

Waccamaw

National Wildlife Refuge

Hunting Permit and Hunting and Fishing Regulations 2026-2027



Welcome to Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge

Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) is one of 562 National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) in the U.S. and its territories. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and their habitats within the U.S. for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans. Hunting is one of the many necessary tools used to responsibly manage wildlife populations and control invasive species. Maintaining a balanced population by removing surplus animals ensures the overall health and viability of all wildlife populations that depend on the managed habitats that this Refuge provides.

General Provisions and Access

The provisions listed below supplement the general regulations which govern the legal use of NWRs and their recreational uses as set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations.

Entry onto the Refuge is done wholly and completely at the risk of the individual. Neither the USFWS nor the Refuge accepts any responsibility for acts, omissions, activities, or conditions on these lands which cause or may cause personal injury or property damage.

Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge
21424 North Fraser Street
PO Box 1439
Georgetown, SC 29440
843/527 8069
<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/waccamaw>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<https://www.fws.gov/about/region/southeast>
July 2026

Hunters and fishermen using the Refuge are subject to inspections of permits, licenses, equipment, bag limits, size and catch limits, vehicles, watercraft, and their personal contents by USFWS, SCDNR, or other law enforcement officers.

Only legally licensed vehicles are allowed on the Refuge. All motorized vehicles are prohibited on Refuge roads on Sandy Island. Vehicles are allowed only on established roads marked open. All other roads may be traveled on foot or by bicycle. The speed limit on all Refuge roads is 15 MPH unless otherwise posted. Vehicles may not block gates and must be parked off of the road. ATVs are prohibited.

A Refuge Hunt Permit is required for all hunters and is located on the front of this brochure. This permit along with South Carolina (State) hunting licenses, appropriate stamps and tags, and photo identification must be carried at all times while hunting and is not valid until signed & dated by the hunter. By law, NWRs are closed to all recreational activities unless expressly permitted.

Hunting on the Refuge is only allowable in designated areas which are outlined in the attached map. When permitted, hunting, fishing, and other public uses will be in

accordance with applicable State regulations and the following special Refuge regulations unless otherwise listed.

Hunting Regulations

Check In and Field Dressing

No check-in is required during Refuge hunts. The only exception is during special lottery hunts where detailed check-in information will be given to selected applicants. Field dressing harvested animals is prohibited on Refuge lands. All harvested animals must be removed from the Refuge with all body parts attached.

Licenses, Permits, Tags, and Stamps

A signed and dated Refuge Hunting Permit, proper State hunting license, photo identification (such as a driver's license) and all applicable tags or stamps, must be in your possession at all times upon entering the Refuge property. A SCDNR WMA permit is not required to hunt on the Refuge.

Youth Hunting and Hunter Education Requirements

A youth hunter is defined as a hunter under the age of 16. All youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult 21 years of age or older who is validly licensed to hunt by the State, holds all applicable stamps and tags, and possesses a signed Refuge Hunt Permit.

Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge Hunt Permit August 1, 2026-July 31, 2027

Name: _____

Address: _____

I have read and understand the regulations governing hunting on Waccamaw NWR.

Signature _____

Date: _____

This permit must be carried on your person at all times and is not valid until signed and dated. Unless you are issued an additional permit for a quota hunt, this permit will serve as your refuge hunt permit. This permit is valid for the duration of this year's refuge hunt season.

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Youth hunters are not required to purchase hunting licenses but must possess a Refuge Hunting Permit and all applicable stamps and tags. *Youth hunters must be within sight and normal voice range of a supervising adult at all times while hunting.*

During small game and migratory game bird hunts, each adult may supervise a maximum of **two** youths. During any big game (deer, hog, turkey) hunt, an adult may only supervise **one** youth. For the purposes of youth hunting, the Refuge classifies hogs as a big game species.

If the youth has completed a SCDNR approved hunter education program, they may sit in their own elevated stand while deer and/or hog hunting as long as they are within sight and normal voice range of the supervising adult and have in their possession proof of successfully completing the hunter education program. If the youth has not completed an approved hunter education program, they must hunt from the same elevated stand as the supervising adult during deer and hog hunts.

Federal Youth-Only Waterfowl Hunting Days

Youth will be allowed to hunt on the Refuge during Federal youth-only waterfowl hunting days. Only youth under the age of 16 are allowed to hunt on the Refuge during these days and must be under direct supervision of an adult regardless of whether or not they have completed a hunter education course. Youth hunters are not required to purchase a hunting license or waterfowl stamps but must possess a Refuge Hunting Permit. All youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult of at least 18 years of age. The adult is not allowed to carry a gun or hunt and does not need a hunting license or waterfowl stamps. However, both the adult and youth must possess a Refuge Hunting Permit.

