

Prime Hook

National Wildlife Refuge Deer Hunting Regulations 2026–2027



Welcome

Established in 1963, Prime Hook is an important stopover site for migratory birds as they travel the Atlantic Flyway and provides protected breeding habitat for federally and State listed threatened and endangered species, as well as many neo-tropical migrating bird species. Prime Hook's habitat features include salt marsh, freshwater marsh, ponds, wooded swamps, upland grasslands and forest.

Accessibility Information

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. For more information please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, <https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/public-civil-rights>.

Hunters with a disability must obtain a certification card from Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). For information on obtaining this card, call the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife at 302-739-9912.

Wheelchair accessible stands are available for nonambulatory hunters that possess an Interagency Access Pass. **See the Island Farm hunt brochure for more information.**

Firearms

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of State and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32.)

We prohibit the use of rimfire or centerfire rifles and all handguns including muzzleloading pistols. The use or possession of buckshot while hunting is prohibited.

Vehicles

Licensed motor vehicles are permitted only on public use roads and trails as shown on the map. ATVs and UTVs are prohibited. Hunters must park in designated parking areas, as identified on the map to access the refuge for hunting. All State regulations and laws are applicable.

Guided Hunts

Hunt permit holders may not engage in guiding, outfitting, or advertising for commercial purposes.

Boats

All hunters are required to operate their craft and possess all safety equipment in accordance with Delaware State and U.S. Coast Guard regulations.

- The maximum horsepower allowed for boat motors is 30 HP. All open refuge waters are slow, no wake zones.
- Designated launching sites must be used to launch boats.
- The use of air-thrust or inboard water-thrust boats on refuge waters is prohibited.
- Boat access to Slaughter and Prime Hook Creeks is prohibited.
- Boats may be used to access the area north of the Fowler Beach Rd ramp.
- Mud motors are recommended due to low water conditions.

Hunting Regulations

Hunting regulations are designed to provide safe recreational opportunities through wise use of renewable wildlife resources. Hunting and fishing are permitted in accordance with Federal regulations governing public use on National Wildlife Refuges as set forth in Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Hunting will be in accordance with applicable State of Delaware regulations subject to the conditions stated below.

Permits

Hunters are required to possess a valid Delaware hunting license and all required stamps, valid government-issued photo identification, and a valid hunting permit issued by the refuge on their person at all times during refuge hunt and scout days.

Read and sign this brochure, it serves as your permit. Keep this permit on you while you are in the hunt area.

Tree Stands

Portable Tree stands, elevated platforms, and ground blinds may be used. All equipment must be removed at the end of each hunt day. The use of nails, wire, bolts, screws, screw-in steps, spikes, or other objects that may damage trees is prohibited.

Remaining refuge stands are not maintained. Use at your own risk.

Prime Hook NWR

Deer Hunting Permit 2026—2027

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

Expires August 31, 2027

Signature (permits are not transferable)

Hunter Orange

During all firearms hunting seasons, all hunters including archers must display a minimum of 400 square inches of hunter orange on the head, chest and back while hunting consisting of a vest and hat or jacket and hat.

Open to Hunting - Deer. Red Fox may be taken incidentally while deer hunting

Closed to Hunting - All other species of wildlife not listed above are protected. Protected species include, but are not limited to, snakes, crow, beaver, otter, and muskrat.

Access Areas -see map

Regular Deer areas are open on a "first come" basis. There is no sign in/out requirement. Accessing the refuge from private property is prohibited.

The **Regular Deer Disabled Area** on Deep Branch Rd has two disabled deer stands. There are flip tags on a board at the entry to the North parking area. These stands are for hunters possessing a State disabled hunter card or a Federal Interagency Access Pass.

Headquarters Deer permits will be issued for specific dates and areas. There are no other hunts in the Headquarters area.

We require hunters to notify a refuge representative and receive permission from the refuge manager or designee prior to entering a closed area or safety zone to retrieve game.

Days & Times-

The refuge is open for hunting access from 2 hours before legal hunting time to 1 hour after legal hunting time. Monday - Saturday. Hunters are prohibited from being on the refuge (including parking lots) between 9:00 pm & 4:00 am.

