U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Hunting

Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Hunting Regulations at Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Public hunting on Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge is allowed in those areas designated as open to hunting by field signs and as indicated on the accompanying map. The following terms and conditions supplement the regulations which govern hunting on National Wildlife Refuges, as set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, part 32 and in current Federal Migratory Bird and State Hunting Regulations.

Species Allowed

North Tract

Deer, feral hog, rabbit, duck, goose, coot, sandhill crane, dove, quail and pheasant.

Middle Tract

Duck, goose, coot, sandhill crane and pheasant.

Hunting Days and Times

(Refer also to supplemental ***Hunting Seasons*** leaflet)

North Tract

Hunting is allowed on all days within the State authorized seasons during legal hunting hours. (No extended Eurasian–collared dove, youth waterfowl or late light goose conservation order seasons or year round rabbit hunting).

Middle Tract

Hunting is allowed on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays within the State authorized seasons from legal morning shooting time to 1:00 p.m. (No early teal, youth waterfowl or late light goose conservation order seasons).

Permits and Licenses Requirements

A valid State hunting license is required. A Federal Migratory Bird Permit (HIP) is required for anyone hunting migratory birds. Persons 16 years of age and older must also have a validated Federal Waterfowl Hunting and Conservation Permit (Duck Stamp) while hunting waterfowl. All crane hunters must have a free Federal Sandhill Crane Permit (available at all New Mexico Department of Wildlife Offices). Habitat Management and Access Validation required (except as per state regulations).

Check Station Procedure

All hunters using the Middle Tract must complete survey cards at the check station (near Visitor Center) after each hunt, regardless of success.

Firearms and Ammunition

Refuge hunters must follow State mandated regulations pertaining to legal sporting arms and ammunition. Only shotguns (capable of holding no more than three shells) are permitted while legally hunting ducks, geese, coots, sandhill cranes, doves, quail, pheasants, and rabbits on designated hunt areas of the refuge. Only U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved nontoxic shot may be used in shotguns when hunting on any part of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Possession of lead shot for hunting is illegal on the refuge. The discharge of weapons other than for legal hunting purposes is prohibited.

Dogs

Hunting dogs may be used for hunting waterfowl and upland game. They are required to be under close control of their handlers at all times.

Hunt Sites and Blinds

All hunting sites are considered available to hunters on a first come, first served basis. No pit blinds or permanent blinds are allowed. Portable blinds are allowed but must be removed each day.

Roads, Parking, and Trails

Vehicle travel is allowed only upon established public use roads. Other access is limited to established public use roads and trails until inside the designated hunt area. Parking is allowed in designated parking areas only. Do not block roads or intersections.

Refuge / Wildlife Violations

Please report any hunting or refuge violations by calling US Fish & Wildlife Service's TIPS hotline at 1-844-397-8477 or contact the New Mexico Department of Wildlife Game Thief hotline at 1-800-432-4263. Do not confront violators but rather be a safe/good witness and provide as much information about the incident as possible.

General Regulations

Disturbing wildlife, such as "rallying" or stirring up birds so that they fly over the hunt areas, is prohibited.

Neither hunters nor their dogs may exit hunt areas to retrieve game.

All personal property, including decoys and portable blinds, must be directly tended at all times.

Access to the North Tract is restricted to walk-in or via horseback, except non-motorized bicycles may be used on established roads only east of the Salt Creek Wilderness.

Feral hogs may be taken (no bag limit) from the North Tract only while legally hunting deer and only with the weapon legal for deer on that day.

Falconry hunting is not permitted.

All litter, including spent ammunition casings, must be removed and disposed of properly. Please help us sustain the refuge hunt by removing any litter that you see, even if you did not put it there. Hunts are subject to closure if problems with litter persist.

Hunters are expected to exercise reasonable care when attempting water crossings as unpredictable conditions may exist.

Please only attempt to shoot at game from within a reasonable range. "Sky busting" (shooting out of range) only promotes instances of wounded and lost game and reduces the quality and success of the hunt for everyone.

For Additional Information:

Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge
4200 East Pine Lodge Road
Roswell, NM 88201

