

National Elk Refuge

Hunting Information

The Blue Goose is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a network of lands and waters managed for the benefit of wildlife and people.



Welcome

The National Elk Refuge was established in 1912 in Jackson, Wyoming, as a winter game (elk) reserve to protect winter habitat for migratory elk. The 24,700-acre Refuge supports a variety of plants and animals with its grasslands, wetlands, and forests.

Hours

Shooting hours are one-half hour before legal sunrise to one-half hour after legal sunset.

Firearms

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of Federal, State, and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with Refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific Refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32).

General Hunting Regulations

Review this brochure in its entirety as new information has been added. Hunting is permitted in accordance with Federal regulations governing public use on national wildlife refuges as set forth in Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Hunting will be in accordance with applicable State of Wyoming regulations subject to the conditions stated below. Brochures may be obtained by mail, at the Refuge headquarters, or from the Refuge website.

Who manages hunting on the National Elk Refuge?

Hunting on the National Elk Refuge (Refuge) is managed through a cooperative effort between the Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, and Wyoming Game & Fish Department (WGFD), with the goal of maintaining the WGFD herd size objective. The Refuge posts information related to the Refuge hunting programs on its website: www.fws.gov/refuge/national-elk

What must I have while hunting on the Refuge?

- Refuge permit & WGFD hunting license for the species you are hunting. Note: The applicant must possess a full price license to apply for the Any Elk and Youth Elk Hunt periods.
- WGFD Conservation Stamp (if required by WGFD)
- WGFD Elk Special Management Permit (if hunting elk)
- Hunter Safety Certificate (if required by WGFD)
- All persons hunting big game during an open firearm season shall wear in a visible manner two (2) or more exterior garments of a fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink color that is visible 360 degrees and that shall include a hat and one of the following: shirt, jacket, coat, vest, or sweater. Fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink camouflage is legal.

How do I get a permit for hunting on the Refuge?

The application process for a Refuge permit for hunting is done online via the WGFD Public Access site, <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/public-access>

What Refuge-specific laws regulate hunting on the Refuge?

In addition to all Federal and WGFD requirements, the following Refuge-specific regulations are enforced. Hunters must be knowledgeable of all regulations prior to hunting as violations may result in forfeiture of the animal, criminal penalties, and permit revocation.

Activities prohibited on the Refuge

- Intentional herding or harassment of wildlife.
- Discharging firearms other than for lawful hunting (i.e. target shooting and sighting in).
- Indiscriminate shooting, shooting multiple times into a running herd, or injuring multiple animals.
- Shooting from parking areas or roads.
- Interfering with or harassing other hunters.
- Using decoys outside the Archery Only Area.
- Possessing a weapon not permitted in a hunting area unless utilizing a direct access route.
- Collecting natural or cultural resources, including but not limited to antlers, skulls, and artifacts.
- Possession or use of alcoholic beverages while hunting.
- Possession of non-certified weed-free hay.
- Starting or maintaining any fires.
- Overnight camping or parking.

Transportation activities prohibited on the Refuge

- Driving off designated roads.
- Stopping or unloading hunters along Refuge roads.
- Parking outside of designated hunt parking lots.
- ORVs are allowed on public roads but must be registered, insured, and operated by a licensed driver. ORVs and snowmobiles are not allowed on Refuge retrieval roads.
- Horses used for hunting are not permitted south of the line depicted on hunting maps. Horses are allowed Refuge-wide for retrieval purposes.
- Bicycles, including e-bikes, can be used for hunting and retrieval purposes, but must stay on designated hunt roads, in designated hunt parking lots, or on retrieval roads.



Two or more exterior garments of fluorescent orange or pink are required while hunting on the Refuge.

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What are the requirements for animal retrieval?

- Accessing retrieval roads via vehicles is allowed for retrieval purposes only; hunting is not permitted from retrieval roads. Hunters retrieving cannot transport other hunters to the field.
- If retrieving after dark, hunters should notify Refuge staff by leaving a message on the Refuge Hunt Information Line at (307) 201-5437.
- Hunters may not leave animal parts, including gut piles and carcasses, within 300 feet of parking areas and public roads.
- No game retrieval is allowed through Grand Teton National Park. This includes retrieval to Gros Ventre parking areas at Milepost 1.1 and 2.3. If retrieving to Highway 89 lot, hunters must bring their vehicle inside the gate to load the animal at the Highway 89 lot.

What should I do before I pursue an injured animal off or onto the Refuge?

Prior to December 1, if an injured animal crosses from the National Forest onto the Refuge, or if retrieval would be more efficient through the Refuge, hunters should call the Refuge Hunt Information Line or Wyoming Game and Fish and leave a message describing their situation and plan for recovery.

Following this notice, the hunter may pursue or retrieve the animal as planned, giving consideration to limiting any resource damage. Beginning December 1, Forest Service lands adjacent to the Refuge are closed to all human presence per winter travel restrictions.

If the injured animal crosses into Grand Teton National Park, the hunter must immediately notify Teton Interagency Dispatch at (307) 739-3301. If you must dispatch an animal in an area outside of the weapon area you were hunting in, you must call (877) 943-3847 for authorization. You may not dispatch an animal without authorization.

What regulations apply to non-hunting assistants?

- Specific regulations apply to assistants depending on the species, see table on last page for details.
- Assistants must stay within 50 yards of the permitted hunter, unless retrieving.
- All assistants during an open firearm season shall wear in a visible manner two (2) or more exterior garments of a fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink color that is visible 360 degrees and that shall include at least two of the following: hat, shirt, jacket, coat, vest, or sweater. Fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink camouflage is legal.

What guide and retrieval companies are permitted to operate on the National Elk Refuge?

Commercial guiding and retrieval services may be available. The company currently authorized to operate on the Refuge is Double Diamond Tag-n-Drag (307) 248-1490.

Does the Refuge allow Wyoming hunter assistance programs for hunters with disabilities?

The Refuge encourages hunters with disabilities to participate in the hunt program and offers reasonable accommodation for the activity. Hunters who have a WGFD Disabled Hunter Permit, WGFD elk license, and a Refuge permission slip are eligible to reserve one of three designated accessible hunt sites. Reservations must be made at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Jackson office at 420 North Cache Street in Jackson, WY. The WGFD Disabled Hunter Companion Permit is also valid on the Refuge. Contact WGFD for further information on these programs. Unless retrieving, hunters using the accessible hunting sites must stay within the designated area.

Vehicle access to designated accessible hunt sites are for hunters with disabilities only. Any assistant being transported to the designated accessible hunt site must be a non-hunter or a hunter with disabilities.

What hunting areas can I hunt, and what are their restrictions?

All hunt areas must be accessed from designated parking lots or direct access routes that correspond to the legal hunting method allowed in that area. All Refuge hunting areas have specific restrictions.

Snow is often encountered during the elk and bison hunts on the Refuge.



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What else do I need to know?

- Prior to the start date of their hunt period, hunters may only access Refuge areas open to the general public.
- Hunters are only allowed in hunt areas when they have a Refuge permit and a valid matching license.
- Refuge roads or parking areas may be closed or inaccessible due to inclement weather or management decisions.
- Use of non-lead ammunition is encouraged.
- Hunters cannot use government buildings, equipment, or vehicles for concealment.
- All hunts must start and end in a hunt parking lot. Accessing retrieval roads via vehicles is allowed for retrieval purposes only, hunting is not permitted from retrieval roads. Hunters retrieving cannot transport other hunters to the field.

National Elk Refuge Hunt Information Line

Hunters are encouraged to call the Hunt Information Line at 307 / 201-5437 for weekly updates on National Elk Refuge Hunts.

Archery Only Areas or Hunt Periods

Hunters must carry and are restricted to possessing only a bow or crossbow legal for taking game as defined by the WGFD. Hunters must be at least 200 yards from all residences and the National Fish Hatchery. After November 1, the Archery Hunting Area along Highway 89 may be accessed by either the Fishing or Hatchery gate parking areas.

Limited Range Areas

Hunters must carry and are restricted to possessing only limited range weapons, including handguns, muzzle loading rifles, shotguns with slugs, or archery equipment legal for taking elk as defined by the WGFD. Handguns are further restricted to straight-walled cartridges with a barrel length no longer than 12 inches. Hunters must be at least 200 yards from all residences and the National Fish Hatchery.

Any Weapon Areas

Hunters may hunt with any legal weapon for taking the game species they are hunting as defined by WGFD. Hunters must be at least 200 yards from all residences and the National Fish Hatchery.

Direct Access Route(s)

Red dotted lines on the hunt maps indicate direct access route(s) for hunters wanting to access limited range or any weapon areas through other hunt areas. Hunters may possess unloaded weapons for use in the hunting area they are on route to while on the direct access route(s).

Refuge Youth Hunter Development Program

The Youth Hunter Development Program on the Refuge provides opportunities for youth mentoring when the adult has drawn a permit and wishes to hunt with a youth that has not drawn a permit. This program does not allow an adult to hunt when the youth hunter draws a permit, but the adult did not. For more information, please call the Refuge Hunt Information Line.

Per Wyoming Statute, any hunter that is 12 or 13 years old shall at all times be accompanied by an adult who possesses and can exhibit a hunter safety certificate, or who currently holds or has been issued a Wyoming big game hunting license within the last five years. If the person who is accompanying the hunter under the age of 14 years old is not the parent or guardian of the hunter, the hunter shall have in their possession a permission slip signed by their parent or guardian allowing them to hunt under supervision. Each accompanying adult shall supervise only one hunter under the age of 14 years.

Wounding and Retrieving

No person shall wound or kill any game animal without making a reasonable effort to retrieve it and reduce it to possession. For the purpose of this subsection, making a reasonable effort shall include a person physically going to the nearest location where the game animal was when a person attempted to take the animal, to search for any sign the animal was wounded or killed, and take the game into possession.

Bear Safety

Grizzly bears and black bears frequent the Refuge. It is recommended you carry bear spray, know how to use it, and make sure it is accessible. For more information on bear safety, visit <https://bearwise.org/>.

Because the grizzly bear is federally protected in the lower 48 states as a threatened species, it is a violation of the Endangered Species Act to shoot one, except in self defense and defense of others during an imminent attack. Penalties under the Endangered Species Act include up to one year in prison and a \$50,000 fine, or both. Additional penalties may also apply to violations of state law.

Harvest Report

Harvest Reports are included with every Refuge permit and must be completed for each hunt period drawn whether successful or not. Directions for submission are on the Harvest Report.

National Elk Refuge Hunting Permit (NERHP) Review (Redline Process)

The NERHP Review is used to withdraw NERHP eligibility from individuals who violated regulations, caused damage to resources or property, or created unsafe conditions while hunting on the National Elk Refuge (NER). The specific circumstances of each violation or incident are thoroughly considered when determining if an individual is disqualified from applying for a NERHP. Multiple violations in the same or consecutive hunt permit years can result in an extended or permanent disqualification of NERHP eligibility.

Per Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations §25.43, "The Refuge manager may terminate or revoke a permit at any time for noncompliance with the terms of the permit or of the regulations in this subchapter C; for nonuse; for violation of any law, regulation, or order applicable to the refuge; or to protect public health or safety or the resources of a national wildlife refuge [67 R 58943, Sept. 18, 2002]." This authority may also be used to immediately revoke an NERHP for egregious violation(s) of federal, state, or NER special regulations by a NER hunt participant.

Chronic Wasting Disease Sampling Program

Elk and white-tail hunters are required to participate in a Chronic Wasting Disease sampling program by depositing the animal's head at a head barrel or allowing a biologist to collect samples in the field. All ear tags and radio collars from harvested animals must be returned to the Refuge or WGFD, Jackson Regional Office.

Head Barrel Locations (hunt parking areas):

- Miller House
- West Lot
- McBride
- East Lot
- Hwy 89

Bison Sampling Program

All successful bison hunters are required to provide biological samples to the Refuge. Contact the Refuge for questions.

Hunting is in accordance with State regulations; in addition, Refuge-specific regulations must be followed and are listed in the table below. The below listed species are the only species permitted to be on hunted on the National Elk Refuge.

Activity	Season Dates	Hunt Areas	Other Regulations
Elk	Nov. 1-26, Dec. 1-5, any unused valid State-issued elk license. Dec. 8-19, Area 77 Type 6 license holders only	See elk hunt map.	Following harvest, elk hunters may use retrieval roads for retrieval purposes only starting at 10:00 am Elk hunters are allowed one assistant for hunting and retrieving and must ensure that assistant is compliant with all Refuge regulations. Assistants must stay within 50 yards of the permitted hunter, unless retrieving. Elk hunters may fill up to one (1) WGFD elk license on a single Refuge permit per day and are limited to possessing no more than 7 cartridges per license. Elk hunters are required to participate in a Chronic Wasting Disease sampling program, see page 3.
Youth Only Elk Hunt	Nov. 27-28, Nov. 29-30	See elk hunt map.	The Refuge Youth Only Elk Hunts will occur Thursday and Friday (Youth Elk Hunt 1) and Saturday and Sunday (Youth Elk Hunt 2) of Thanksgiving weekend. For those two 2-day periods, full-priced youth license holders who have applied for and been drawn for a Refuge permit for that period may take any elk. Youth elk hunters are allowed up to two (2) assistants. Assistants must be compliant with all Refuge regulations and stay within 50 yards of the permitted hunter, unless retrieving.
Bison	State regulations apply.	See bison hunt map.	Following harvest, bison hunters may immediately use retrieval roads for retrieval purposes only. Bison hunters must ensure their entire hunt party is compliant with all Refuge regulations. Assistants must stay within 50 yards of the permitted hunter, unless retrieving. All successful bison hunters are required to provide biological samples to the Refuge.
Antelope	Season closed for Hunt Area 85 by Wyoming Game and Fish.		
White-tailed deer	Unit 6 Archery Sept. 1–14 Firearms Sept. 15–Nov. 26	See white-tailed deer hunt map.	You must possess a valid state-issued area 148 tag in order to hunt white-tailed deer on the Refuge. Following harvest, white-tailed deer hunters may immediately use retrieval roads for retrieval purposes only. White-tailed deer hunters are allowed one assistant for hunting and retrieving and must ensure that assistant is compliant with all Refuge regulations. Assistants must stay within 50 yards of the permitted hunter, unless retrieving. White-tailed deer hunters are limited to possessing no more than 7 cartridges per license. White-tailed deer hunters are required to participate in a Chronic Wasting Disease sampling program, see page 3. Portable tree stands are permitted but must be removed daily.

National Elk Refuge (NER)

Hunt Information Line
(307) 201-5437

National Elk Refuge Administrative Office

P.O. Box 510, 675 E. Broadway Avenue
Jackson, WY 83001
(307) 733-9212
www.fws.gov/refuge/national-elk

National Elk Refuge Visitor Center

532 North Cache Street
Jackson, WY 83001

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

www.fws.gov

Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Jackson Office

P.O. Box 67, 420 North Cache Street
Jackson, WY 83001
(307) 733-2321

Teton Interagency Dispatch

(307) 739-3301

In an emergency, dial 911

For State Relay Service

TTY / Voice: 711

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Accessibility

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. For more information please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, www.doi.gov/accessibility.