There is no Sunday hunting.

Scouting

Regular Area deer scouting will be allowed the Saturday and Sunday before each opening day and on Sundays during daylight hours between August 29 and January 31

Headquarters scouting will be the Saturday and Sunday before the hunt date.

Activity	Date	Open Areas	Special Regulations
Archery Deer	Sept 1 - Jan 30	Graves Area Jefferson-Loffland Area Millman tract	State regulations apply. All State approved archery equipment is allowed. There is no Sunday hunting.
Muzzleloader Deer	Oct 9-17 Jan 25-Jan 30	Regular Deer Disabled Area Prime Hook South Prime Hook North Oak Island Cods Road area Fowlers South Fowlers North Slaughter Canal	State regulations apply. There is no Sunday hunting.
Shotgun Deer	Nov 13-21 Jan 16-23		
Antlerless Deer	Dec 12 Dec 19		
Disabled/ Youth Deer	Sept 26 Nov 7		
Headquarters Deer	Oct 13 Nov 17	Headquarters units 1-4	Headquarters special hunt permit required.
State hunting regulations and licensing requirements apply to all hunting on the refuge. Shooting hours and methods of take may differ from the state. Signed refuge hunt brochure must be in possession of hunter. upon request, hunters and their assistants must display for inspection all licenses, permits, game, equipment, weapons, and ammunition, to Federal and State law enforcement officers.			

Youth hunt

Any youth from 10 years through 15 years old may participate in the designated Youth Hunt. Youth hunters must be accompanied and assisted by an adult 21 years of age or older. Adult assistants must possess a valid Delaware hunting license or LEN. Adult assistants shall not possess a firearm or other hunting device during the hunt. Hunters 13 -15 years of age must have completed a hunter education course and possess a certification card and must also purchase a Delaware junior hunting license. Adult assistants must remain within 5 feet, maintaining close visual and verbal contact, providing adequate direction to, and can immediately assume control of the firearm from the youth hunter.

Potential Disturbance

Due to an ongoing research project biologists may be present in the Prime Hook North unit. Work will be confined to the marsh areas in the Eastern part of the unit. Researchers will be wearing orange vests and will wait until after 9am to enter the area on hunt days to minimize disturbance.

Prime Hook
National Wildlife Refuge
12322 Turtle Pond Road,
Milton, DE 19968
302-684-8419

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1-800-344-WILD
July 2026



Prohibited Activities

By law, recreational activities on national wildlife refuges are prohibited unless expressly permitted. Please check with the office if you have questions.

- Entering hunt areas without possessing authorized hunt permits.
- Hunting and scouting outside designated days.
- The use of rimfire or centerfire rifles and all handguns including muzzleloading pistols
- The use or possession of buckshot while hunting.
- Use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages or other intoxicating substances while hunting.
- Permanent tree stands, nails, screw-in steps, or other items that penetrate the outer bark of a tree.
- Building or maintaining any structure on the refuge.
- Leaving any property unattended.
- Cutting and damaging vegetation/trees or the use of cut vegetation/trees or organic material as camouflage for any purpose.
- Access to the refuge from private or state property
- Distribution of bait or hunting with the aid of bait, including any grain, salt, minerals and other substances that are consumed.
- Hunting within 150 yards of any public use facility or hunting in designated safety zones as shown on hunting maps.
- Littering.
- Leaving deer entrails or other waste within 50 feet of any trail, road, or refuge structure.
- Driving or pushing deer.
- Dogs may not be used to hunt or pursue deer.
- Shooting from, across or down any designated refuge road.
- Target shooting or shooting for any purpose other than legal in season hunting.
- Parking in front of or blocking gates.
- Camping and fires
- Searching for or removal of any natural items such as antlers, skulls, plants, historic, and archaeological features.
- Use of electronic or photographic trail/game monitoring devices.
- Use of drones.

