

Merritt Island

National Wildlife Refuge

Waterfowl Hunting Regulations 2016-2017

Welcome to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR/ Refuge) was established in 1963 as an overlay of the John F. Kennedy Space Center. Some areas of the Refuge can be closed by NASA for safety or security purposes. Individuals found inside NASA's "normal" or "expanded" restricted areas are subject to arrest. The Refuge has no control over NASA's closures, therefore refunds for quota permits will not be provided. The tremendous variety of habitats found on the Refuge and its location on the Atlantic Flyway makes the Refuge an important wintering area for migratory birds. Common species include lesser scaup, teal, wigeon, and coots.

Waterfowl hunting is permitted on 36,000 acres of the Refuge. The remainder of the Refuge is closed to hunting to protect non-game birds and endangered species and to permit other recreational activities. The waters of the Banana River are closed to hunting at all times. Concentrations of waterfowl occur in the open waters of Mosquito Lagoon and in the brackish and fresh water impoundments during the fall and winter. Please see map on back for details and color maps are available at www.fws.gov/refuge/Merritt_Island.

Waterfowl-Specific Hunting Regulations

Waterfowl hunting on the Refuge is in accordance with State and Federal Migratory Bird Regulations. Hunters should consult these regulations before going afield. Listed below are Refuge-specific regulations that pertain to Merritt Island NWR for waterfowl hunting. These

regulations may be modified annually or as habitat, populations, or other conditions change. Violation of regulations may result in the loss of hunting privileges. We allow hunting of ducks, mergansers, and coots in designated areas of the Refuge subject to the following conditions:

License and Permits

- Hunters must carry a valid State-issued Merritt Island NWR 'Waterfowl Quota Permit', which can be purchased through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) **while hunting in areas 1 or 4 from the beginning of the regular waterfowl season through January 31.** The Quota Hunt Permit is a limited entry/ quota permit, area-specific, and nontransferable.
- Hunters must possess and carry a current, signed Refuge brochure permit.
- We require an adult, age 18 or older, to supervise hunters age 15 and younger. The adult must remain within sight and normal voice contact of the youth hunter at all times. Three total guests are allowed per permit.
- Hunters must have on their person all applicable Florida hunting licenses and permits and must comply with State requirements for hunter-education courses.
- Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuges must comply with all provisions of Federal, State, and local law. Persons may only discharge firearms in accordance with Refuge regulations.

- Licenses, permits, all hunting equipment and effects such as vehicles and/or other conveyances are subject to inspection by law enforcement officials.

Equipment

- Each hunter may only possess 25 shells during one hunt day which includes both vehicles and boats.
- Only steel shot or other approved non-toxic shot is allowed. Possession of lead or other toxic shot is prohibited.

Scouting

- Boats must remain within the perimeter impoundment ditch and may not be in the interior while scouting.
- Hunters must carry their valid Quota Hunt Permit identifying the permitted hunt area and dates while scouting areas 1 and 4.
- Hunters must be in possession of all required State and Federal licenses, stamps, and permits while scouting.
- Hunters may not possess hunting equipment while scouting such as guns, ammo, decoys, etc.

Harvest

- We allow hunting of ducks, mergansers, and coots in designated areas of the Refuge in accordance with State and Federal Migratory Bird Regulations.
- The use of trained dogs to retrieve is encouraged. However, dogs must remain under owner's control at all times.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 2683
Titusville, FL 32781
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Merritt_Island
321/861 0669 Visitor Center

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD

September 2016

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
Waterfowl Hunt Permit 2016

Name: _____
Print

Address: _____
(I have read and understand all Refuge hunting regulations.)

Signature _____ (This permit is only valid when signed.)

