

Use of “E-Bikes” on Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Are e-bikes allowed while hunting on designated roads?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s National Wildlife Refuge System announced on October 22, 2019, a [Director’s Order](#) to allow the use of low-speed electric bicycles (e-bikes) at national wildlife refuges that permit traditional bicycling, expanding recreational opportunities and access. E-bike use is now permitted at any refuge where biking is deemed to be consistent with the site’s statutory purpose. The Director’s Order supports [Secretary’s Order 3376](#), which was signed by Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt on August 29, 2019.

E-bikes (low speed electric bicycles with power assistance) are now allowed wherever traditional bicycles are currently permitted on Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge on a trial basis. On hunt units, the operator of an e-bike may only use the motor to assist pedal propulsion. The motor may not be used to propel an e-bike without the rider also pedaling, except in locations open to public motor vehicle traffic. Operators must not exceed 15 mph as stated in the hunt brochure, except as otherwise legally posted. Operating any bicycle off designated roads and trails is prohibited.

The trial use of e-bikes will authorize and allow the refuge to determine the impact on wildlife, hunt roads, and experience of other hunters. This trial is necessary because e-bikes, in particular Class 3, weigh significantly more (over 69 pounds in many cases), are faster, and may cause considerable damage to the primitive, unimproved hunt roads especially when conditions are less than ideal. The Compatibility Determination for Hunting on Blackwater NWR (2017) currently prohibits the use of bikes to access hunt areas *except as authorized* by the Refuge Manager. For 2020/21 hunt season, traditional bikes are authorized, hence e-bikes will be authorized.