Headquarters Deer Hunts

October 13th & November 17th

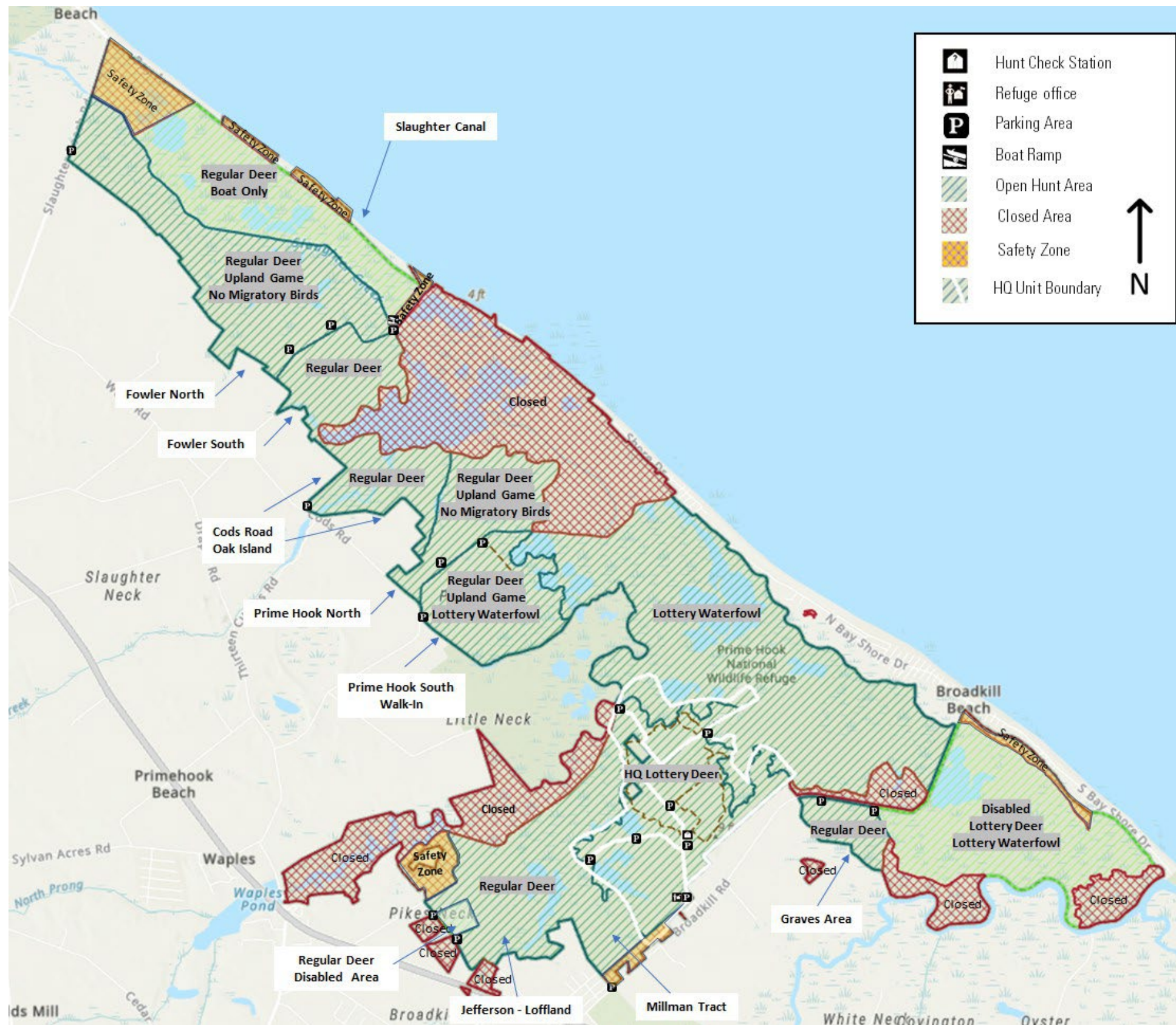
There will be a preseason lottery to issue permits. To participate, complete an application available at the hunt check station, online (www.fws.gov/refuge/prime-hook/visit-us/activities/hunting) or at the refuge office, and mail it in or drop it off by **September 15th**. You must be at least 16 years old to obtain a Prime Hook Headquarters Deer Permit. Permits will be issued in 4 zones in the Headquarters Deer Hunt Area (see map). Standby hunters may sign up for no show spots or signed out spots after 9am at the refuge visitor center.

