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Service Proposes New Hunting Opportunities on National Wildlife Refuges in Fourteen States

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced a proposal to open one new refuge to hunting and to expand hunting opportunities at 16 national wildlife refuges in 14 states. If approved, the proposal would provide additional public hunting opportunities in fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

“The National Wildlife Refuge System offers some of the best public hunting and fishing around, helping to connect generations of Americans with this great outdoor tradition,” said Service Director Dan Ashe. “Our goal is to increase hunting opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds, wherever these opportunities are compatible with refuge purposes.”

Notice of the proposal was published in the *Federal Register* on July 11, 2012; the public has until August 10, 2012, to comment on the proposed changes. See the proposed rule and instructions on where to submit comment [here](#). Or visit <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/hunting/huntFishRegs.html>.

The proposal would open the [Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge](#), MI, to migratory bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting for the first time since its establishment in 2001. The refuge is closed to sport fishing.

The proposal calls for closure of [Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge](#), HI, to big game hunting. With this change, the refuge will be closed to all hunting activity. The refuge is also closed to sport fishing. The proposal also calls for closure of the [Santee National Wildlife Refuge](#), SC, to migratory bird hunting. The refuge is open to sport fishing.

All but two of the refuges in the proposal are open to sport fishing and would remain so.

Other proposed changes are:

- [Big Muddy National Fish & Wildlife Refuge](#), MO: Expansion of areas for migratory bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.
- [Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge](#), IN: Expansion of the refuge's big game hunting area. The refuge is also open to upland game hunting and sport fishing.
- [Block Island National Wildlife Refuge](#), RI: Addition of deer to the refuge's big game hunting program. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.
- [Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge](#), GA: Addition of migratory bird hunting and upland game hunting; expansion of area for big game hunting and addition of wild turkey to big game hunting program. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.
- [Chickasaw National Wildlife Refuge](#), TN: Expansion of area for migratory bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.
- [Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge](#), ID: Expansion of area for big game hunting. The refuge is also open to migratory bird hunting, upland game hunting and sport fishing.
- [Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge](#), TX: Addition of turkey to species in big game hunting. The refuge is also open to migratory bird hunting, upland game hunting and sport fishing.
- [Saddle Mountain \(Hanford Reach\) National Wildlife Refuge](#), WA: Expansion of area for migratory bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting. Addition of chukar (a member of the pheasant family) to upland game hunting program. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.
- [Julia Butler Hanson Refuge for the Columbian White-Tailed Deer](#), OR: Expansion of area for migratory bird hunting. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.
- [Lower Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge](#), TN: Expansion of area for migratory bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.
- [Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge](#), MN: Expansion of area for migratory bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.
- [Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge](#), RI: Addition of deer to species for big game hunting program. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.
- [Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge](#), MT: Expansion of area for migratory bird hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.
- [Upper Ouachita National Wildlife Refuge](#), LA: Expansion of area for migratory bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is open to sport fishing.
- [Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge](#), SC: Expansion of area for big game hunting. Add woodcock to species for migratory bird hunting. The refuge is also open to upland game hunting and sport fishing.
- [William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge](#), OR: Expansion of area for big game hunting. The refuge is also open to sport fishing.

While definitions of hunting categories vary by refuge and state, migratory bird hunting generally includes ducks and geese. Upland game hunting may cover such animals as game

birds, rabbit, squirrel, opossum and coyote. Big game hunting may include such animals as wild turkey, deer and feral hogs.

Under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, the Service can permit hunting and fishing along with four other types of wildlife-dependent recreational uses where they are compatible with refuge purpose and mission. Hunting, within specified limits, is permitted on more than 300 national wildlife refuges. Fishing is permitted on more than 270 national wildlife refuges. Other wildlife-dependent recreation on national wildlife refuges includes wildlife observation, photography, interpretation and education.

The National Wildlife Refuge System, managed by the Service, is the nation's premier system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve America's fish, wildlife and plants.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#), and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).

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