

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fort Niobrara

*National Wildlife
Refuge*

*Hunting Regulations
2015 – 2016*



Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge

Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is 19,131 acres in size and is located along the Niobrara River in north-central Nebraska. The Refuge is a unique and ecologically important component of the National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 150 million acres and over 560 national wildlife refuges across the United States. Fort Niobrara NWR was established by Executive Order in January, 1912, as a “preserve and breeding ground for native birds.” Its purpose was expanded later that same year to include the preservation of bison and elk herds representative of those that once roamed the Great Plains.

The provisions listed below supplement the general regulations which govern public use on national wildlife refuges as set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations. When permitted, hunting is allowed in accordance with applicable State laws unless otherwise listed.

General Provisions and Access Regulations

By law, recreational activities on national wildlife refuges are prohibited unless expressly permitted.

Hours

Hunting hours on the Refuge are the same as those set in State regulations. Hunters may only access the Refuge 2 hours before legal sunrise until 2 hours after legal sunset.

Access

Motor vehicles are permitted only on public use roads and trails as shown on the map. Hunters must park in the designated parking areas in a manner that will not interfere with the normal flow of traffic.

Closed Areas

All Refuge lands south and east of the Niobrara River are closed to hunting. Hunting is prohibited within 200 yards of any public use facility. All Refuge access is prohibited after dark unless specifically authorized by the Refuge manager.

Gates

Hunters must close any gate they open for access.

Vehicles

Only legally licensed vehicles are allowed on designated Refuge roads.

Weapons

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of State and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32).

Carrying, possessing, or discharging fireworks, or explosives on national wildlife refuges is prohibited. The use or possession of air guns, spears, gigs, or other weapons on national wildlife refuges is prohibited.

Alcohol

Possession of alcoholic beverages on Fort Niobrara NWR is prohibited.

Camping and Fires

Camping and fires are both prohibited on the Refuge.

Refuge and Cultural Resources

All government property, including natural items such as antlers, bison skulls, plants, historic, and archaeological features, are protected by Federal law. Searching for or removal of objects of antiquity or other value is strictly prohibited.

Monitoring Devices

The use of electronic or photographic trail monitoring devices is prohibited.

Accessibility

Most Refuge areas are accessible to persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are encouraged to participate in Refuge hunts and other activities. Contact the Refuge manager for guidelines to obtain special use access.

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. Dial 711 for a free connection to the State relay service for TTY and voice calls to and from the speech and hearing impaired. For more information or to address accessibility needs, please contact the Refuge staff at 402 / 376 3789, or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Specific Hunting Regulations

Species

Only deer may be hunted on Fort Niobrara NWR.

State of Nebraska Regulations

State hunting and fishing regulations, seasons, bag limits, and license requirements apply to all hunting on the Refuge. Additional refuge-specific regulations are outlined in this brochure.

Refuge Specific Regulations

Hunters may only harvest a maximum of one deer of either sex and one antlerless whitetail.

Weapons

Only archery and muzzleloader equipment allowed by Nebraska hunt regulations may be used. Hunting deer on the Refuge with firearms capable of firing cartridge ammunition is strictly prohibited.

Deer Season Dates

No hunting, by any weapon, is allowed on Fort Niobrara NWR during the Nebraska November Firearm Deer Season. All other Nebraska deer seasons and permits valid for this area are authorized.

Game Retrieval

In addition to meeting Nebraska statewide harvested game retrieval requirements and Refuge-specific access regulations, game carts or any other wheeled device used for retrieving game on the Wilderness Area portion of the Refuge that is opened for hunting is prohibited. Harvested deer on the Wilderness Area portion of the Refuge must be packed out by hand or by horse.

Harvest Reporting

In addition to meeting statewide harvest requirements, **hunters must complete a Big Game Harvest Report (FWS Form 3-2359), and return it to the Refuge by February 15.**

Access

Hunters must park in designated parking areas, as identified on the map below, to access the Refuge for hunting. Access to the Refuge from private property is prohibited. Hunters may only access the Refuge 2 hours before legal sunrise until 2 hours after legal sunset. Overnight camping and parking is prohibited on the Refuge.

Horses

Horses are allowed within the hunt area of the Refuge. Persons using horses on the Refuge must register at the Refuge headquarters prior to using horses during the hunting season. Only hunters are permitted to use horses outside of the Wilderness portion of the hunt area. Horse access to the Wilderness Area is only permitted via the Refuge corrals and the Bison Bridge. Horse trailers may only be parked at the three designated horse trailer parking access areas identified on the map. Horse use is limited to three groups at a time and no more than five horses per group. Horse use is prohibited from 2 hours after legal sunset until 2 hours before legal sunrise.

Tree Stands

We prohibit permanent tree stands, nails, screw-in steps, or other items that penetrate the outer bark of a tree. We prohibit tree stands and ground blinds from being left in the same location for more than 7 consecutive days. We require hunters to clearly label unattended tree stands, elevated platforms, and ground blinds with the hunter's name and address or hunting license number so it is legible from the ground. Tree stands, elevated platforms, and ground blinds may be put up no earlier than the opening day of deer season and must be removed by the last day of deer season.

Tree Marking

Marking any tree or other Refuge feature with reflectors, paint, or other substance is strictly prohibited. Flagging is prohibited.

Boats

The Refuge allows canoes, kayaks, and float tubes capable of carrying no more than four people on the Niobrara River below Cornell Dam. Boats, canoes, kayaks, etc. are prohibited upstream of Cornell Dam.

Safety

At any time, hunters may encounter bison. Bison can behave in an unpredictable manner, and hunters should use caution when in close proximity to these animals.