Headquarters Deer Hunt Special Regulations

Vehicles are only permitted into the hunt area through the entrance gate on Turtle Pond Road two hours before the morning legal shooting time (for 1 hour) and between 2:00-2:30pm. The gate will be manned by a refuge representative.

This is a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a network of lands and waters managed for the benefit of wildlife and people.

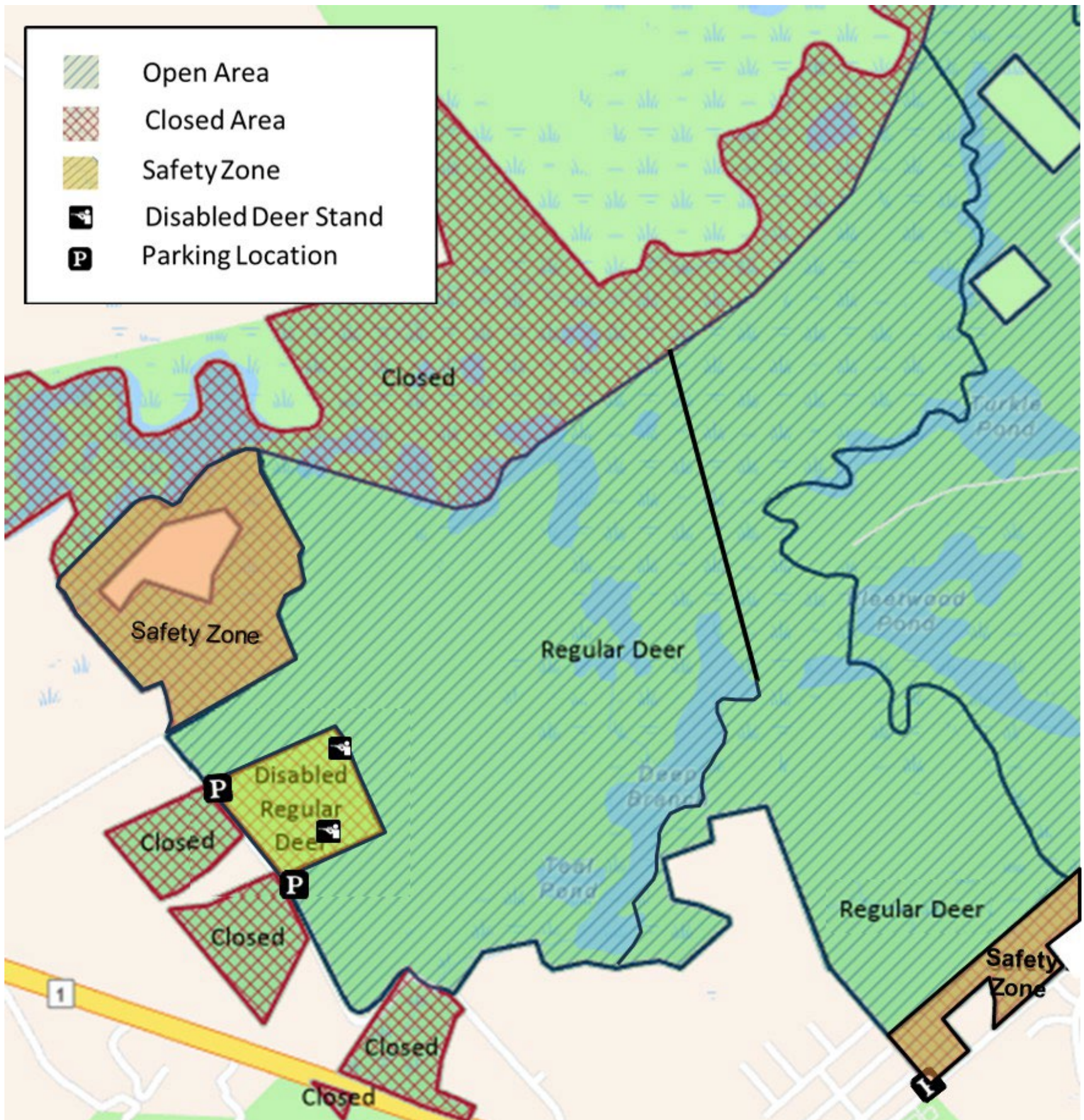




