FAQ'S SHEET FOR BIG OAKS NWR DEER HUNT

How do I apply for the Big Oaks NWR hunt?

Register for the hunts through the DNR website (www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild) as detailed on the website and in the Indiana Hunting and Trapping Guide. Occasionally, additional opportunities are possible by participating in 'no-show' drawing each morning of every hunt day at 7:00 AM (8 Oct-5 Nov) or 6:00 AM (6 Nov- 20 Nov) to fill empty slots. These are available for every hunt except for the Youth Hunt.

Are there any new regulations for the hunting season?

Archery Hunters who have a valid fall turkey license can also harvest 1 turkey during their hunt (the turkey counts toward their state bag limit). You may use the State Firearm Season License only during the State Gun Season to harvest a buck; military/refuge licenses may be used to take deer of either sex on the special hunt area. Bonus Antlerless licenses can also be used to harvest antlerless deer on Big Oaks NWR. All legal state of Indiana permitted firearms and handguns for deer hunting on public land will be allowed as legal weapons during the gun hunt. **The new high powered rifle rules for Indiana only apply to private land, no high powered rifles will be allowed at Big Oaks NWR in 2016.** All hunters must possess and carry a compass to hunt on the refuge. Also license restrictions have changed to encourage hunters to harvest does (see below). All reservations for state drawn hunts must be made by phone (no more reservations can be made in-person at the refuge office) by hunters selected via the drawing. Hunters can use 2 military/refuge licenses per hunt day. This will allow hunters to have more flexibility on what licenses are used during hunts at Big Oaks NWR. Military/refuge licenses can be used for both archery and firearms hunts (used for either an archery hunt or a firearms hunt).

Where do I check my deer in upon harvest?

Big Oaks NWR has its own check station. You must check your deer in at the refuge office (Building 125). Do not check-in your deer with your cell phone or computer; we will do that for you.

How is a primitive muzzleloader defined for this year's Hunt?

(a) Fire black powder or black powder substitute.
(b) Have a traditional, external side-hammer design.
(c) Be capable of being loaded only from the muzzle.
(d) Have a caliber of at least .45.
(e) Be loaded with a bullet at least four hundred forty-thousandths (.440) of an inch diameter.
(f) Have an ignition system that is flintlock or caplock.
(g) Use a lead round ball or lead conical bullet without plastic or other sabot.
(h) Have traditional-style open sights (fixed or adjustable v-notched rear sight, buckhorn rear sight, metallic rear peep sight, and post or blade front sight).
(i) Not have telescopic or other sights that incorporate glass or electronics.
(j) Hunters also can use archery equipment, but must wear hunter orange during this 2-day hunt.

How many deer can I harvest and of what sex?

There will be a limit of 2 bucks/hunter with the harvest and check-in of an antlerless deer for each type of hunt (2 for archery and 2 for gun). Without the check-in of an antlerless deer, the limit is 1 buck/hunter with all archery licenses and 1 buck/hunter with all firearm licenses (which includes the primitive muzzleloader hunt). Hunters can continue to harvest antlerless deer if they have a valid military/refuge license or Bonus Antlerless License.

What licenses are available to me to use during the Big Oaks NWR deer hunt?

Archery licenses include: Regular archery, Extra archery, Crossbow, Bonus Antlerless, and Military/Refuge Licenses. Gun licenses include: Regular Gun, Bonus Antlerless, and Military/Refuge Licenses. The Regular Firearm License can only be used during the State Firearm Season. The buck tag included in a Bundled License can only be used during the State Archery or Firearm Season (using the appropriate equipment) as well.

I have a lifetime (or youth) hunting license; do I need to buy a military/refuge license to hunt at Big Oaks NWR?

No, military/refuge licenses are included in lifetime and youth licenses. The ability to use a military/refuge license is dependent on being selected to hunt at the refuge thru a lottery drawing or being a partner of someone selected (this gives you permission to use 2 military/refuge licenses per hunt day).

Can I buy my hunting license at Big Oaks?

No. You must purchase your hunting license at a business that sells hunting licenses.

What refuge permits must I have to hunt on Big Oaks?

You must have in your possession the Big Oaks NWR hunting permit. Hunt Permit **fees ($20) are only waived for those 15 or under; Hunt Permits will be $10 for holders of the Senior Pass (available at the refuge for $10 for those 62 or older) or holders of the Access Pass (for those permanently disabled).** Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps and Annual Permits no longer waive Hunt Permit fees.

If you purchased a Refuge Hunting Permit for turkey/squirrel hunting, it can be used for deer hunting.

Do I need hunter safety verification prior to hunting Big Oaks NWR?

State regulations apply at Big Oaks NWR; those hunters born after December 31, 1986 will need hunter safety verification. An exception to this rule will be for those hunters who possess an Indiana "Apprentice License," which is to encourage new hunters to learn about the sport.

Is a partner mandatory when hunting at Big Oaks NWR? Can my son/daughter be my hunting partner at Big Oaks NWR?

Yes. All hunters are required to have a partner. If you are a selected hunter you may invite a different partner each day of your hunt. Those persons born after December 31, 1986 will have needed to complete a hunter safety education course and show verification of the course completion prior to hunting Big Oaks (see above for the exception for Apprentice License Holders). Those persons born before December 31, 1986 do not have to show proof of completing the hunter education course.