575/244-6256

www.fws.gov/refuge/bitter-lake

September 2026

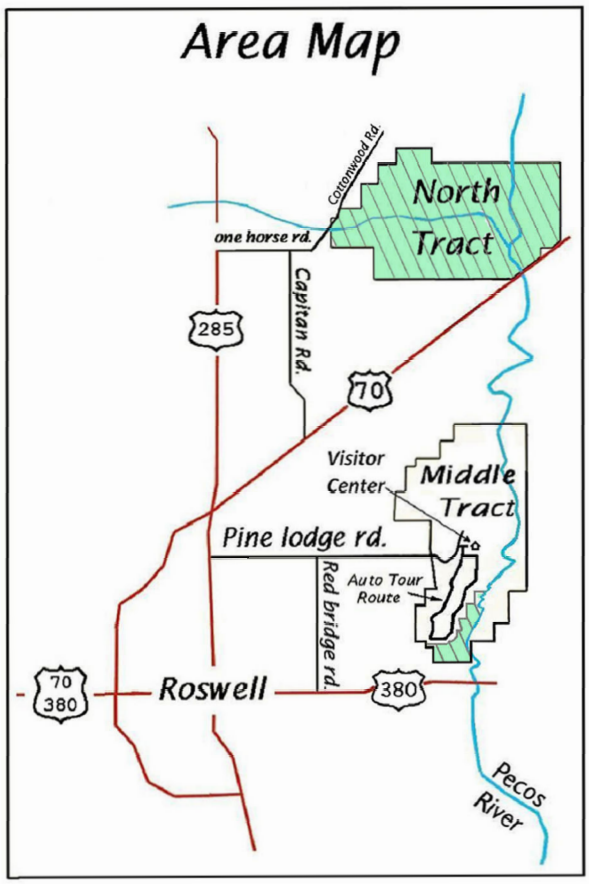
BITTER LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE HUNTING SEASONS – 2026/2027

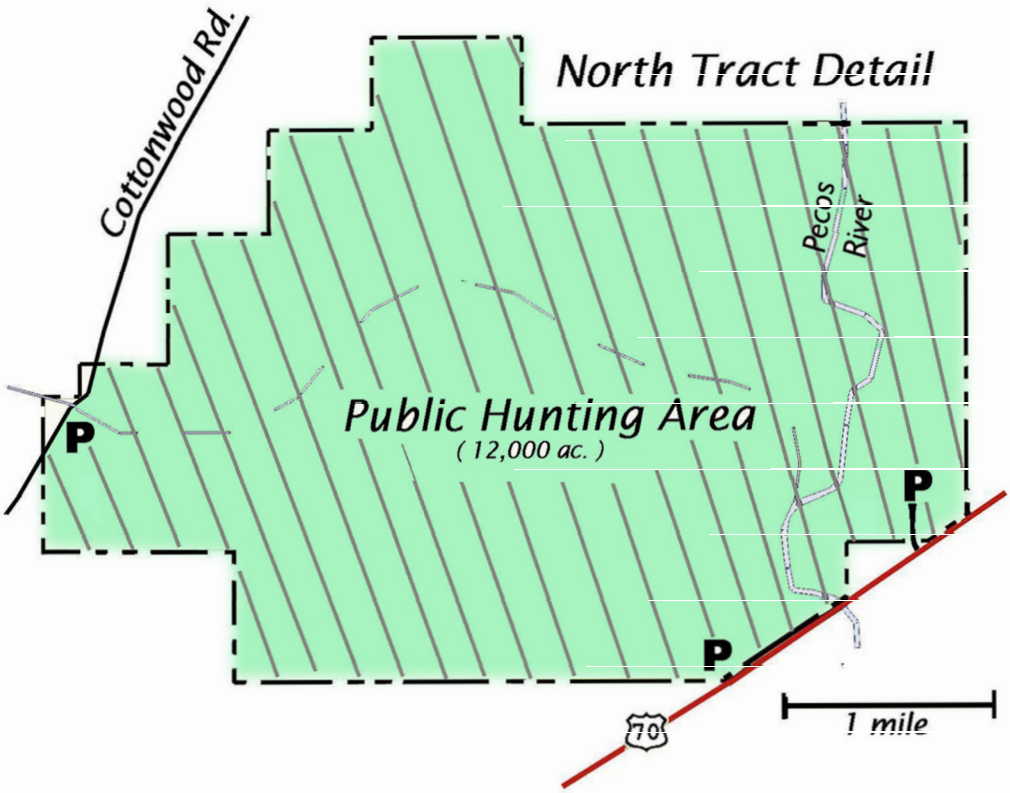
GAME	BAG LIMIT	MIDDLE TRACT SEASON	NORTH TRACT SEASON
DEER **(Hunt Unit 32)**	1 deer possessing an antler which has a definite fork, showing two or more distinct points. A burr at the base does not constitute a point or fork. No antlerless deer may be taken.	Middle Tract closed to deer hunting	ANY LEGAL SPORTING ARM October 31-November 4, 2026 (DER-1-305)` November 14-18, 2026 (DER-1-306) MUZZLELOADER, BOW AND CROSSBOW October 24-28 (DER-3-311) BOW ONLY September 1-24, 2026 (DER-2-309) and January 1–15, 2027 (DER-2-310)
Feral Hog	No Limit	Middle Tract closed to feral hog hunting	Hog(s) may be hunted only while legally hunting deer and only with the weapon legal for deer on that day.
Dove	**15** per day (**45** in possession)	Middle Tract closed to dove hunting	September 1–October 28, 2026 and December 1, 2026– January 1, 2027
Quail	**15** per day (**30** in possession)	Middle Tract closed to quail hunting	November 15, 2026 – February 15, 2027
Rabbit	No Limit	Middle Tract closed to rabbit hunting	November 15, 2026 – February 15, 2027
Pheasant	**3 males** per day (**6** in possession)	December 10 & 13, 2026 Thurs. & Sat. - 1/2 hr. before sunrise to 1:00 p.m.	December 10-13, 2026
Sandhill Crane	**3** per day (**6** in possession)	October 24, 2026 – January 21, 2027 Tues, Thurs, & Sat - 1/2 hr. before sunrise to 1:00 p.m.	October 24, 2026 – January 21, 2027
Dark Geese **(Canada and White-Fronted Geese)**	**5** per day (**15** in possession)	October 17, 2026 – January 31, 2027 Tues, Thurs, & Sat - 1/2 hr. before sunrise to 1:00 p.m.	October 17, 2026 – January 31, 2027
Light Geese **(Snow, Blue-phase Snow, & Ross's Geese)**	**20** per day (60 possession limit)	October 17, 2026 – January 31, 2027 Tues, Thurs, & Sat - 1/2 hr. before sunrise to 1:00 p.m. (No light goose conservation season on refuge)	October 17, 2026 – January 31, 2027 (No light goose conservation order season on refuge)
American Coot	**15** per day (**45** in possession)	October 28, 2026 – January 31, 2027 Tues, Thurs, & Sat - 1/2 hr. before sunrise to 1:00 p.m. (No youth waterfowl season on refuge)	October 28, 2026 – January 31, 2027 (No youth waterfowl season on refuge)
Ducks (Mexican-like ducks are considered part of the mallard bag)	**6** per day total to include no more than 5 mallards (only 2 females), 2 redhead, 3 wood duck, 1 scaup, 2 hooded merganser, 3 pintail, 2 canvasback (possession = 3 times daily)	October 28, 2026 – January 31, 2027 Tues, Thurs, & Sat - 1/2 hr. before sunrise to 1:00 p.m. (No September teal or youth waterfowl season on the Middle Tract)	September 12-20, 2026 (September teal season) (September teal season: 6 singly or in aggregate/18 in possession) October 28, 2026 – January 31, 2027 (No youth waterfowl season on refuge)