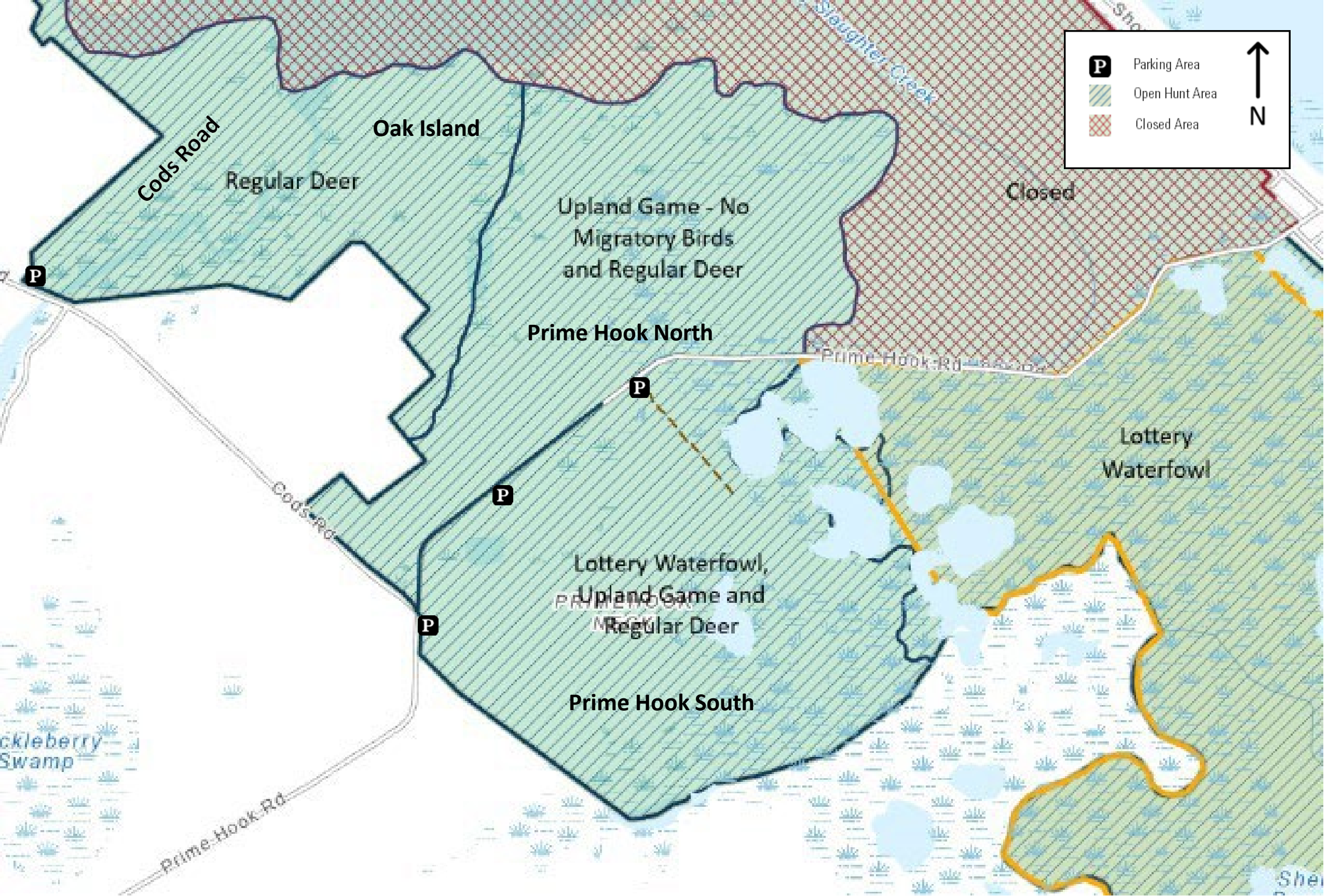
THIS MAP IS FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY. THE BOUNDARY LINES SHOWN ARE APPROXIMATE. FOR BOUNDARY LINE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE REFUGE OFFICE. PLEASE OBSERVE AND ADHERE TO ALL POSTED AREAS. REFER TO REFUGE HUNTING REGULATIONS FOR AVAILABLE HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES, INCLUDING HUNT DATES AND HUNT AREAS.

