

## Swan Lake NWR Waterfowl Hunting Program Pre-season Update

On **Saturday October 7<sup>th</sup>** from 9 AM to 5 PM the refuge will host a waterfowl hunting scout day. On that date you will be able to access all of the hunting units and have questions answered at the Refuge Visitor Center by the Refuge Manager. Please mark your calendars so you can take advantage of this opportunity.

We are going to be utilizing the online draw system as in the past two years but with some changes. The draw will be conducted with a new partner known as RecAccess. We hope to alleviate some of the issues we had the past couple of years by going with this new partner. I believe you will find the application process less complicated under the new format.

To apply for the online draw you will need to set up a RecAccess account. Once you set your account up you will be able to log into the system with your username and password to apply for hunts and purchase permits without having to enter your information each time.

You can do this any time at the Swan Lake draw site located at

<https://swanlake.recaccess.com/>

## Draw Changes for 2017

Please keep in mind that most of the following changes have taken place because of feedback we received from those of you that have participated in the Swan Lake hunting program. It is impossible for us to address every issue brought to our attention. However we will do our best to improve the hunting program based upon your feedback within the resources we have to address any given issue.

I would like to clarify some definitions of terms used for the hunt program so we are all on the same page when communicating.

**Hunting Unit:** The blind or walk in unit open to hunting.

**Hunting Slot:** A specific hunting unit on a particular day (example **Nov 5, S1**).

**Swan Lake Waterfowl Permit:** The Permit that authorizes a particular hunter to hunt in a particular Hunting Slot. Up to four permits can be purchased for a Hunting Slot. The permit can be purchased by the successful applicant of the draw for the hunting slot awarded through the draw. Those Hunting Slots not filled in the draw or not purchased by the draw deadline the permit can be purchased on a first come basis on the Rec Access website or at Cooney's General Store in Sumner, MO.

As in the past there will be four draws throughout the waterfowl season at Swan Lake NWR. The application process will begin on October 1, 2017. You can set up your RecAccess account anytime at the website listed above. We suggest you do it ahead of time to get familiar with the new system.

Draws will not be conducted as parties like in the past but as individuals.

Each individual that is successfully drawn can then purchase up to four permits and bring up to three other hunters with them on their assigned Hunting Slot awarded through the draw. The permit will have the successful applicants (purchaser) name on it with an indication of how many they will have in their party. So the other 1-3 will be filled with anyone they want to bring the day of the hunt so long as they have their required hunting licenses, stamps, and permits and are accompanied by the person who purchased the permit.

RecAccess will oversee the draws and the morning check in. To cover these costs there will be a \$2 lottery application fee and an \$8.50 permit fee for each hunter that gets a permit through the lottery, online purchase, or morning check in for vacant units. Since the fees go to cover the cost of the permitting system there will be no refunds for any reason including hunting unit closures due to weather or flooding.

For each draw period there will be two draws conducted. The two draws will include a Youth Draw and an Open Draw.

To participate in the youth draw you must be age 18 or older to apply and certify that there will be at least one youth, age 15 or under, that will be in your hunting party. You will not be able to hunt on the day of the hunt if one of your party is not a youth age 15 or younger.

Hunters may apply to both the Youth Draw and Open Draw for each draw period.

There will be eight Hunting Slots filled in the Youth Draw for each draw period. After the youth draw is completed all remaining Hunting Slots will be filled through the Open Draw.

When applying for the draw each hunter will be able to prioritize up to eight dates and eight units for each draw period.

For each draw, successful applicants will have a deadline to purchase their permits for their awarded Hunting Slots. Any Hunting Slots left over and not filled by the deadline will be available for purchase on the site on a first come basis. Leftover permits purchased online will be just as other permits. The purchaser can purchase one to four permits for the available Hunting Slot and bring up to three other hunters with them on the day of the hunt. Hunters that do not have computer access will be able to purchase any leftover Hunting Slots not filled through the draw at Cooneys General Store in Sumner, MO up until the evening before the hunt day.

Hunters will be required to check in at the Hunter Check Station between 4-7 AM each day. Any available Hunting Slots can be obtained at Cooneys General Store up to the evening before the hunt. Available hunting slots may be purchased online up to the morning of the hunt. You must be checked in by 7 AM. There is no computer access at the hunter check station. The Hunter Check Station number is (660) 856-3343. Any Hunting Slots not checked in by 7 AM on the day of the hunt will be filled by hunters present at the Check Station. Those units filled at

the Check Station the morning of the hunt will be subject to the \$8.50 permit fee. Checks will be the only payment method accepted at the Check In Station.

The Draw Application Schedule will be as follows:

	<u>Application Period</u>
Draw 1	October 1 – Oct 20 @ 9 PM
Draw 2	October 1 – Nov 5 @ 9 PM
Draw 3	October 1 – Nov 17 @ 9 PM
Draw 4	October 1 – Dec 8 @ 9 PM

The accessible A7 Blind can be reserved by individuals with a disability by contacting the Refuge Office at 660-856-3323 ext 13 or 16. Days that A7 is not reserved by disabled hunters it will be filled at the check station at 7 AM along with any other vacant units.

If you have any questions feel free to email me at [steve\\_whitson@fws.gov](mailto:steve_whitson@fws.gov) or give me a call at the number below. **Please do not reply or reply all to this email as it will not be accepted.**

Our Friends Group (Friends of Swan Lake NWR) is working on upgrading some of the blinds to protect them better during flood events, make them more easily accessible by hunters, and reduce the overall maintenance of them. If you are interesting in this project you can contact me to find out more information.

As I receive questions about the hunting program I will send out a follow up email in a few weeks with the frequently asked questions so everyone can see them. So please email me at [steve\\_whitson@fws.gov](mailto:steve_whitson@fws.gov) with any questions you may have.

Feel free to pass this information along to anyone you know might be interested.

Thanks,

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