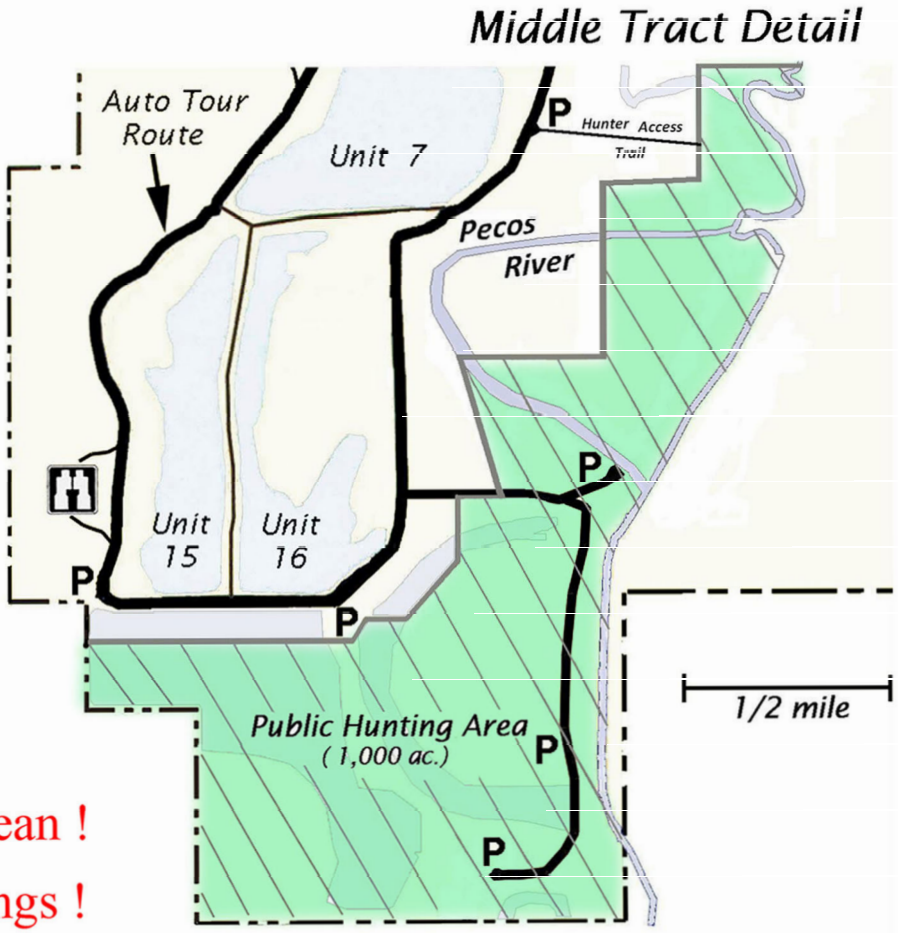
HUNTERS MUST COMPLY WITH ALL FEDERAL AND STATE HUNTING REGULATIONS. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT THE REFUGE AT (575) 625- 244-6256

Bitter Lake
National Wildlife Refuge

PUBLIC HUNTING AREAS







Legend

-- Public Hunting Area

-- Hunter access road

P -- Parking Area

-- Refuge Boundary

Hunters help keep refuge clean !

Please pick up all shell casings !