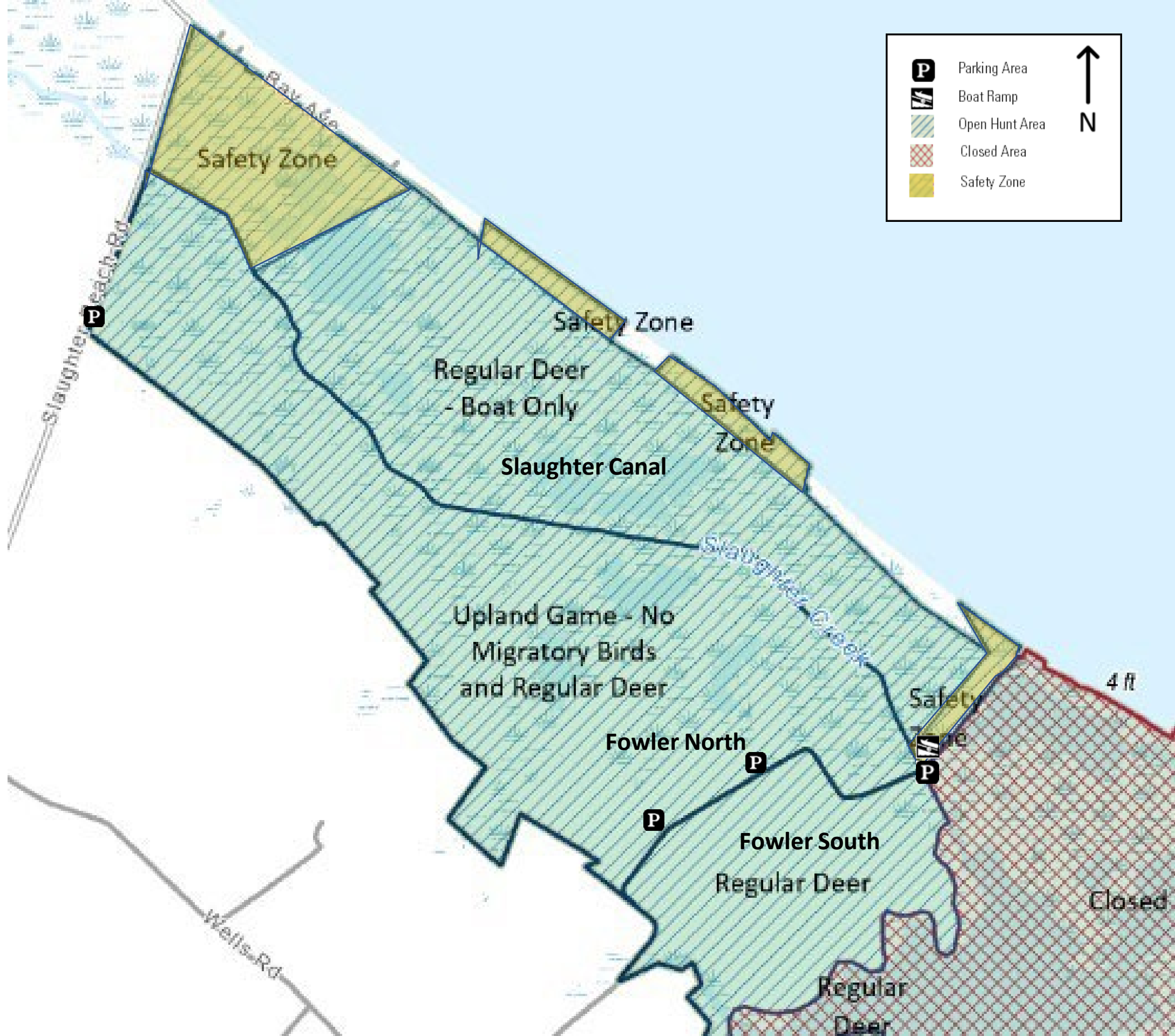
Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