State Youth-Only Waterfowl Hunting Days

Youth will be allowed to hunt on the Refuge during State youth-only waterfowl hunting days. Only hunters 17 years of age or younger may hunt waterfowl on this day. The youth(s) must be accompanied by an adult of at least 21 years of age. The adult is not allowed to carry a gun or hunt, but must be properly licensed, including state and federal duck stamps. Youth who are 16 and 17 years of age who hunt on this day are not required to

be licensed or have a state waterfowl stamp but must possess a Federal Waterfowl Stamp and Migratory Bird Permit. The youth and the adult must also have a Refuge Hunting Permit.

Hunter Education Courses

All residents and non-residents born after June 30, 1979, must successfully complete a hunter education course that is approved by SCDNR before a hunting license can be obtained. Additionally, hunters 16 years of age or older must possess a SCDNR hunting license to hunt in South Carolina.

Turkey Hunting

Turkey hunting on the Refuge is for Adult-Youth pairs only (1 adult and 1 youth). Both hunters are allowed to carry weapons and shoot turkeys except on Youth-Only Turkey hunting days. The limit is 1 turkey per day per party and 2 turkeys per season. The same requirements for big game youth hunting on the Refuge apply. All hunters, including youth, or those who are calling, must possess a valid set of turkey tags. No person may possess more than one set of turkey tags. The youth is not required to purchase a hunting license but must possess a signed Refuge Hunting Permit. The adult must be 21 years of age or older, properly licensed to hunt with all applicable tags, and carry a signed Refuge Hunt Permit.

Special Hunts

The Refuge reserves the right to hold special hunts for small game, big game, and migratory birds throughout the year. These may include youth-only hunts, mobility-impaired hunts, and invasive species management hunts. These hunts will be advertised through press releases, Refuge website (www.fws.gov/waccamaw), and Facebook (www.facebook.com/waccamawnwr).

Sandy Island Archery Lottery Hunt

The Refuge will host its annual archery-only deer and hog lottery hunt on the upland portions of Sandy Island during the months of October and November. Hunters 18 years of age and older may apply for a special permit which will allow those selected to hunt deer and hogs on the upland interior portions of Sandy Island from October 1st through November 30th, excluding Sundays. Hunters may apply in tandem with one other hunter or may apply as an individual. Hunters under the

age of 18 are allowed to hunt with an adult 21 years of age or older who is selected for a permit. Hunters must hunt from and provide their own elevated hunting stands as well as provide their own transportation to and from the island. Hunting will be by archery only and no crossbows will be allowed.

Each permit allows for the harvest of three deer, only one of which can be a buck, which must have 6 points or more. SCDNR issued deer tags must be used during this hunt. There is no limit on feral hogs.

Hunting for small game, turkey, bear, and migratory birds is prohibited. To apply for the hunt, send your name, address, and phone number to the following email address: WaccamawNWR@fws.gov. Also indicate which type of permit you are applying for. The deadline to apply is September 15th.

Visible Color Clothing

During all Refuge hunts, regardless of species and weapon type, hunters are required to wear either a hat, coat, or vest of solid visible international orange. Hunters for turkey, ducks, and geese are exempt from this requirement.

Weapons

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on NWRs 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 (50 CFR Part 32). Discharging a weapon for a purpose other than to take legal game animals during established Refuge hunting seasons is prohibited. Discharging any firearm from any type of watercraft or vehicle is strictly prohibited (except hunting waterfowl). All firearms must be unloaded and dismantled (or cased) while being transported in a vehicle or watercraft. Blow guns, and poison tipped arrows are prohibited.

Only muzzleloading rifles using a single projectile are permitted during muzzleloader hunts. Crossbows may only be used during big game hunting sessions where we allow muzzleloaders or modern weapons. They are not permitted during archery-only sessions.

Ammunition

Non-toxic shot is required when hunting with shotguns with the only exception being slugs. *Buckshot is prohibited on all Refuge*

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hunts and may not be in possession at any time while on the Refuge. Use of full metal jacketed bullets or rimfire ammunition during big game hunts is prohibited.

Closed Areas and Times

Designated areas will be closed seasonally to hunting, fishing, and all other public access to provide resource protection and reduce migratory bird disturbance. Other areas may be closed for special management and safety reasons. *The Refuge is closed everyday from one hour after sunset until one hour before sunrise except when allowances are made for specific Refuge hunts.*

Hunters may enter the Refuge no earlier than 5 am on hunt days and must leave the Refuge no later than one hour after legal sunset except during the State waterfowl season where waterfowl hunting is allowed on the Refuge. *Trails on the Refuge that are in areas open to hunting will be closed to the general public during deer, turkey, and hog hunts.*

Intoxicants

While hunting on the Refuge, no person may possess, consume, or be under the influence of intoxicants, including alcohol, drugs, and all other controlled substances.

