

2022-2023 Blackwater NWR Deer Hunt Regulations

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is one of over 565 national wildlife refuges in the United States. The primary objective of a national wildlife refuge is to provide habitat for the conservation and protection of wildlife.

Your hunt permit authorizes you to take deer only. Taking and/or collecting any other wildlife or plants, including shed antlers, is a violation of refuge regulations. The regulations listed on this page supplement the general regulations which govern hunting on national wildlife refuges set forth in [Title 50: Part 32, Code of Federal Regulations](#). Hunting will be in accordance with State regulations and subject to the following conditions and regulations. Failure to abide by any Federal laws, State laws or the terms and conditions under which a hunt permit is issued may result in the revocation of the permit and hunting privileges.

Application Guidelines

- Beginning July 21 : Applications will be available online www.recreation.gov or by phone at (877) 444-6777 through Recreation.Gov.
- We require all hunters to apply for all refuge hunts.
- We require anyone who applies for a hunt permit in Areas U1 and Q2 (areas identified for hunters with a permanent disability) to provide their Federal Interagency Access Pass number. Passes can be obtained at the refuge visitor center or online at <https://store.usgs.gov/pass/access.html>.
- Hunters may apply together (up to a total of four hunters), but only the person completing the purchase will be issued a permit. It is the purchaser's responsibility to make sure the other hunters in the group have a printed copy of the permit. All permits are non-transferable and must be signed by the hunter to be valid.
- Only individuals may purchase the Sportsman's Package. Group members cannot be added.

General Conditions and Regulations

Required Documents:

Hunters are required to possess an electronic or printed copy of a valid Maryland hunting license and all required stamps, an original valid government-issued photo identification (no copies or photos), and a valid hunting permit (signed printed copy) issued by Recreation.gov on their person at all times during refuge hunting and scouting days. The corresponding State stamps are required to participate in the archery and muzzleloader hunts. Hunters hunting from a vehicle must possess a Maryland DNR - issued Universal Disability Pass (formerly a "hunt from vehicle" permit).

Accessing the Refuge

- Only participants who possess an authorized hunt permit will be allowed to enter the hunt areas.
- Hunters may access the refuge up to 3 hours before legal sunrise and must exit the refuge within 3 hours after legal sunset (including parking lots).
- Vehicles may only be operated on designated roads and parking areas indicated on the hunt map.
- Vehicles may not exceed 15 MPH on any refuge road.
- Parking in front of gates or impeding traffic is prohibited; all wheels must be off the roadway.
- We prohibit the use of ATVs, motorized off-road vehicles and amphibious vehicles. (See Hunt Area U1 and Q2 Regulations for ATV use in those areas.)
- Bicycles, including e-bikes, are authorized to access hunting areas; operating bicycles off designated roads and trails is prohibited. See refuge Deer Hunting web page for [more information on e-bikes](#).
- Boats may only be launched from private land or the Route 335 soft launch. During archery and open hunts, areas B1, M1, R, S, T and X may be entered by boat. Boat access is not allowed during limited hunts or into any other hunt areas. Boats must be operated in accordance with Federal and State law.
- We require hunters to notify a refuge representative and receive permission from the refuge manager or designee prior to entering a closed area to retrieve game.
- Hunters may only enter the area assigned to them during the limited hunts. [See the refuge Deer Hunt Map](#).

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Scouting

Scouting will only be permitted from 7:00 am to sunset on September 3-4, October 16, November 27 and December 18, 2022. Scouting is not permitted outside of these dates and times.

Hunt Area U1 and Q2 Regulations

- Hunters with a permanent disability must possess their Federal Interagency Access Pass on their person at all times during refuge hunting and scouting days in addition to any other required documents.
- Hunters with a permanent disability who are permitted to hunt in U1 may have an assistant who must remain within 5 yards while accompanying them. Assistants are not required to maintain sight and normal voice contact while retrieving game.
- Assistants may hunt if they possess a valid hunt permit for that specific day (or group of days) for any hunt area.
- Persons who do not possess a hunt permit who are assisting a hunter with a permanent disability must sign the hunter's permit as the assistant, possess a valid government issued identification and obey all refuge, State and Federal laws and regulations.
- Stands and blinds may be left throughout the hunt season in U1 but cannot impede the flow of traffic.
- All refuge-provided hunt blinds are reserved for hunters with a permanent disability only; however, when a certified disabled hunter and their assistant occupy the same blind, both may take game.
- Assistants must adhere to State blaze orange or daylight fluorescent pink requirements during applicable hunts.
- ATVs are only permitted to be operated by Federal Access Pass holders. When the pass holder is unable to physically do so, the assistant may operate the ATV.
- If hunting from an ATV, hunters are required to also have the U (universal disability) designation on their Maryland State hunting license or a handicap placard and a Maryland Universal Disability Pass (formerly known as a "hunt from vehicle" permit).
- ATVs must only be operated on established roads and/or field edges; amphibious vehicles or Argos are not permitted. Cars and trucks may not be operated in the U1 Area beyond the parking area.
- Parking an ATV on roads or ATV access roads, or impeding other ATVs or vehicles, is prohibited.
- Parking an ATV in front of a gate is prohibited.
- Shooting from, across or down any ATV access road is prohibited.
- A DOT approved helmet and eye protection must be always worn while operating or riding an ATV.
- ATVs may not be operated above 10 MPH on the refuge.
- See the refuge Deer Hunting web page for a [map of Area U1](#).