Ft. Niobrara

National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge boundary

Public road

Wildlife drive

Wilderness access route

Wilderness open to hunting

Open to hunting

Closed to hunting

Headquarters and visitor center

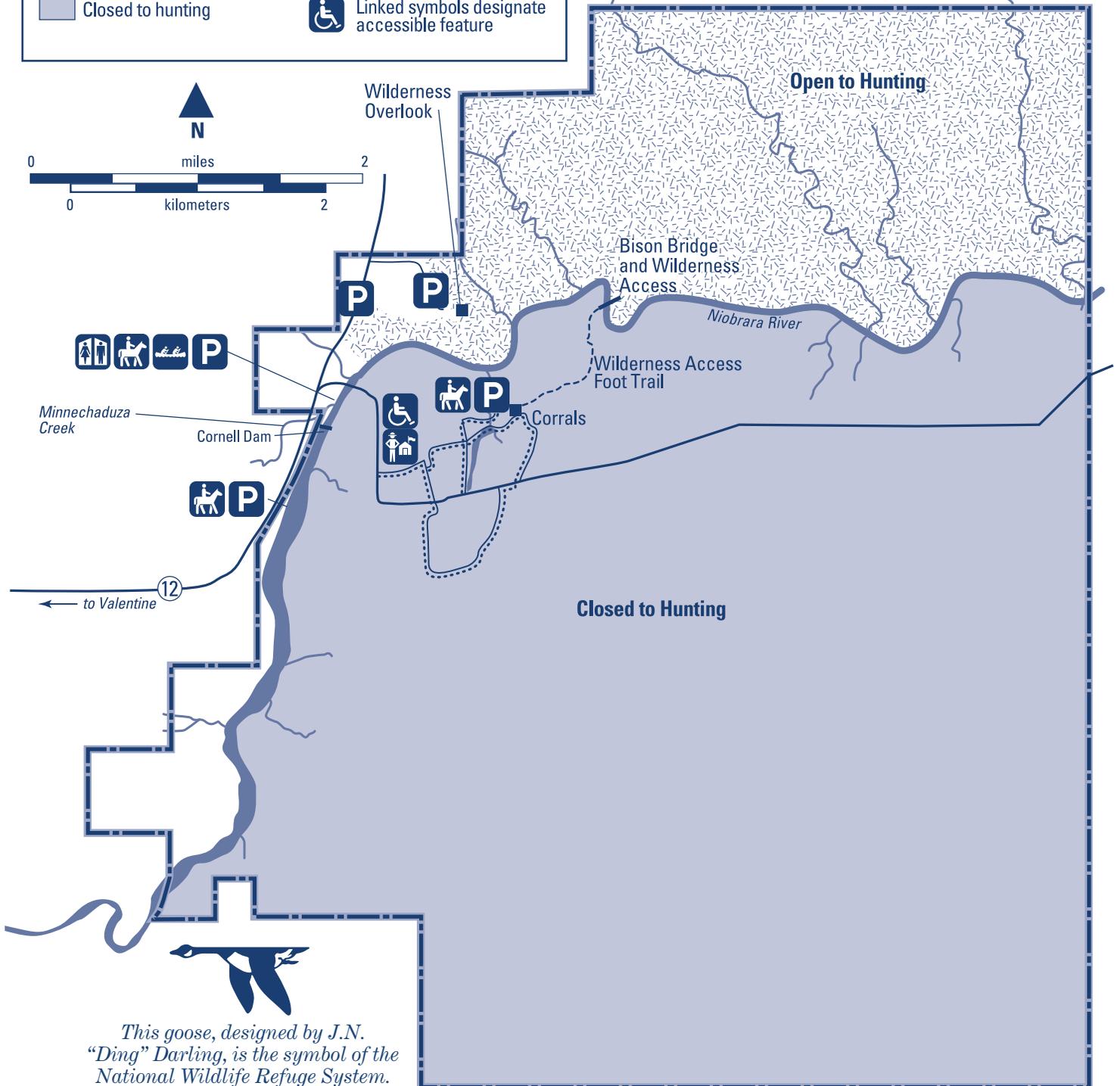
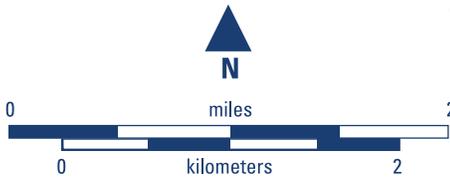
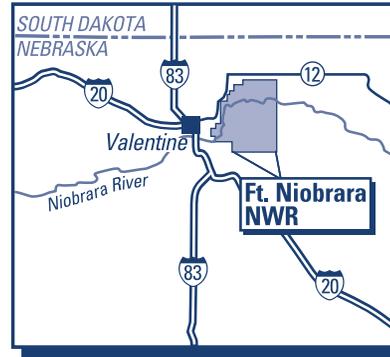
Restroom

Hunter parking and access

Foot trail and horseback access

Fort Niobrara launch area (recreation fee station)

Linked symbols designate accessible feature



This goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Signs and Boundaries

Signs are useful tools in regulating the use of a public area. The wording of the sign applies to the area located behind the sign, except for parking signs. Please respect the following signs:



Refuge Boundary
Entry permitted in accordance with
Refuge regulations.



Closed Area
All entry prohibited.



No Hunting Zone
Hunting, weapons, and game retrieval
prohibited.



No Vehicles
All vehicle traffic prohibited.



Parking Area
Designated areas to park vehicles while
hunting.

Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge
39983 Refuge Road
Valentine, NE 69201
402 / 376 3789
fortniobrara@fws.gov
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/fort_niobrara

For State relay service
TTY / Voice: 711

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

For Refuge Information
1 800 / 344 WILD

July 2015

