



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Clarks River

National Wildlife Refuge

Public Use Regulations 2026–2027

Welcome

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers over 570 National Wildlife Refuges. The primary objective of a National Wildlife Refuge is to provide habitat for the conservation and protection of all species of wildlife. Through this work to conserve natural resources, refuges provide communities with healthier environments, clean water, flood control and a stronger economy. Refuges also offer a variety of opportunities for the American people to enjoy the outdoors and natural heritage.

Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge

91 US Highway 641 North

P.O. Box 89

Benton, Kentucky 42025

270/527-5770

fws.gov/refuge/clarks-river

fws.gov
1-800-344-WILD



General Information

Accessibility

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services and provides, upon request, reasonable accommodation including auxiliary aids and services necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in all programs and activities of the Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge. Discrimination complaints should be filed with the U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240 or 1-800-344-WILD.

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

The use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) or any unlicensed vehicle is prohibited on all refuge property.

Licensed vehicles are permitted on open and maintained paved and graveled roadways only. Abandoned railroad tracks are not considered a roadway. Vehicles blocking refuge gates will be towed at the owner's expense.

Hunting and Fishing Regulations

Hunting and fishing 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 and Fishing

Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge Annual Hunting/Fishing Permits are required for individuals 16-years-old or older who are also required to have a Kentucky State hunting/fishing license and are engaged in hunting/fishing activities on the Refuge. Valid permits must be possessed physically or digitally, while engaged in hunting/fishing activities on the refuge.

Annual hunt/fish permits are available at kynwrs.recaccess.com. For help with log-in, creating an account, or obtaining a permit you'll find instructions by visiting help.recaccess.com.

Permits and Fees

Youth under 16	Free, no permit needed
Age 16 - 64	\$14
Age 65 and Older	\$4
Active Military/Veterans	\$4
All Waterfowl Lottery Applications	\$6



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Regulations - continued

Hunting and fishing will be in accordance with applicable State of Kentucky regulations, found at fw.ky.gov, subject to the conditions stated below.

Hunting is prohibited within 100 yards (91 meters) of any residence, refuge graveled roads, hiking trails, or portions of the abandoned railroad track.

Hunters under the age of 16 must be supervised by an adult 21 years of age or older, and must remain in sight and normal voice contact with the adult. On upland game hunts the adult may supervise no more than two youths, on big game hunts no more than one youth.

Hunter orange must be worn as required by state regulations. **Caution:** other non-hunting members of the public may be in the area and not wearing hunter orange during hunting seasons.

Ground blinds used for the purpose of hunting any species during the deer modern gun, muzzleloader and youth firearms seasons must display hunter orange in accordance with KDFWR regulations on state WMAs.

Only one ground blind per hunter is permitted. Ground blinds must be removed from the refuge when not occupied.

We allow the use of trail cameras. Cameras may be used year round. Cameras must have owner's name, address and phone number clearly displayed or it will be confiscated.

To retrieve or track game from a posted closed area of the refuge the hunter must first receive authorization at 270-532-7435.

The use or possession of any lead shotgun shell (shotshell) is prohibited on the Refuge with the exception of lead shot ammunition legal for the taking of turkey during statewide turkey seasons. This regulation does not apply to rim fire or center fire ammunition.

Waterfowl

Waterfowl hunting is open in accordance to the state seasons and bag limits, except in the Waterfowl Units and Natural Area Units utilized for waterfowl lottery hunts. Please see the chart in the back of this brochure for refuge specific regulations.

Waterfowl Lottery Hunt

Waterfowl hunting will be allowed on the Clarks River managed waterfowl units and natural areas by a lottery draw hunt only. The units and areas will be closed to all entry, with the exception of the drawn permit holder and their guests on drawn hunt days only.

Drawn hunt days will be during the statewide waterfowl season, except during modern rifle and muzzleloader deer seasons. Mallard Point Unit, Wood Duck Natural Area Unit, and Teal Natural Area Unit will be assigned drawn hunt dates on Saturdays and Sundays. Redhead and Wolfe Units will be assigned drawn hunt dates on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Descriptions and maps of each area can be found on the refuge website.

