

News Release



Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex Releases Draft Hunting and Fishing Plan for Public Review for Blackwater and Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuges

Hunting and fishing are traditional uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System. At Blackwater and Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuges (NWR), we welcome people of all backgrounds and abilities to participate in recreational hunting.

Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex is seeking public review and comment on its proposed hunting and fishing plan. The public is invited to review the draft document for our proposed hunts and fishing access, which includes the Draft Hunting and Fishing Plans, Compatibility Determinations and Environmental Assessment.

Blackwater and Eastern Neck NWRs are proposing to allow the use of rifles using straight walled cartridges, allow the take of coyotes incidental to deer hunting, and align with the state bag limits. Both refuges would add a primitive hunt in February following the state season and align the youth deer hunt with the state. At Blackwater only, we propose to add an early teal season as well as add youth, veteran and military waterfowl dates. A “sportsman pass” to purchase all deer hunts with one permit is proposed. At Blackwater, an additional 723 acres will be added for hunting, as well as bank fishing from Key Wallace Drive causeway and ponds for youth and mentored fishing events. The refuges will move towards the reduction and future elimination of lead by proposing the use of non-lead ammunition and fishing tackle over a five-year period, with a complete elimination by 2027. The voluntary use of non-lead ammo and fishing tackle would be encouraged in the interim.

Draft documents are available online at the refuge's official website at <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/blackwater> and <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/eastern-neck>. There will be an open house on June 9th from 4pm-7pm at the Environmental Education building at the beginning of Wildlife Drive at Blackwater NWR. This is an opportunity to discuss the proposed changes and to provide your comments on the draft plans.

The comment period will stay open for no less than 60 days after the publishing of the "2022–2023 Station-Specific Hunting and Sport Fishing Regulations," which will be announced in the Federal Register. If you wish to comment, please note "Chesapeake Marshlands NWRC" in the subject line of an email, and send to HuntFishRuleComments@fws.gov. They may also be mailed to the refuge, provided at the open house, received by phone at 410-221-2034 or emailed to matt_whitbeck@fws.gov.

Across the country, National Wildlife Refuges work closely with state agencies, tribes, and private partners to expand recreational hunting access. Hunting provides opportunities for communities, families, and individuals to enjoy the outdoors, support conservation efforts, and participate in a popular American tradition.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

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