How do I reserve my area to hunt? When can I view the required safety video before hunting on Big Oaks NWR?

Areas may be reserved by calling on the day and time specified in your information packet available online on the DNR website. If you miss your call-in day, you may call in a later date or sign up for an area the morning of your hunt. The day before your hunt and on Public Use Days (Mondays, Fridays, and the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month except when those days are a Federal Holiday) beginning on October 2nd, safety briefings will be held at 7:00 AM, 12:00 noon, and 3:00 PM and $20/hunting Permits for Big Oaks NWR will be sold. The video can also be viewed on hunt days at 5:30AM (8 Oct-5 Nov) and 4:30AM (6 Nov- 20 Nov). Be sure to check if the refuge is closed due to a federal holiday (October 10 and November 11 are federal holidays).

What are refuge hours during the hunt at Big Oaks NWR?

Big Oaks refuge office hours are from 5:30AM to 8:00PM during the 8 Oct-5 Nov hunts (and the youth hunt) and 4:30AM to 7:00PM during the 6 Nov- 20 Nov hunts. The office opens at 530AM (8 Oct-5 Nov)/ 4:30 AM (6 Nov- 20 Nov) to begin checking hunters in until 7:00AM (8 Oct-5 Nov)/6:00AM (6 Nov- 20 Nov). If you do not show by 7:00AM (8 Oct-5 Nov)/6:00AM (6 Nov- 20 Nov) your hunting slot will be given away during the 'no-show' drawing. Hunters must check out no later than 8:00PM (8 Oct-5 Nov)/7:00PM (6 Nov- 20 Nov). Hunting privileges may be revoked upon discretion of the refuge manager if you are late checking out. Legal shooting times are as designated by the state.

What areas can I hunt?

Numbered areas indicated on the refuge map are all available to hunt. However, you may only hunt your assigned area the day of the hunt. Closed areas are strictly off limits and if you are found hunting a closed area you will banned from hunting Big Oaks. Air National Guard Flights could cause cancellation of hunting in areas within the safety fan of Jefferson Range.

Can I leave my deer stand up overnight?

If you are hunting your assigned area again the next day, you may leave your stand out overnight.

Can I scout my hunting area?

The only areas open prior to hunting seasons are those areas in the day-use portion of the refuge (see refuge map). Day-use areas may be accessed on public use days.

Can I drive around the refuge during my hunt day and scout other areas?

No. You are only permitted to drive to your assigned hunting area during the day of your hunt, and then return to the office.

Where do I enter and exit the refuge for hunting?

After checking in at the office, hunters may enter/exit the refuge using the east and west perimeter road gates. However, west gate hours are 5:30am-8:00am and 6:30pm-8:00pm (8 Oct-5 Nov) and 4:30am-7:00am and 5:30pm-7:00pm (6 Nov- 20 Nov). If you must leave the refuge outside of these time periods you must use the east gate. The east gate is open all day (5:30am-8:00pm, 8 Oct-5 Nov/4:30am-7:00PM, 6 Nov- 20 Nov).

Where may I park my vehicle while hunting?

There is limited designated parking near some hunt areas. You may pull off to the side of the road (be careful to not get stuck) and allow enough room for traffic to pass. If you get stuck, we will give you a phone number to contact a towing company; we do not pull vehicles out or tow them. Please do not block gates.

Can I use my cell phone or walkie-talkie when hunting?

Yes. But please be aware of your surroundings when using any electrical device that could potentially set off nearby unexploded ordnance.

May I leave the refuge during my day of hunting for lunch or to take deer to the processor?

You may leave the refuge during your day of hunting, but you will have to exit leaving the East gate. You must first check in your deer and then check out at the refuge office before leaving the property and check back in at the office before reentering the refuge. All deer must be checked out at the deer check station at the office.

Are there regulations specific to hunting on Big Oaks NWR?

Yes. A copy of Big Oaks NWR rules and regulations is required to be read and understood when signing off on the Acknowledgment of Danger form.

What weapons are allowed for deer hunting at Big Oaks NWR?

All legal state of Indiana permitted firearms and handguns for deer hunting on public land will be allowed as legal weapons during the gun hunt. **The new high powered rifle rules for Indiana only apply**

to private land, no high powered rifles will be allowed at Big Oaks NWR in 2016. All archery weapons are subject to state regulations. See above state definitions for the primitive muzzleloader hunt.

If my deer goes into an area other than I am assigned to, can I retrieve my deer? Can I use my ATV to retrieve a deer?

You must contact refuge staff to determine the process and/or possibility of retrieving your deer that is outside your area. The use of off-road vehicles is strictly prohibited on Big Oaks NWR.

Can I shoot coyotes or any other animals while deer hunting?

No. The only animals to be harvested on Big Oaks include deer, turkey and squirrel during specified hunting seasons.

If I see a white/pie-bald deer, can I shoot it?

Yes, if you have a valid tag/license/permit.

Can I keep a shed deer antler I have found on the refuge?

Yes, but the antlers are for personal use only.

Have any deer at Big Oaks been infected with chronic wasting disease?

No. The Big Oaks NWR deer herd was sampled and all the deer tested negative for the disease. Refuge staff will continue to be on the lookout for the chronic wasting disease on the refuge.