In case of emergency call 321/867 7911



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

- **Hunters must report all hunting activities at one of the two check stations, including both successful and non-successful hunts, prior to leaving the Refuge.**
- Legal shooting hours are ½ hour before legal sunrise until 12 noon. All waterfowl hunters must remove all equipment and must be off the Refuge by 1 pm daily. Permanent blinds are prohibited.
- Hunters may enter the Refuge no earlier than 4 a.m. for the purpose of waterfowl hunting.
- We prohibit hunting or shooting within 25 feet, or shooting from any portion of a dike, dirt road, or railroad grade. In addition we prohibit shooting over any dike or roadway.
- We allow hunting in four designated areas of the Refuge as delineated in the Refuge hunting regulations map.
- The use of internal combustion engines is restricted to the perimeter impoundment ditch at all times, to reduce habitat degradation and damage to the marsh. Vessels may be propelled outside the impoundment perimeter ditches by push-poles, paddles, or electric motors only. Internal combustion engines must be shut off while inside impoundments past the perimeter ditch. Scouting must remain within the impoundment perimeter ditches.
- The Indian River within the Refuge boundary adjacent to hunt areas 1 and 4 is closed to all hunting. Access to all impoundments in areas 1 and 4 is prohibited from the Indian River.
- Two poll & troll zones are delineated with buoys in Mosquito Lagoon (see map). Use of internal combustion engines is prohibited within zones. Outside the designated running lanes, vessels may be propelled by push-poles, paddles, or electric motors only.

Season: 2016-2017

- We allow hunting on Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day; provided they fall within the State's waterfowl season.

Early Teal: September

Split NO HUNT: November 28 -
December 9

Youth Hunt: February

Regular season: Quota Hunts Area 1 & 4: November, December, and January

Regular season: Open Hunts Area 2 & 3: November, December, and January

Limited Entry/Quota Permits Regulated by FWC

To hunt waterfowl in **areas 1 and 4** during the months of **November, December, or January**, you will need to purchase a Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Waterfowl Limited/Quota Permit through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Recreational Licensing Issuance Services System (RLIS).

- Each permit costs \$27.50 and the permit is non-transferable
- You must be 16 years of age to apply
- Each hunter may purchase up to 3 permits per season
- Each permit allows up to 3 guests; (adult is 18 and over) (youth 15 and under)
- Preference points do not apply
- Each permit is area specific and for specific date. See map for details.
- The Refuge has no control over NASA's closures, therefore refunds for quota permits will not be provided
- You must have a picture ID, a Florida Hunting License, a self-issuing Refuge Permit (signed brochure), a Florida Limited/ Quota Permit, and all appropriate state and federal license (youth must have a signed brochure)
- A Florida Wildlife Management Permit is not required

How to Apply

To apply for a Merritt Island NWR permit online go to www.MyFWC.com/hunting, (go "**Apply for Limited Entry/ Quota Permit**") then choose "**Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge**") or complete the application worksheet and present it to a licensed agent or tax collector office. Florida residents applying through the internet must have a valid Florida driver's license or ID card to be considered a resident. Youth, active duty military, resident disabled customers, and residents age 65 or older that do not have an active Florida Driver's license or ID card must apply at a licensed agent or tax collector office to show alternate proof.

When to Apply

Phase I Application: 9/16/2016 –
9/26/2016

Claim Deadline: 10/10/2016

Phase II Leftovers: 10/12/2016 –
until filled

What You Need to Know

- Phase I permits are issued by random drawing
- Remaining permits will be on a first come, first served basis
- To check for availability go to www.MyFWC.com/hunting then go to "Permit Availability"
- Drawing results are typically posted on the FWC website within two weeks after the end of the application period
- If you are successful in the Phase I drawing you may claim your permit online and print from your own printer or claim your permit at a licensed agent or tax collector office
- If lost or stolen you may reprint your permit at no cost from the online website or for \$2.50 from a licensed vendor; or you may download the "FWC Fish/Hunt Florida App" and sync your license to your smart phone
- If you have problems with issuance of your quota permit, please contact FWC at 850/488 3641 (M-F 8 am - 5 pm)

Waterfowl Management Notes

Proper water level and adequate food availability are two very important aspects of waterfowl habitat. To ensure continuing high-quality habitat, marsh restoration projects were initiated. The objective is to enhance the salt marsh ecosystem for many different species in coordination with mosquito control operations. Restoring the marsh areas by reconnecting them to the river will allow for greater species diversity in the impoundments. It will also be a part of the overall management of the Indian River Lagoon System in its entirety.

Short-term inconveniences to waterfowl hunters may be realized in some areas. Lower water levels in various areas on a rotational basis will allow plants (waterfowl food) to grow in the otherwise nutrient-poor mud flats. This will help reestablish a food chain and provide better food supplies to increase the quality of habitat (and hunting) on a long-term basis. The Refuge is dependent on rainfall for fresh water. Therefore, if you see anyone tampering with water control structures please call or contact the Refuge. If you have questions about this project, contact the Refuge Headquarters.

