

Updated Hunt Plan for Patuxent Research Refuge - September 15, 2022

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has released a final hunting plan for Patuxent Research Refuge (NWR) in Maryland

A draft plan was issued earlier this spring, and during the 97-day public comment period, 4 comment letters were received from the public. We are grateful to the people who provided meaningful comments on the draft, which helped in developing the final plan.

Some comments reflected an opposition to hunting and fishing in general and in particular on refuge lands. We understand and respect this viewpoint. The legislation which guides how national wildlife refuges across the country are managed not only requires us to consider allowing wildlife observation, hunting, fishing, photography, environmental education, and interpretation, but further directs us to promote these activities when compatible with refuge purposes. Not one of these recreational uses have a priority over another – they are simply different ways people choose to enjoy the refuges and to engage themselves, their families, and their friends in the outdoors.

A summary of all substantive comments, and our responses, can be found in Appendix E (Finding of No Significant Impact). No significant changes have been made between the draft and final versions of the Hunting. As part of next year's proposed rule, Patuxent Research Refuge will propose a non-lead requirement, which will take effect on September 1, 2026. The EA analyzes the impacts of lead ammunition and tackle; based on the breadth of comments received on the plan to require non-lead ammunition and tackle by 2026, the Service intends to complete additional analysis and provide another opportunity to comment during next year's annual rulemaking.

We may begin to implement the Hunting Plan for Patuxent Research Refuge upon publication of the final 2022-2023 Station-Specific Hunting and Sport Fishing Regulations in the Federal Register. The final plan can be viewed [here](#)