

Public Use and Hunting Regulations

Kofa National Wildlife Refuge

General Information

Kofa National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1939 and is managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The refuge encompasses 665,400 acres of important Sonoran desert habitat and is home to desert bighorn sheep, endangered Sonoran pronghorn and the California fan palm, the only native palm in Arizona. Kofa Mountain barberry (a rare plant found only in Southwest Arizona) also occurs on the refuge. Other notable wildlife species found in the area include white-winged dove, desert tortoise, desert mule deer, and desert kit fox. A wide variety of plant life is found throughout the refuge.

Bighorn sheep are found chiefly in the two mountain ranges that dominate the refuge landscape – the Kofa and Castle Dome Mountains. Although these mountains are not especially high, they are extremely rugged and rise sharply from the surrounding desert plains, providing excellent bighorn sheep habitat.

In the early part of the 20th Century, numerous mines were established throughout the refuge. One of the most notable mines was the “King Of Arizona Mine.” It gave the Kofa Mountains their name – “Kofa” which is contracted from “King Of Arizona.”

Most refuge roads are unmaintained and many of them are passable only by four-wheel drive vehicles. Some roads may be passable by two-wheel drive, high clearance vehicles (see map). Vehicles may be damaged by brush or rocks, or may become stuck in sandy areas. Private lands occur within the refuge and may be posted. Before traveling on the refuge, visitors should contact refuge headquarters to learn of current conditions. There are no facilities on the refuge for towing, gasoline, sanitation, or drinking water. Cellular phone coverage is not always available. Visitors are advised to let someone who is not travelling with them to the refuge know where they going and when they plan to return.

Kofa Public Regulations brochures are available at the refuge headquarters in Yuma and in pamphlet boxes located at refuge entrances.

Water is scarce in the desert. Natural water sources are highly variable and may not last until seasonal changes can replenish the supply. By improving natural water holes and creating new ones, refuge managers have increased the availability and reliability of water for wildlife.

Many species have benefitted from these water developments, particularly desert bighorn sheep. Approximately 400-800 bighorn sheep live on the refuge. In the past, this herd has provided animals for transplanting throughout Arizona and neighboring states.

Palm Canyon, at the west end of the Kofa Mountains, is well known for native palms. These palms are probably remnants from an era when this area was wetter and cooler. Few in number, less than 100 trees, plus probably one or two other groves around the state, are the only native palms in Arizona.

Public Use Regulations

The following is a summary of refuge regulations. For additional detail or clarification, contact the refuge headquarters. All public access, use or recreational activity, unless specifically authorized, is prohibited.

Wilderness

Passage of the 1990 Arizona Desert Wilderness Act included 547,700 acres of the Kofa NWR. Wilderness status acknowledges the relatively pristine character of the refuge and dictates some management restrictions. No vehicular travel, including bicycles, is permitted into wilderness areas. Only foot or horseback travel is permitted.

Vehicles

Mechanized, vehicular traffic is limited to designated roads which can be identified by numbered markers at junctions. Bicycles are considered vehicles on the refuge. **Off-road vehicle travel is prohibited.** All motorized vehicles, including ATCs, ATVs, UTVs, quadratracs, and motorcycles and all operators, must be **licensed** and **insured** for **highway** driving. Speed is limited to 25 MPH, unless otherwise posted.

Animal and Plant Life

Collecting, possessing, molesting, disturbing, injuring, destroying, removing or transporting any plant or animal or part thereof (alive or dead) is prohibited (except for legally taken game).

Firearms and Explosives

Carrying, possessing, or discharging explosives (including fireworks) on the refuge is prohibited. Persons may possess, carry, and transport firearms, in accordance with all Federal and state laws. Unauthorized discharge of firearms or target practice is prohibited. For additional information see the Hunting Regulations section.

Weapons Other than Firearms

Use or possession of other weapons, such as crossbows, bows and arrows, and airguns is only permitted in conjunction with authorized and permitted hunting activities.

Disposal of Waste

Littering, and the dumping of sewage or liquid wastes on the refuge is prohibited. Do not bury trash—wildlife will dig it up! Do not burn cans or plastic—please pack it out. Bury all human waste and burn toilet paper or pack it out. Please “leave no trace.” Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Government Property

Destruction, injury, defacement, disturbance, or removal of any government property is prohibited.

Commercial Activity

No commercial activities are allowed on the refuge without a permit. The refuge is also closed to mineral entry. Prospecting, removal, or disturbance of sand, rock, gravel, or minerals is prohibited. (Exceptions are valid mining claims existing prior to 1974.)

