvest a wild turkey. Shooting hours from ½ hour before legal sunrise until legal sunset. Bearded turkeys only. Only bows, crossbows, pre-charged pneumatic air guns propelling a bolt or arrow, and shotguns using a #2 or smaller shot size may be used for hunting.

Turkey (Spring Season)

March 20 – April 25, 2027. Permit release date is August 13, 2026. Bearded turkeys only. Shooting hours from ½ hour before legal sunrise until ½ hour after sunset. Only bows, crossbows propelling a bolt or arrow, pre-charged pneumatic air guns, and shotguns may be used for hunting. Bag limit is 2 for all spring seasons.

Questions, concerns, reports of violations:

Report Violations to 888-404-3922, *392, or 904-359-6584; Option 7.

Need a paper copy of this brochure?

Send a self-addressed stamped envelope for each brochure to: Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge 16450 NW 31st Place, Chiefland, Florida 32626 352-493-0238 or call/text John Stark 479-312-8892.

Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge
16450 NW 31st Place Chiefland, FL 32626
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fws.gov/lowersuwannee/
The Best Info: friendsofrefuges.org/
Maps: friendsofrefuges.org/maps.html
Info: fws.gov/refuge/lower-suwannee

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

June 2026