- To participate in the waterfowl lottery a person must apply at kynwrs.recaccess.com. Applications will be accepted starting September 1st and must be completed no later than October 15th. Winners will be notified by email on October 18th and must claim their permit by November 15th. Unclaimed permits will be available on November 18th at 12 pm on a first come, first served basis. Only one permit may be claimed per user per season.
- Only one entry may be submitted per person. Preferred dates and units/areas may be requested. If the dates or units/areas have already been assigned, the first available date and unit/area remaining will be assigned.
- To be eligible, individuals must be at least 16 years of age and possess valid and current state and federal licenses and stamps for hunting waterfowl. Hunters under 16 years of age may apply for the youth-only hunt day(s) if they will be under 16 during the hunt date(s). Active Military and Veterans may apply for the Military/Veteran-only hunt day(s).
- To claim a winning lottery permit, individuals must first purchase a refuge hunt permit. Youth under 16 are not required to obtain a refuge hunt permit.
- Permit holders will be allowed to hunt their assigned unit/area on the designated date.
- Permit holders may bring up to four guests with them to the unit/area. Guests are not permitted without the attendance of the permit holder, no exceptions.
- No person may sell, trade or barter their permit. The permit is the sole property of the permit holder and is non-transferable. If a person cannot attend their drawn date, the unit/area will be closed for those dates.
- Watercraft is allowed in the waterfowl units/areas by drawn permit holders, which may use watercraft to access their assigned units and to retrieve waterfowl.
- Access to the refuge is two hours before sunrise. Hunting will cease and hunters will be out of the field by 12 noon each day.



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Access

With the exception of hunting raccoon, opossum and bullfrog, access to the refuge is two hours before sunrise to two hours after sunset.

Wolf, Redhead, and Mallard Waterfowl Units are closed to all entry from Nov. 1 through Mar 31, with the exception of drawn permit holders. Deer hunting in Wood Duck and Teal Natural Area Units is limited to archery only hunting through Nov. 30, these areas are closed to all entry Dec. 1 through Mar. 31, with the exception of drawn waterfowl permit holders. High water or flood conditions do not affect or change these boundaries and entry by boat is not permitted.

Bicycles, including eBikes, are permitted while engaged in wildlife related activities on refuge open and maintained paved and graveled roads, and portions of the abandoned railroad tracks that are owned by the refuge.

Horseback riding is permitted on refuge-graveled roads and the portions of the abandoned railroad tracks owned by the refuge while engaged in wildlife related activities, except during muzzleloader and modern gun deer hunts. Horses and mules are not permitted off these secondary access routes for any purpose.

Fishing on the Refuge is allowed under Kentucky statewide regulations with the exception of the Environmental Education and Recreation Area Pond.

Environmental Educational and Recreation Area (EERA) Specific Regulations

- Pets not on a leash are prohibited.
- Portions of the EERA are closed to all entry from November 1 to March 31.
- Area is pole fishing only with limit of 1 pole per person.
- Use of any watercraft is prohibited.
- Horseback riding is prohibited.
- Use of live fish for bait is prohibited.
- Introduction or stocking of fish is prohibited.
- Swimming is prohibited.
- Hunting or harvesting of frogs is prohibited.

For all other species not listed in the chart below, follow statewide regulations.

<i>Species</i>	<i>Size limit</i>	<i>Creel limit</i>
Bluegill	None	10
Channel Catfish	12"	5 Combined (Channel Catfish and Largemouth Bass)
Largemouth Bass	12"	

Harvest Reporting

Deer, Turkey, River Otter and Bobcat harvested on the Refuge must be telechecked through the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources at 1-800-245-4263 with public land code for Clarks River NWR. Hunters are required to follow all state CWD regulations.



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Tree Stands

The use of nails, wire, screws or bolts to attach a stand to a tree, or hunting from a tree into which a metal object has been driven to assist a hunter is prohibited.

Construction or use of any permanent tree stand is prohibited. Only climbing and/or portable stands may be used.

Only one stand per hunter is permitted.

Tree stands may be placed in the field no earlier than 14 days prior to the opening of season and must be removed from the field within 7 days after season closes.

All stands left in the field must be identified by hunter's FW Customer ID number from KDFWR license, or owners name and contact information. If stand does not contain this information, it will be confiscated.