Disturbance of the Peace

Disturbance of the peace or other disorderly conduct on the refuge is prohibited. No person who is intoxicated shall enter or remain upon the refuge.

Pets

Pets are permitted only if they are confined or leashed. Dogs may be off-leash when they are participating in quail and cottontail hunting.

Treasure Hunting

Persons are prohibited from searching for or removing objects of antiquity, Indian artifacts, or paleontological objects.

Many outdoor recreational activities are permitted on the refuge with a few restrictions. The more popular pursuits are as follows:

Wildlife Observation, Photography, Interpretation, and Education

These activities are permitted on all areas of the refuge except closed areas, patented mining claims and other private inholdings. The use of automatic or remotely-controlled cameras on the Refuge is prohibited.

Rockhounding and Rock Collecting

Recreational (noncommercial) rock or mineral collecting is restricted to the 1.5 square mile **Crystal Hill Area** north and east of Junction #77 (see map). Possession of rocks is limited to 10 specimens or 10 pounds (whichever occurs first) in any 12 -month period. Rock or mineral collection is limited to materials that are exposed and collectable **without the use of tools** (metal detectors are considered tools). **Digging**, including the use of simple hand tools, **is prohibited.** The collection of any rocks or minerals is prohibited on the remainder of the Kofa NWR.

Camping

Campers may select their own campsites. However, camping within 1/4 mile of water is prohibited. Vehicles must remain within 100 feet of designated roads. Camping is limited to 14 days in any 12 month period.

Fires

Campfires are permitted, but only dead, *down*, and *detached wood* may be used. Uprooting dead stumps, trees, and bushes is prohibited. Dead wood may only be collected from areas on the refuge which are not designated as wilderness (see map). **Collecting wood from wilderness lands is prohibited.** No wood may be removed from the refuge. Wood is very scarce; please consider bringing your own supply of firewood.

Stargazing

Many clear nights relatively unobstructed by city lights make the refuge an excellent location for amateur astronomy and stargazing. The only regular interference with observation is a glow low in the eastern sky produced by lights from the Phoenix metropolitan area, and depending on your location in the refuge, a glow in the southern sky produced by lights from Yuma.

CAUTION: Entering any mine (or cave) on any National Wildlife Refuge is prohibited. This regulation is in effect for public safety and to reduce the spread of white-nose syndrome, a deadly fungus affecting bats. Abandoned mines are extremely dangerous due to the possibility of collapse.

If you enter old buildings and/or historical structures on Kofa NWR, you do so at your own risk. Exposure to airborne disease-causing pathogens is possible.

Kofa NWR was included in the desert military training exercises conducted by General Patton during World War II. Unexploded ordnance may be encountered. **DO NOT PICK UP** anything that appears to be military hardware. Note the location of the object and report it to refuge headquarters or the Phoenix Interagency Law Enforcement Dispatch at 1/800-637-9152.

Rock climbing is hazardous and is generally discouraged. If you choose to rock climb, you do so at your own risk. Remember that your safety on Kofa NWR is your responsibility. Kofa NWR is not and will not be responsible for injuries caused by engaging in negligent and/or risky activities.

Occasional storms on the refuge will cause flash flooding in low-lying areas and washes; please use **CAUTION** when in these areas.

Hunting Regulations

Regulated hunting is permitted for quail, bighorn sheep, mule deer, cottontail rabbit, coyote, and fox. All other wildlife is protected. Hunters must follow all Public Use Regulations and the following Hunting Regulations.

State hunting licenses (for all hunting) and permits (for deer and desert bighorn sheep) are required.

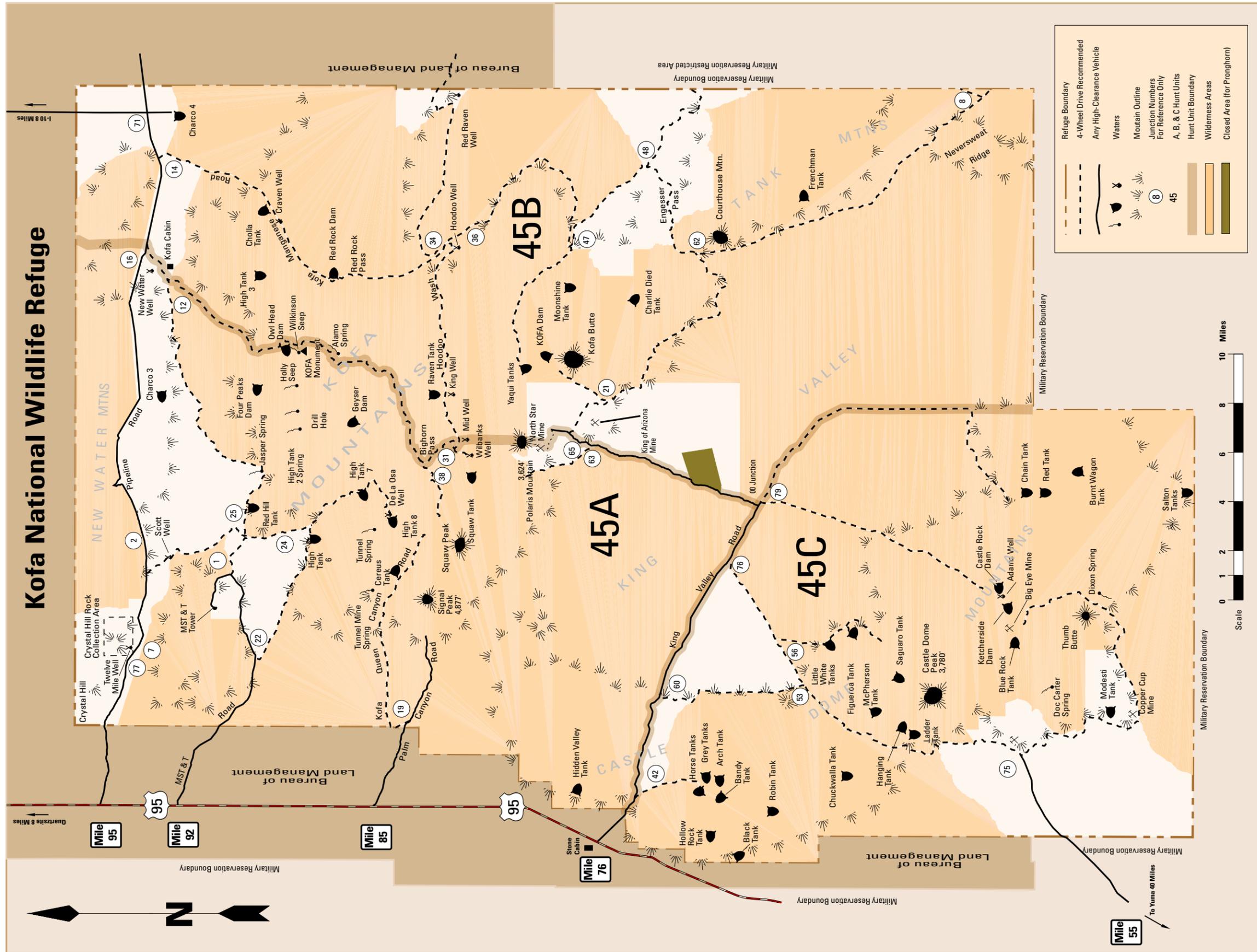
The refuge is closed to the taking of predatory animals during the regular rifle deer season except deer hunters with valid Unit 45A, 45B, and 45C deer permits may take predatory animals until they have taken a deer. Bag limits for predatory animals, quail, and cottontail are the same as State regulations.

Individuals may not be under the influence of alcohol while in the process of hunting.

Shooting from a vehicle is prohibited. Discharge of firearms is not permitted within 1/4 mile of an occupied structure.

Cottontail may be taken with shotgun only. Deer may be taken by bow and arrow or rifle depending on the hunting season.





Cottontails and predators (coyotes and foxes) may only be hunted during the quail season.

Persons may possess, carry, and transport firearms in accordance with all Federal and state laws. Unauthorized discharge of firearms or target practice is not permitted.

Trapping is not permitted on the refuge.

Hunting is allowed near water sources. Individuals should respect other hunters' privileges and leave the area if other hunters arrive at a water source first.

Hunting seasons for the refuge are listed in current Arizona Game and Fish Department hunting regulations.

Recreational livestock permitted on the refuge include horses, mules, burros, and llamas. The use of feeding containers is required and water is to be packed in. All surface disturbances at campsites are to be restored. Use of pelletized feed is highly recommended to reduce the potential introduction of invasive species. Livestock are not to be tethered directly to trees or other vegetation.

Please report any hunting violations you observe to the Phoenix Interagency Law Enforcement Dispatch at 1/800-637-9152 or to Arizona Game and Fish Department Operation Game Thief Hotline at 1/800-352-0700.

For More Information Contact

Please contact the refuge headquarters for additional information about other programs and activities, to report all injuries or accidents, or any unusual incidents or observations.

Refuge Manager
 Kofa National Wildlife Refuge
 9300 East 28th Street
 Yuma, AZ 85365
 928/783-7861
 Monday—Friday, 8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.