

PUBLIC NOTICE

Update on Waterfowl Hunting Access and Infrastructure Conditions at Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge

October 22, 2026

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service appreciates the many hunters, volunteers, community members, and partners who have shared concerns regarding current conditions at **Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge**.

Many of the observations we have received reflect challenges that Refuge staff have also identified. Over the past several years, significant storm-related damage has compounded long-standing deferred maintenance needs extending across more than 70 miles of habitat berms and 40 miles of public access roads, trails, and related infrastructure. In some locations, deteriorated conditions or vandalism have required us to implement partial closures to protect public safety.

Certain blind locations are difficult to access or inaccessible because of shallow water conditions, damaged infrastructure, erosion along access routes, and operational constraints associated with the A3W water-control structure. Changing water levels and conditions may affect access throughout the season.

What We Are Doing

We are pursuing both near and long-term solutions to improve conditions and support public access and hunting opportunities at the Refuge within the bounds of policy, safety standards, and available funding.

Emergency Storm Damage Funding: Recent progress includes securing Congressional emergency storm damage funding. The Refuge also initiated agreements with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to assist with emergency near-term and long-term repairs. Planned and ongoing work includes:

- Restoring critical habitat berm integrity;
- Repairing damaged water-control structures;
- Addressing erosion and stability concerns along portions of the Bay Trail; and
- Improving the resilience of Refuge infrastructure affected by severe weather events.

Prioritizing work across 7 Refuges: In previous years, available funding was directed toward projects identified as the highest priorities in previous planning efforts, particularly repairs to managed pond infrastructure. These investments included raising sections of outer berms and replacing critical water-control structures.

Working with Partners and Volunteers: The Refuge has also partnered closely with volunteers to support hunting program facilities. Volunteer efforts have contributed to repairs of several waterfowl blinds, and an additional ADA-accessible blind has been added. We continue to support these efforts through the provision of supplies and equipment. We also appreciate support provided through organizations such as Delta Waterfowl and Ducks Unlimited.

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Next Steps

Looking ahead, Refuge staff will continue to provide updates as engineering designs advance and construction schedules are finalized. We are committed to advancing repairs and maintenance projects as funding becomes available through Congressional appropriations and other authorized funding sources. Additional actions include:

- Continued monitoring of pond water levels and field conditions;
- Evaluating changing site conditions throughout the hunting season; and
- Communicating project milestones and anticipated improvements as information becomes available.

We sincerely appreciate the patience, dedication, and advocacy shown by members of the hunting community and the public. We share the same goal: providing a functional, safe, and sustainable public waterfowl hunting experience while preserving the ecological values that make Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge an important community asset and a vital part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. We deeply value your feedback and your continued involvement in the Refuge.

Thank you for your continued support for the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge.