



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

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

September 2016



Merritt Island

National Wildlife Refuge Big Game Hunting Regulations 2016-2017



Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Big Game Hunt Permit 2016

Name: _____
Print

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

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

1 In case of emergency call 321/867 7911



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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 hunt area lies within Volusia and Brevard Counties in Florida. The Refuge will provide two, archery only, hunts for white-tailed deer and feral hog which allow 30 limited/quota permitted hunters to hunt all three days of the permitted weekend.

The hunt area includes 5,000 acres of upland habitat along SR3, north of Haulover Canal between the Indian River Lagoon and Mosquito Lagoon. The remainder of the Refuge is closed to protect endangered species and to permit other recreational activities. There are five zones named:

- (1) Shiloh
- (2) Gomez Grant Line
- (3) WSEG
- (4) Pine Flatwoods and
- (5) Beacon 42

The hunt zones provide a variety of habitats suited for white-tailed deer and feral hogs. Pine Flatwoods hiking trail and WSEG boat ramp will be closed to all public use during hunt except permitted hunters. Please see map on back for details and color maps are available at www.fws.gov/refuge/Merritt_Island.

Big Game Hunting-Specific Regulations

Big game hunting on the Refuge is allowed in accordance with State and Federal Regulations. Hunters should consult these regulations before going afield. Listed below are Refuge-specific regulations that pertain to Merritt Island NWR for Big Game 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 the hunting of white-tailed deer and feral hog in designated zones on the Refuge subject to the following conditions:

License and Permits

- Hunters must carry a valid State-issued Merritt Island NWR 'Big Game Quota Hunt Permit', which can be purchased through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The Quota Hunt Permit is a limited entry/quota permit, zone-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. Youth hunters are the only guests allowed.

- Hunters must have on their persons all applicable Florida hunting licenses and permits and must comply with State requirements for hunter-education courses.

- Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on a National Wildlife Refuge 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

- Crossbows are not allowed unless you obtain a "Persons with Disabilities Crossbow Permit" from FWC.

- Archery hunters must wear at least 500 square inches of solid fluorescent-orange color while moving to and from their vehicles, to their stands or hunting spots, and while tracking or dragging out game.

Scouting

- We prohibit all scouting in the hunt area during the quota hunt.

- We allow permitted hunters to scout within their permitted zones up to 7 days prior to their permitted hunts.

- Hunters must carry their valid Quota Hunt Permit identifying the permitted hunt zone and dates while scouting. In addition, hunters must be in possession of all required State and Federal licenses and permits while scouting.

- Hunters may not possess any hunting equipment while scouting such as bows, stands, scents, etc.

Harvest

- The bag limit and antler requirements for white-tailed deer on the Refuge will follow State regulations but will not exceed two deer per permitted hunt. It is illegal to take spotted fawns.

- Antlered and antlerless deer are defined per State regulations.

- There is no bag limit or size limit for the take of feral hogs.

- Legal shooting hours are ½ hour before legal sunrise to ½ hour after legal sunset.

- We allow parking for scouting or hunting along SR 3 in a manner that does not block any road or firebreak. Parking and driving is not allowed beyond 'Area Closed' signs or within the hunt areas.

- We prohibit hunting from Refuge roads that separate units, within 100 yards of roads open to public vehicle traffic, or within 200 yards of a building or KSC facility.

- Hunters may access the Refuge no earlier than 5 am for the purpose of big game hunting and must leave the Refuge no later than two hours after legal sunset. However, hunters must be at their vehicle within one hour after legal shooting time. To track wounded game beyond one hour after legal sunset, hunters must gain consent from a Federal Wildlife Officer.

- If flagging or other trail-marking material is used, you must print your name on each piece or marker. Flagging and trail markers may be set up to two days prior to the permitted hunt and must remove all of them by the end of the last day of the permitted hunt.

- Hunters may set up stands or blinds up to two days prior to the permitted hunt and must remove them on the last day of the permitted hunt. Hunters must clearly mark stands and blinds with their name and address. Hunters may have no more than one stand or blind per person on the Refuge at any time. Stands or blinds for youth hunters must be placed within sight and normal voice contact of the supervisory hunter's stand and marked with the supervisory hunter's name and address and the word "YOUTH."

- Hunters must be on their stand or in their blind while hunting. Stalking or moving through the hunt area while hunting is prohibited.

- Hunters may field dress game; however, we prohibit cleaning game within 1,000 feet of any public area, road, game-check station, or gate. Dumping game carcasses on the Refuge is prohibited.

- We prohibit hunting with dogs; however, we are allowing the limited use of trained tracking dogs but only with prior authorization by a Federal Wildlife Officer. Federal Wildlife Officers may be contacted through the deer check stations. Dogs must remain on a leash and be equipped with a GPS tracking device. This regulation is under a trial period for this season only and may not remain available if improperly used.

- **Hunters must report all hunting activities at one of the two Refuge check stations, including both successful and non-successful hunts, prior to leaving the Refuge.** The check station areas will have a self-checkout box with instructions if Refuge staff is not present.

Season: 2016

- We allow hunting as a quota permitted 3-day weekend hunt within the State's deer season.

October (7, 8, 9)

December (2, 3, 4)

Limited Entry/Quota Permits- Regulated by FWC

To hunt white-tailed deer or feral hogs in **October or December**, you will need to purchase a Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Archery 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 one permit per season

- Each permit allows the hunter (adult is 18 and over) plus one youth guest hunter (youth is 15 and under)

- Preference points do apply

- Each permit is zone specific and for specific dates. 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 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: 5/15/2016 – 6/15/2016

Claim Deadline: 7/19/2016

Phase II Leftovers: 7/21/2016 – 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 2 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)

Big Game Management Notes

The Refuge conducted the first annual Big Game Archery Hunt in October 2015. Over 900 applicants applied for the thirty available quota permits. The hunt was held on over 5,000 acres that was divided into five zones. The size of the zone dictated the number of permits. A total of 11 white-tailed deer and 4 hogs were harvested during the hunt. Bucks averaged 118 lbs. and antlerless deer averaged 92 lbs. The State average for this region is 125 lbs. and 95 lbs. respectively. All hunters saw deer or hogs during their hunt and all five zones were successful. Due to the success of the archery hunt, we added an additional hunt for the 2016 season. Each quota permit will continue to allow one youth under 16 years of age (the only authorized guest hunter) to accompany the permit holder and the hunt will continue to be archery only.