Dogs

Dogs may be used for waterfowl, snipe, woodcock, raccoon, opossum, squirrel, and during special hog hunts. Retriever dogs may be used for waterfowl, snipe, and woodcock. Bay dogs may be used for squirrel, raccoon and opossum. Catch dogs are not permitted. Dogs must be leashed and under control of the owner when not in pursuit of authorized game animals. All dogs are required to wear a collar displaying the owner's name, address, and phone number.

Hunting Stands

Deer and feral hogs must be hunted from elevated stands. Boats and other types of watercraft are not considered elevated hunting stands and shooting game (except waterfowl) from a watercraft is prohibited.

Only one portable stand per hunter is permitted on the Refuge at a time and must be clearly marked with the hunter's State hunting license number. Stands must not be placed on the Refuge more than three days prior to the opening day of each deer and/or hog hunting session and all hunting stands must be removed no later than three

days after the conclusion of the session. An exception will be made when the next deer and/or hog hunting session for that unit is less than seven days away, in which case, stands do not have to be removed and may remain on the tree through the next session. If the next session for that unit is more than seven days away, the stand must be removed.

The use of nails, screws, or bolts to attach a hunting stand to a tree or hunting from a tree where a metal object has been driven to support a hunter is prohibited. Living trees or plants may not be trimmed, cut down, or damaged in any manner. Any stands found on the Refuge outside of allowed periods or in areas closed to hunting will be confiscated.

Tree Marking

You may use flagging to mark entry sites from roads or trails and again at the stand site. You may use clothes pins with reflective tape between these sites to mark the route to the stand. Hunters must label all such markers with their full name and remove them at the end of the hunt.

Pre-hunt Scouting

We allow scouting all year during daylight hours except during the State waterfowl season. During the waterfowl season, we allow scouting Monday through Friday only.

Game/Trail cameras and other scouting devices are prohibited.

Fishing Regulations

All fishermen must abide by all State fishing regulations as outlined in the 2025-2026 South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Hunting and Fishing Regulations. Additionally, lakes and ponds located on Refuge lands DO require a State freshwater fishing license. Fishermen are not required to possess a special Refuge permit to fish on Refuge lands.

Prohibited Activities on the Refuge

- Searching for or removing natural or historic objects, objects of antiquity, or any other items of historic value. All federally owned property including natural, historic, and archeological features are protected by Federal Law.
- Killing, harassing, injuring, trapping, or hunting any wildlife not specifically

allowed in this brochure including but not limited to crow, fox, rabbit, quail, bobcat, otter, beaver, birds, snakes, turtles, coyotes, bear, and American alligator.

- Possessing or using any controlled substance except that which was obtained by the possessor directly, or pursuant to a valid prescription or order, from a practitioner acting in the course of his professional practice, or except as otherwise authorized by applicable law. Additionally, no person may enter or remain in any NWR while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any other controlled substance.
- Camping, overnight parking, open fires, and littering.
- Use of ATVs and/or airboats to access Refuge lands.
- Possession of bait, baiting, and/or hunting in the vicinity of bait. Bait includes, but is not limited to, grains, feeds, salts, mineral blocks, meats, fruits, and other consumable items.
- No person shall possess or use any substance or material that contains or purports to contain any excretion collected from a cervid (deer) including urine, feces, blood, gland oil, or other body fluid for the purpose of taking, attracting, or scouting any wild animal in SC. This does not prohibit the use of synthetic products or substances collected by a hunter from deer legally harvested in SC.
- Using or directing the rays of a spotlight or other artificial light or automotive headlights for the purpose of spotting, locating, observing, harassing, or taking any wildlife.
- Using game/trail cameras and scouting devices or electronic game calls.
- Entering or discharging a weapon within, into, or across a "No Hunting Zone" or "Closed Area".
- Hunting on Sunday.
- Releasing or attempting to release any animal onto Refuge lands.
- Hunting or shooting any game (except waterfowl) from a watercraft.

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- Hunting from within 100 feet of any roadway, whether open or closed to vehicular traffic or from within 300 yards of any residence or designated hunter check station.
- Destroying, injuring, or cutting vegetation. The possession of axes, saws, machetes, mowers, trimmers, or other tools used for cutting vegetation are not permitted on the Refuge. In addition, the use of hammers, screws, nails, bolts, or any other foreign objects that are inserted into or permanently affixed to any vegetation is prohibited.
- Stalk hunting, “man-drives”, or any other form of an organized hunting technique while hunting deer, hog, or turkey in which two or more hunters are attempting to drive game animals from cover to shoot, kill, injure, or move animals towards other hunters.
- Hunting for wildlife on any Refuge unit other than that which is officially opened and posted.

Harvest Limits

Deer

No Sunday hunting. All harvested deer are required to be tagged at the point of kill. SCDNR issued deer tags must be used on all deer harvested and animals must be in compliance with the guidelines for the specific tag used.

In addition, only one antlered deer allowed for each hunt session not to exceed three total antlered deer per year. Three antlerless deer may be harvested per season not to exceed two per day.

Legal hunting hours are from ½ hour before official sunrise to ½ hour after official sunset. Official sunrise/sunset times are listed in the SCDNR Hunting & Fishing Regulation Guide.

Hogs

No Sunday hunting. No limit. Additional hog hunts may be offered during and after deer season to further control this invasive species.

All feral hogs must be dispatched before removing them from the Refuge.

Use of dogs for hog hunting is prohibited, however, exceptions may be made if the

Refuge determines additional hog hunts not listed in this brochure are necessary.

A State hunting license and a Refuge Hunting Permit are required.

Turkey

Nontoxic shot required. Adult/Youth Only. Allowed in Unit 1 only.

One gobbler per day per party. Two gobblers per season. Turkey tags are required. All harvested turkeys must be tagged before being moved from the point of kill.

Squirrel

Nontoxic shot required if using shotguns. No Sunday hunting.

Gray squirrel only. Fox squirrels are not allowed.

Bag limit is 10 squirrels per hunter per day.

One treeing dog allowed per hunter.

No hunting from watercraft.

Raccoon / Opossum

Nontoxic shot required if using shotguns.

Three raccoon per party per night. Opossum no limit.

Waterfowl / Woodcock / Snipe

Nontoxic shot required.

Same limits as outlined in the South Carolina Migratory Game Bird Hunting Guidebook 2026-2027.

If a scheduled Refuge deer hunt falls within the State migratory bird season, hunting is not permitted until after the deer hunt concludes.



This sign delineates the refuge boundary. Entry is permitted only for authorized uses (hunting, fishing, sightseeing, etc.) in accordance with refuge regulations.



This area is closed to all hunting. Firearms and archery equipment are prohibited (see map).



This area is closed to all entry. No hunting, fishing or sightseeing is permitted. No roads or trails are open to the public.



This area is closed to all hunting except during special hunts. Refer to Special Hunts section in this brochure.

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Refuge Hunting Sessions

(Only species listed are allowed to be hunted)

Unit 1 Hunting Sessions

Deer / Hog	No Sunday Hunting.
Archery	August 17-29, September 14-26
Archery & Muzzleloader	September 28 - October 17
Modern Weapons, Archery & Muzzleloader	November 16 - December 5
Hog	No Sunday Hunting February 1 - March 26 Buckshot and Rimfire firearms prohibited. No Limit. Additional hunts determined as needed after annual hog hunt.
Squirrel	No Sunday Hunting September 28 - February 27
Turkey	Youth-Only: Same as State WMA Youth-only days Adult/Youth: April 3 - 24, Saturdays Only
Waterfowl / Woodcock	Wednesdays and Saturdays only until 12 noon during the State seasons on Refuge Tracts in Unit 1 that are along the Great Pee Dee River. Tracts in Unit 1 that are along the Waccamaw River are closed to waterfowl and woodcock hunting. Youth hunters are allowed to hunt on the Refuge during Federal and State Youth-Only Waterfowl Hunting Days. Waterfowl hunting is not allowed during the Early Teal and Early Canada Geese seasons. Hunters may enter the Refuge no earlier than 5 am on hunt days and must be off of the Refuge by 2pm. If a scheduled Refuge deer hunt falls within the State migratory bird season, hunting is not permitted until after the deer hunt concludes.
Raccoon / Opossum	September 28 - February 27 Wednesday and Saturday nights only. Must not enter Refuge until one hour after sunset.

Unit 2 Refuge Sessions

Deer / Hog Modern Weapons, Archery, & Muzzleloader	September 7-26, October 26 - November 14 No Sunday hunting
Hog	No Sunday Hunting February 1 - March 31 Buckshot and rimfire firearms prohibited. No Limit. Additional hunts determined as needed after annual hog hunt.

Unit 3 Refuge Sessions

Deer / Hog Modern Weapons, Archery, & Muzzleloader	No Sunday Hunting September 7-26, October 26 - November 14
Hog	No Sunday Hunting March 1-31 Buckshot and rimfire firearms prohibited. No Limit. Additional hunts determined as needed after annual hog hunt.
Snipe	Wednesday and Saturday only. February 1 - close of Federal season. Nontoxic shot required.
Raccoon / Opossum	Wednesday and Saturday nights only. October 3-24, November 18 - February 27

Sandy Island Lottery Hunt

Deer/Hog Archery Only	October 1 - November 30 No Sunday hunting *Additional Permit Required*
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