

Prime Hook

National Wildlife Refuge Waterfowl 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.)

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.

Scouting

Waterfowl scouting is allowed the Saturday and Sunday prior to the start of each season segment when there is not an open hunt occurring and every Sunday throughout the season. See table for season dates.

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.
- Access to the lottery waterfowl hunting area is by boat only and hunters must use designated launching sites to launch their boats.
- 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, **this signed brochure**, and a valid lottery application (yellow copy) issued by the refuge on their person at all times during refuge hunt and scout days.

Prime Hook NWR

Hunting Permit 2026—2027

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

Expires August 31, 2027

Signature (permits are not transferable)

Hunts offered

Waterfowl: Permits will be available for the September Teal and Resident Canada Goose season, Youth, Veteran, Active Military days, all 3 splits of Regular duck, and both splits of late Canada Goose.

Open to Hunting: Ducks, geese, and coots. Mute swans may be taken during any open waterfowl season.

Swan identification: Mute Swans have orange and black bills with a hump at the back near the eyes. Tundra and Trumpeter swans have all black bills with no hump. Be sure before you shoot!

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.

Areas

The only areas open to waterfowl hunting are the lottery waterfowl area, the walk-in area south of Prime Hook Rd, and Island Farm disabled hunt area.

Days - Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday during designated seasons. **There is no Sunday hunting.**

Prime Hook State Wildlife Area is open on Sunday. Foord's Landing may be used to access State blinds on Sunday. Refuge lands and waters are closed to hunting on Sunday. Hunting firearms may not be possessed while scouting the refuge on Sundays.

Hours - The refuge is open for hunting access from 2 hours before legal hunting time to 1 hour after legal hunting time. Waterfowl hunts conclude at 4:00 pm. All hunters and assistants must exit the hunting areas by 6:00pm. Hunters are prohibited from being on the refuge (including parking lots) between 9:00 pm & 4:00 am.

Seasonal Closures

Island Farm unit is closed to all access from February 1st - August 23rd

Guided Hunts

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

Dogs

The use of dogs is permitted to locate, point, and retrieve while hunting waterfowl.

Activity	Season	Harvest	Hunt	Regulations
Lottery Waterfowl	Sep 1-25 -Resident Canada Goose Sep 5 - Sep 12, -Sept Teal Oct 24 - Youth, Veteran, Active Military Oct 31 - Nov 7 Regular Duck Nov 25 - Nov 28 - Regular Duck Dec 16 - Jan 30 - Regular Duck Nov 25 - Nov 28 Canada Goose Dec 23 - Jan 30 - Canada Goose	State and Federal limits apply. Ducks, geese, and coots. Mute swans may be taken during any open waterfowl season.	Lottery Waterfowl hunt area specific blind sites	Refuge-issued permit is required in addition to the proper state licenses.
Walk-In Waterfowl	There is no Sunday hunting on the refuge.		Walk-In hunt area specific blind sites	State and Federal Waterfowl Stamps 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.				

Procedures for Hunter Facilitated Drawing: At the hunt check station the morning of the hunt, each hunting party will completely fill out a waterfowl lottery application, fold it in half, and place it in the provided bucket. All members of the hunting party must be present at the drawing or at the time of self-service. Hunters may not reserve blinds or obtain permits for other hunting parties. The names of all occupants of the blind/blind-site and contact information for one hunter must be written on the application prior to the morning drawing or before hunting if the blind site is claimed by first-come, first-serve procedures after the drawing.

Two hours before shooting time, applications are picked one at a time out of the bucket by a willing hunter from the crowd. Hunters may select blind-sites from the tag board in the order that the party was selected from the bucket. Hunters must sign out a blind or blind-site by turning over the appropriate tag from green (available to red (in use and write the number on your application in the "Blind/Blind Site #" section. Place white copy of the application in the "permit" slot. Keep the yellow copy on your person and return the completed hunt report to the check station after hunting. **Flip your tag back to green when your hunt is over** Yellow hunt reports must be turned in at the check station by 5:00 PM. The questionnaire portion must be filled out after the hunt. When leaving the blindout at the check station before hunting again. unoccupied for any reason, the report must be turned in and a new application must be completely filled

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.

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 feathers, carcasses, or other waste within 50 feet of any trail, road, or refuge structure.
- 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.

Lottery Waterfowl Hunt Area: Includes 1 blind and 6 blind-sites on the Federal refuge and 7 stationary blinds in the State-owned Prime Hook Wildlife Area.

Blinds #1-7 are on the state-owned Prime Hook Wildlife Area and blind sites #'s 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 & stationary blind #25 are on the refuge.

Lottery hunting for these areas will be managed through a daily standby, hunter-facilitated, drawing conducted 2 hours before shooting time at the refuge's check station followed by self-service until 12:00 noon. Hunters must not be on the refuge any earlier than 3 hours before shooting time to begin signing up for the lottery drawing. Access to the hunt area is available via the boat ramp at Foord's Landing. The headquarters area boat ramp is open to mud motors only. Close the gate after launching.

The Walk-in Waterfowl hunt area: Located south of Prime Hook Beach Road (see map), is the walk-in Waterfowl Hunt Area. Five hunt areas will be available (with up to three hunters per area). Walk-in Blind-site hunters must be within 20 feet of each other while hunting. AREA IS FOOT ACCESS ONLY.

Hunters must be within 100 feet of the blind site while hunting. Exception: recovering downed birds.





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