Jefferson – Loffland, Millman Area, and Regular Disabled Deer Area



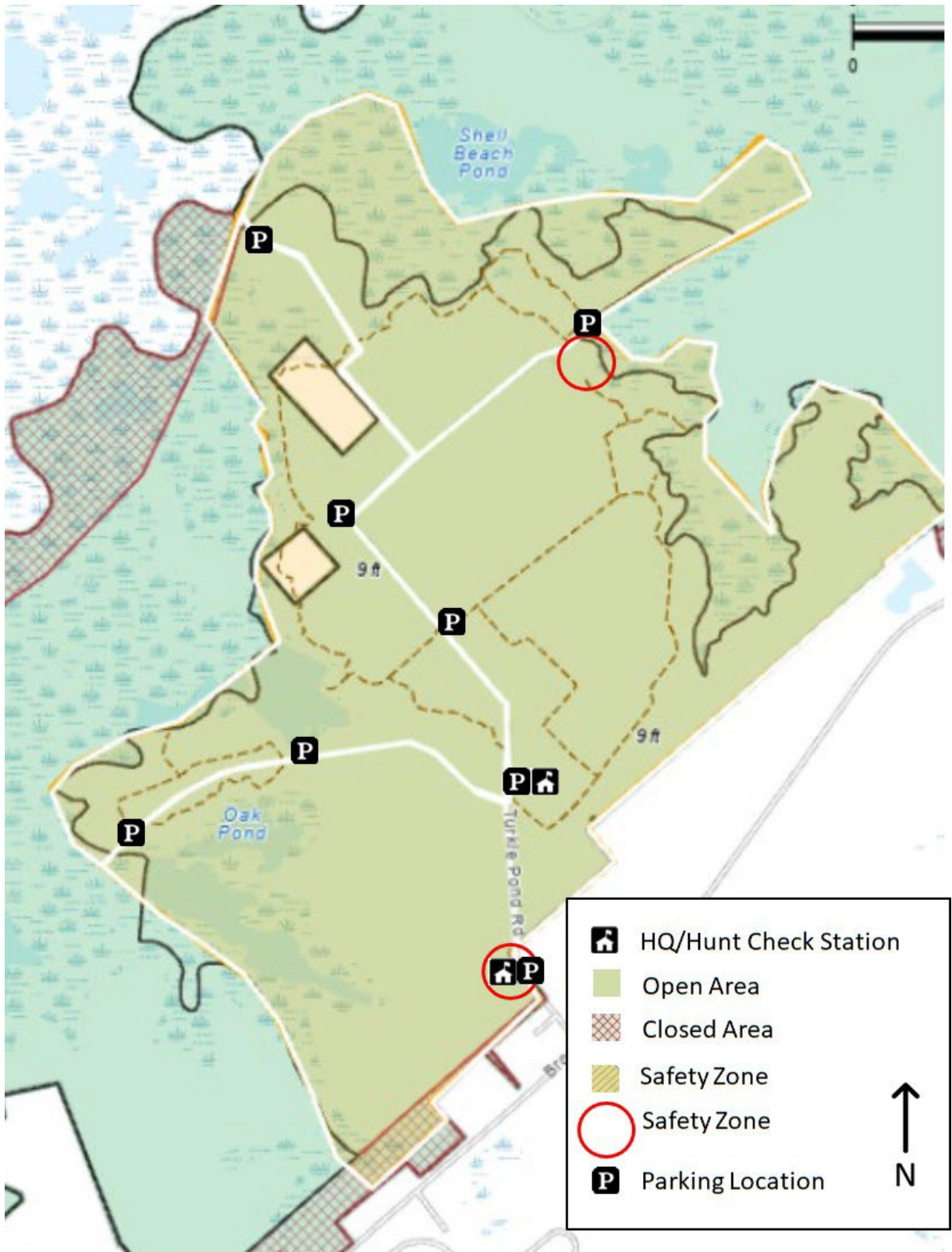
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Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

Headquarters Deer Hunt Area



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