

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
2700 Suwannee Canal Road
Folkston, GA 31537
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<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee>

News Release



For Immediate Release

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Supervisory Refuge Ranger

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Announces Hunt Dates and Regulations for 2016/2017 Season

Folkston, GA...Okefenokee is one of many national wildlife refuges in the United States that offer hunting opportunities to the visiting public. The primary objective of a national wildlife refuge is to provide habitat for the conservation and protection of all species of wildlife. Certain times of the year public hunting on the Okefenokee NWR is permitted in three areas: the Suwannee Canal Recreation Area, the Pocket, and the Cowhouse Unit. All hunters must possess all applicable Georgia hunting licenses in accordance with state regulations. Hunters may view the new 2016/2017 hunt brochure (available online at www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee) for specific hunt information.

Suwannee Canal Recreation Area Lottery Quota Hunt

Due to hunter feedback and support from refuge staff, changes will go into immediate effect for the 2016 Suwannee Canal Recreation Area Quota Hunt. Permits will be issued via **lottery draw**. A total of 30 permits will be awarded for the hunt, 10 of which will be reserved for **mobility-impaired hunters** (i.e. confined to a wheelchair) and/or **youth hunters** (ages 16 and under) in which youth must be supervised by an adult 21 or older. A hunter education certificate is required for youth hunters. Each mobility-impaired/youth hunter drawn for Chesser Island can have one escort to assist with their hunt. The escorts of these individuals are authorized to hunt under the same permit.

Hunts are scheduled for two half-days: **Friday, October 28 and Saturday, October 29, 2016**, from 5:00 a.m. until noon. The hunt is for deer (either sex, limit 2 per day) and feral hogs (either sex, no limit). No dogs allowed. Hunters are required to use shotgun with slugs or muzzleloaders only. Use of buckshot is prohibited. Deer taken do not count against the state limit and a special refuge tag will be provided upon check-out for each deer taken.

Lottery applications will be accepted from August 15 to September 15. Lottery applications can be found here (<http://www.fws.gov/forms/3-2354.pdf>). Applications should be submitted as follows:

In person: Richard S. Bolt Visitor Center (check refuge website for hours of operation)
Mail: Attn: Okefenokee Hunt Program 2700 Suwannee Canal Road Folkston, GA 31537

A lottery drawing will be held for each day of the hunt. If you are available and interested in hunting on both days, you **MUST** indicate that on your submitted lottery form. Only one lottery form needs to be submitted per person. Each hunter drawn for the lottery hunt must purchase a SCRA hunt permit the morning of the hunt. Permits are \$15/hunter (cash or check). Your SCRA hunt permit serves as your general entrance permit the days of the hunt; the refuge-specific annual pass DOES NOT serve as your hunt permit.

Check-in commences at 5:00 a.m. each day of the hunt at the Okefenokee Shop Area. Follow signs from entrance road to sign-in area. Hunters may line up for check-in no earlier than 4:00 a.m. and vehicles may not be left unattended.

The Pocket Hunt

This free hunt for **archery only** will take place at the Pocket Unit near Fargo September 10–October 14, 2016 in accordance with State regulations. All hunters must **sign in and out** at the west entrance kiosk and possess a refuge entrance pass. All stands must be removed daily. Park private vehicles on the shoulder of the road and do not block access roads or ditches. Walk into the hunt area; ATV's and dogs are prohibited. Contact Stephen C. Foster State Park at (912) 637-5274 for early exit to hunt area if you are staying in the park overnight.

Cowhouse Unit Hunt

In cooperation with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Cowhouse Island is managed for deer, feral hog, small game, and turkey. Hunters on this portion of the refuge are limited to foot and bicycle traffic only. No dogs allowed except for hunting quail. Sign-in and check-in at Dixon Memorial WMA. Regulations and information may be obtained by calling (229) 426-5267 or at <http://www.gohuntgeorgia.com> and <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee>. Hunt dates are as follows:

Deer and Feral Hog

Archery (Either Sex)

September 10- October 3, October 9-11, October 16-20, Sign-in.

Primitive Weapons (Either sex)

October 5 - 8, Check-in. October 13-15, Sign-in.

Firearms (Buck only)

October 22-23, October 29- November 1, Sign-in.

Firearms (Either Sex)

November 10-12, Check-in. November 23-27, Sign-in.

Small Game (Quail, Rabbit, & Squirrel Only)

Firearms (See State Regulations)

August 15- October 3; October 9 - November 8, November 13- February 28. Pointing dogs allowed for quail hunting only. No furbearer season. Feral hogs may be taken during small game dates after October 31. Sign-in at Dixon Memorial WMA and at refuge Cowhouse kiosk if on refuge property.

Turkey

Firearms (Shotgun)

March 25- May 15, 2017

In accordance with Dixon Memorial WMA regulations. Sign-in at Dixon Memorial WMA and at refuge Cowhouse kiosk if on refuge property.

More information is available in the hunt brochure found on the refuge website at www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee, or at the Richard S. Bolt Visitor Center, located off Hwy. 121/23 near Folkston, GA by calling (912) 496-7836 between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Tuesday – Saturday or daily after September 1.

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The Suwannee Canal Recreation Area (East Entrance) to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is the primary entrance managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is located 11 miles southwest of Folkston, GA off Hwy 121/23. Entrance fees are \$5 per vehicle/\$1 per bicycle for a daily pass (good for 7 days). Annual passes are also available. The refuge is open daily and offers a variety of opportunities for the visiting public. Call 912-496-7836 or visit the refuge website at www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee for hours of operation, upcoming events, and entrance fee information.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to providing access to our events for all participants. Persons needing reasonable accommodations in order to attend and participate in our events should contact Susan Heisey at (912) 496-7366 ext. 233 or Susan_Heisey@fws.gov. In order to allow sufficient time to process requests, please contact us for assistance at least five business days before the event.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook pages at www.facebook.com/okefenokeewildliferefuge or www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast