

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge
2018-2019 Proposed Hunting Expansion
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is the Refuge proposing to open additional acres to hunting opportunities?

[Hunting](#) is one of six priority wildlife-dependent public uses of the [National Wildlife Refuge System](#) in accordance with the [National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997](#), which includes Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (Refuge).

Hunting has been available on the Refuge for decades and is a popular wildlife-dependent recreational activity. However, for over 20 years, the units open to hunting on the Refuge have totaled approximately 17,000 acres (about 22% of Refuge land). During this time, the total Refuge acreage has increased to over 77,000 acres without opening additional hunting areas.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is currently assessing all of our hunting regulations and opportunities nationwide, which includes this Refuge, as part of our efforts to support and expand hunting and fishing opportunities in accordance with [Secretarial Order 3356](#). The proposed expansion of hunting access and opportunities on the Refuge supports objectives outlined in Secretarial Order 3356, which focuses on “efforts to enhance conservation stewardship; increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans, including opportunities to hunt and fish; and improve the management of game species and their habitats for this generation and beyond.” Secretarial Order 3356 also emphasizes recruiting and retaining hunters, and engaging non-traditional audiences in [America’s hunting tradition](#).

Q: What species would be available for hunting in the new hunting areas?

The new hunting areas proposed would be open to waterfowl and pheasant hunting and would align with State regulations for these species.

Q: How would increased hunting affect native species and migratory birds on the Refuge?

At least 60% of the refuge would remain closed to hunting, with current core rest areas being maintained. These core rest areas are managed primarily for migratory birds and they are used by other native wildlife species as well.

Q: When would these proposed changes take effect?

Following the public comment period, the Service will analyze comments received, publish a final Environmental Assessment (EA), and make a final determination about the proposed

hunting expansion. The Service aims to open these proposed new hunting areas in time for the 2018-2019 hunting season.

Q: How many acres on the Refuge are currently available to hunting?

Units open to hunting on the Refuge currently total approximately 17,000 acres (about 22% of Refuge land).

Q: How many acres on the Refuge would be available to hunting with the proposed changes?

The proposed expansion of over 13,000 additional acres of land for hunting on the Refuge would bring the total acreage available for hunting to about 30,000 acres. The additional areas proposed for hunting expansion would result in a total of up to 40% of the Refuge's acreage being open to migratory bird hunting in the future. By law, at least 60% of the Refuge's lands must "be maintained as an inviolate sanctuary for such migratory birds" (Section 690d of the refuge's enabling legislation [16 U.S. Code §690-690h]).

Q: How would other wildlife-dependent recreational activities be affected by the increased hunting acreage?

The Refuge would maintain opportunities for other forms of wildlife-dependent recreation and continue providing healthy habitat for native and migratory wildlife. Under the proposed changes, 60% of Refuge lands would be managed for uses other than hunting. These areas would continue to support, where compatible, opportunities for fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

Q: Why is hunting allowed on national wildlife refuges?

[Hunting](#) is one of six priority wildlife-dependent public uses of the [National Wildlife Refuge System](#) in accordance with the [National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997](#). Other wildlife-dependent public uses include fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation. Each of these activities are permitted when determined to be compatible with refuge management goals and are recognized as legitimate and appropriate public uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System, which includes Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.

Hunting is an American tradition and a key component of the [North American Model of Wildlife Conservation](#). Hunters have been and continue to be [ardent conservationists](#) who support native wildlife and habitats in a variety of ways, such as through [Federal Duck Stamp](#) purchases.