Prohibited Activities

- Discarding any fish or animal carcasses or parts within 100 yards of parking lots, the EERA, roadsides, or any other area visible to the visiting public. Hunters must not field dress their harvest within 100 yards of these areas.
- Marking or flagging any tree or other Refuge feature with non-biodegradable reflectors, paint or other substance.
- Littering, including, but not limited to, fish and animal parts not taken on Clarks River NWR, yard debris, limbs, leaves, plants, landscaping, seasonal decorations, domestic animals, etc.
- Camping
- Fires
- Trapping
- Search or removal of any object of antiquity including arrowheads, pottery, or other artifacts.
- Target practice or non-authorized discharge of firearms.
- Possession or use of alcoholic beverages.
- Release of plants or animals, including wildlife and domesticated animals.
- Harassment of any individual or group engaged in legal refuge activities.
- Taking of wildlife (outside legal hunting season) or plants (including cutting trees and brush) is prohibited.
- No unauthorized person shall use or direct the rays of a spotlight or other artificial light, or automotive headlights for the purpose of spotting, locating or taking any animal within the boundaries of the refuge or along right-of-way for public or private roads within the refuge.
- Feeding of wildlife and the hunting of any wildlife by the aid of or distributing any feed, salt, minerals, or other ingestible attractants.
- The running or training of dogs outside the hunting season for a particular species is permitted by special use permits only. For more information contact the refuge office.
- Dog owners/handlers must have a collar on each dog with the owner's name, address and telephone number. We allow dogs for raccoon, opossum, migratory birds, waterfowl, squirrel, rabbit and fall turkey hunting. All dogs must be detained by leash or chain if not being legally used for hunting. Other pets must be confined or on a leash.

Hunting of any species not listed on the following page is considered closed. All state bag limits, season dates and weapon regulations apply unless otherwise specified.

Type	Season dates/bag limits	Refuge specific regulations
Duck, Goose, Coot	Same as State Waterfowl Seasons and Bag Limits, except in Waterfowl Units and Natural Area Units. Hunting in managed Waterfowl Units and Natural Area Units is only permitted through a lottery permit.	- Only nontoxic shot permitted. - Access to the refuge is two hours before sunrise. Hunting will cease and hunters will be out of the field by 12 noon each day. - Only portable and temporary blinds are permitted and must be removed when not occupied. - Decoys must be removed each day (lottery units/permit holders excluded). - The use of dogs for retrieving purposes or in the pursuit of migratory birds is permitted
Dove, Woodcock, Snipe, Crow, Quail	Same as State Seasons and Bag Limits. Closed during all refuge modern gun and muzzleloader deer seasons, including special youth dates.	- Only nontoxic shot permitted. - Centerfire weapons prohibited. - Access to the refuge is two hours before sunrise to two hours after sunset. - The use of dogs for retrieving purposes or in the pursuit of migratory birds is permitted.
Squirrel, Rabbit	Same as State Season and Bag Limits. Closed during all refuge modern gun and muzzleloader deer seasons, including special youth weekends.	- Only nontoxic shotshells permitted. - Centerfire weapons prohibited. - Access to the refuge is two hours before sunrise to two hours after sunset. - The use of dogs for retrieving purposes or in the pursuit of gray and fox squirrels, eastern cottontail and swamp rabbits is permitted. Use of dogs outside hunting season is by special use permit only.
Raccoon, Opossum	Same as State Season and Bag Limits	- Only nontoxic shotshells permitted. - Centerfire weapons prohibited. - Access to the refuge after sunset is permitted. - The use of dogs in the pursuit of raccoon and opossum is permitted in accordance with State regulations. Use of dogs outside hunting season is by special use permit only.
Coyote, Bobcat, Fox, Skunk, Otter, Muskrat, Mink, Weasel, Beaver	Same as State Season and Bag Limits (Bobcat and Otter taken on Refuge will be telechecked through State 1-800-245-4263 with public land code for Clarks River NWR)	- Only nontoxic shotshells permitted - Access to the refuge is two hours before sunrise to two hours after sunset. May only be taken during daylight hours - Use of dogs is not permitted.
White-tail Deer	Same as State Season and Bag Limits for Zone 1, except in archery only zones. (Deer taken on Refuge will be telechecked through State 1-800-245-4263 with public land code for Clarks River NWR) Hunters are required to follow all state CWD regulations.	- Access to the refuge is two hours before sunrise to two hours after sunset. - Ground blinds are permitted, one per hunter, and must be removed when not occupied. During modern gun, muzzleloader, and youth firearm ground blinds must display hunter orange in accordance with KDFWR regulations on state WMAs. - Hunters may not hunt by organized deer drives of two or more hunters. - Pursuit of white-tailed deer with dogs is prohibited.
Turkey	Same as State Seasons and Bag Limits (Turkey taken on Refuge will be telechecked through the State 1-800-245-4263 with public land code for Clarks River NWR)	- Access to the refuge is two hours before sunrise to two hours after sunset. - Ground blinds are permitted, one per hunter, and must be removed when not occupied. - The use of dogs for retrieving purposes or in the pursuit of wild turkey is permitted in accordance with state regulations
Bullfrogs	Same as State Seasons and Bag Limits, except in the EERA.	- Access to the refuge after sunset is permitted - Hunting of bullfrogs at the Environmental Education Recreation Area is prohibited. - Collection, hunting, and/or harm of all other species of reptiles and amphibians on the Refuge is prohibited.
Feral Hogs	Closed	Feral hogs are not regarded as a game species on Clarks River NWR.
Sandhill Crane, Groundhog	Closed	Closed



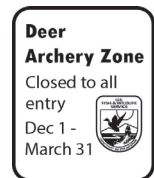
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Signs

Millions of people visit National Wildlife Refuges each year. Human activity, if not regulated, can negatively impact wildlife and their habitats. Signs help control recreational activities and respect private property while protecting natural resources on the refuge. Below are some common signs posted on the refuge:



These signs and yellow paint clearly mark all refuge property. It is your responsibility to know where the property lines are and remain within the boundaries.



This area is closed to all deer modern gun and muzzleloader hunting. This area will close to all entry from December 1st through March 31st.

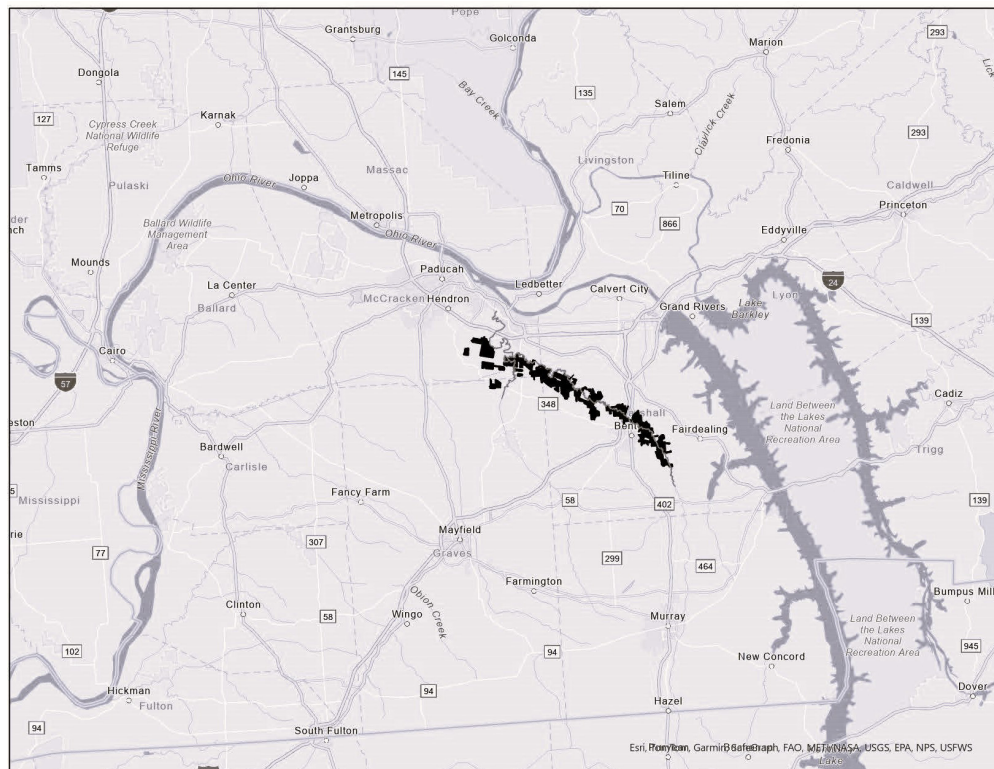


This area is closed to all hunting. Firearms and archery equipment are prohibited. Some of these signs may have dates indicating the length of time the area is closed to all hunting.



This area is closed to all entry. No entering, hunting or sightseeing is permitted. No roads or trails beyond this sign are open to the public. Some of these signs may have dates indicating seasonal closure and length of time the area is closed.

Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge is approximately 12,000 acres and located in Marshall, McCracken, and Graves Counties in western Kentucky.



Detailed maps of the refuge are available 24 hours a day outside the refuge office. Maps are also available on the refuge website at fws.gov/refuge/clarks-river

