

Waterfowl Hunting Brochure 2023-2024



Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is part of the Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex. It is one of over 565 NWRs in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The primary objective of the System is to provide habitat for the conservation and protection of wildlife.

The regulations listed below supplement the general regulations which govern hunting on NWRs set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations. Failure to abide by any laws or regulations may result in the revocation of the permit and hunting privileges.

Refuge Regulations

1. We only allow hunters to access hunt sites by boat; the use of air boats, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), or amphibious vehicles of any type (including Argos), is prohibited.
2. Dogs must be controlled while on refuge property when not actively retrieving.
3. Use or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.
4. The removal or cutting of any vegetation on the refuge is prohibited.
5. Use of natural vegetation in any manner is strictly prohibited.
6. All hunt blind materials and decoys must be removed at the end of each hunting day.
7. We require all hunters in a hunt party to only hunt within their assigned hunt unit.
8. Hunters may only use temporary blinds and blind materials.
9. Hunters may not access the refuge before 4am.
10. Commercial guiding is prohibited.

PERMIT LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Each hunter must have the following in his/her possession and display them upon request of any FWS employee or MD Natural Resources Police officer:

1. Valid Maryland State waterfowl hunting license, Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp), and State Waterfowl Stamp.
2. Valid government issued photo identification.
3. Electronic or signed hard copy of the refuge hunt permit.

Legal hunting hours are one half hour before sunrise to 2:00 pm (EST).

PERMIT GUIDELINES

- Reservations are made through the **Recreation.gov** website.
- The maximum hunt party size is four.
- The individual whose name is on the permit must be present in the hunt party on the day of the hunt.
- An individual may only purchase one permit per reservation but can reserve up to two units per week if available.
- The hunter who made the reservation may have an electronic refuge permit on their phone. All additional hunters in the party must print, read, and sign the permit of the hunter who made the reservation.
- The permit will only be valid for that specific unit and day.
- All waterfowl hunt related information must be obtained from the Blackwater NWR website:
www.fws.gov/refuge/Blackwater

Hunting Days:

Wednesdays and Saturdays only.

Early Teal Season

September 16th, 20th, 23rd, 27th, and 30th

1st Split

October 14th, 18th, 21st

2nd Split

November 11th, 15th, 18th, 22nd

3rd Split

December 16th, 20th, 23rd, 27th, 30th
January 3rd, 6th, 10th, 13th, 17th, 20th, 24th, 27th

Youth, Veteran, and Military Waterfowl Hunt Days

Nov. 4th and Feb. 3rd

Hunt Unit Reservation:

Reservations for hunt units open at 10 am EST, the Monday prior to the week of the hunt (see below).

The system will close at 3 pm EST on the last hunt day of that week.

If offered and available, you may select up to two units per week. Each unit selected will be a separate reservation fee of \$6.

Reservation opens through Recreation.gov:

Sept. 4th for Sept. 16th.
Sept. 11th for Sept. 20th and 23rd.
Sept. 18th for Sept. 27th and 30th.

Oct. 2nd for Oct. 14th.
Oct. 9th for Oct. 18th and 21st.

Oct. 30th for Nov. 11th.
Nov. 6th for Nov. 15th and 18th.
Nov. 13th for Nov. 22nd.

Dec. 4th for Dec. 16th.
Dec. 11th for Dec. 20th and 23rd.
Dec. 18th for Dec. 27th and 30th.
Dec. 25th for Jan. 3rd and 6th.
Jan. 1st for Jan. 10th and 13th.
Jan. 8th for Jan. 17th and 20th.
Jan. 15th for Jan. 24th and 27th.

Youth, Veteran, and Military Waterfowl Hunt Days

Oct. 23rd for Nov. 4th
Jan. 22nd for Feb. 3rd

Available hunt units

Blackwater River East
Blackwater River Central
Blackwater River West
Beaverdam Creek East
Beaverdam Creek West
Goose Dam Creek North
Goose Dam Creek South

Spring Island East
Spring Island West
Bishop's Head East
Bishop's Head West

Nanticoke 1
Nanticoke 2
Nanticoke 3
Nanticoke 4
Nanticoke 5
Marshyhope 1
Marshyhope 2

Scout dates are the following Sundays:
Sept. 3rd and 10th, Oct. 1st and 8th, Nov. 5th and 12th

Other than the refuge permit, hunters must meet the **Permit License Requirements** for scouting.

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

ACCESS

Hunt units are only permitted to be accessed by boat. See the website for approved access points for early season hunt units. Hunters are strongly encouraged to scout hunt units on designated scout dates. Scouting may only be done from a boat. Individuals scouting the Goose Dam Creek hunt units will be allowed on land at the Parsons Creek dam only for the purpose of portaging their boat.

In the event that ice, low water, or any other natural events prohibit access to hunt areas, no alternate hunt unit or hunt day will be made available.

ACCESS POINTS

The Blackwater River hunt units are accessed from the refuge car top boat launch on Route 335.

The Beaverdam Creek hunt units are accessed from the east side of Smithville Road near the Smithville Public Boat Launch.

The Goose Dam Creek hunt units are accessed from the southwest side of the Route 16 Bridge at Parsons Creek (please note that boats must be portaged over a small dam to reach the blind locations).

Canoes/kayaks are recommended due to shallow water and tree stumps in the creek. The Nanticoke and Marshyhope units can be accessed with a trailered boat from the Cherry Beach Park boat launch in Sharptown, MD or the public boat launch in Vienna, MD. The Spring Island and Bishop's Head hunt units are Chesapeake Bay island sites and can be accessed with a larger boat from a launch of your choice.