Hunt Area Q2 Only

- Hunters are required to have the U (universal disability) designation on their MD State hunting license or a handicap placard and a MD Universal Disability Pass (formerly known as a "hunt from vehicle" permit), and a Federal Access Pass.
- At any given time, Area Q2 is limited to five (5) hunters with permanent disabilities.
- Hunters must hunt in assigned areas from either the blind or their vehicle. Hunters may only shoot within the designated shooting lanes.
- Stands and ground hunting are prohibited.
- A sign-in/sign-out board is installed past the entrance gate within Q2 and must be completed every time a hunter enters or exits the area. If a hunter leaves the blind, it cannot be reserved for later use.
- For more information, see the [Area Q2 map and instructions](#) on the refuge's Deer Hunting web page.

Youth Hunt (Nov. 12 and 13)

Hunters 16 years of age or younger may participate in the youth hunt if the individual possesses a valid hunting license or is exempt from Maryland hunting license requirements. Youth must be accompanied in the field by a non-hunting adult/guardian age 21 or older. Only areas B1 and U are open for the youth hunt. Youth hunters and those accompanying them must wear blaze orange or daylight fluorescent pink in accordance with State law.

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Tree Stands, Blinds, and Trail Markers

- We only allow portable or temporary tree stands and blinds while hunting. All stands and blinds must be removed at the end of the hunt day (except for U1).
- We require hunters to mark in plain sight the tree stand or blind with the hunter's Maryland DNR ID number.
- We prohibit hunting from a permanently constructed tree stand or blind.
- We prohibit paint or any other permanent marker to mark trails and the use of tacks, screw-in steps, spikes or other objects that may damage trees.
- We require hunters to remove all marking devices, including flagging or tape, by sunset of the last day of their hunt. **Stands and blinds may not be left overnight (except in U1).** Any stands and/or blinds left in a hunt area will be deemed abandoned property and confiscated.

Other Regulations

- **Hunters must possess a furbearer permit for the incidental take of coyotes.**
- **The use of rifles that fire straight-walled cartridges will be allowed on shotgun hunts.**
- We prohibit the use of rimfire or centerfire rifles (except for rifles that fire straight-walled cartridges) and all handguns including muzzleloading pistols.
- The distribution of or hunting over bait is not permitted.
- Boats, bicycles or any other equipment or property may not be left on the refuge overnight.
- We prohibit leaving deer organs or other deer waste within 50 feet of any trail, road or refuge structure.
- Camping and campfires are not permitted.
- Guiding, outfitting, advertising and/or audio or visual productions for commercial purposes are prohibited.
- Use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.
- Automatic, motion-activated, game or trail cameras are prohibited on the refuge.
- Driving deer is permitted only on designated days.
- Shooting or hunting within 150 yards of any occupied structure is prohibited.
- Shooting from, across, or down any designated refuge road is prohibited. An open gate designates a refuge road.
- All property must be removed at the end of each hunting day.
- Blaze orange or daylight fluorescent pink must be worn in accordance with State law during all shotgun and muzzleloader hunt days. Additionally, archery hunters must wear it on the youth hunt day of Nov. 12.
- Pruning or cutting trees, plants, or use of natural vegetation is prohibited.
- Area U and B1 will be closed to archery during the youth hunts on November 12, 2022.
- No Sunday hunting except the Nov. 13 youth hunt.

Tagging and Checking Regulations

- Hunters must check deer taken on Jan. 21, 2023 as a firearms harvest.
- Deer taken at Blackwater NWR **WILL** count against the Maryland state bag limit.
- ALL deer killed must be field-tagged, recorded and checked in accordance with State regulations under the public land code for Blackwater NWR (**543**).

Report illegal activity or related information to: USFWS Law Enforcement at 410-221-8814.