
2023 Deer Firearms Draw Information Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge

This page includes information and instructions for those interested or selected to participate in a 2023 Indiana Deer Firearms Hunt Draw. It is important to note that areas participating in reserved hunts are managed by various agencies and may have unique restrictions that each hunter must follow. Please read each area's information packet carefully before pursuing a hunt.

Applying:

The application period for the 2023 Big Oaks NWR Deer Firearms Hunt Draw is July 2, 2023 – Aug. 6, 2023. Late applications will not be accepted. You must obtain or have a valid Lifetime License, Youth Hunt/Trapping License, Military/Refuge License, Bonus Antlerless License, Deer Firearm's License, Deer Archery License, Deer Crossbow License, or Deer Bundle License prior to applying. Drawn hunters are randomly assigned hunt dates at Big Oaks. There are no age restrictions on applying. Youth hunters may apply if they are properly licensed to hunt deer. An adult, age 18 or older, must directly supervise youth hunters aged 17 or under. We require all refuge hunters to hunt with a partner (and the partner can hunt).

Restrictions:

Allowed Equipment:

- Hunters with a deer firearm's license may use shotguns, handguns, and rifles with legal cartridges, muzzleloading long guns, muzzleloading handguns, and air guns during firearms season.
- Shotguns must have a 10, 12, 16, 20, 28, or .410" bore and shoot a single slug or sabot bullet.
- Handguns must have a barrel length of 4" minimum, bullet diameter of .243" minimum and a cartridge length of 1.16" minimum, except for 10mm.
- Rifles must have a bullet diameter of .375" and case length between 1.16"-1.8".
- Muzzleloading long guns must have a barrel caliber of .44" and bullet diameter of .357".
- Muzzleloading handguns must have a barrel length of 12", measured from the base of the breech plug (excluding tangs and other projections to the end of the barrel, including the muzzle crown), barrel caliber of .50", and bullet diameter of .44".
- Air guns must shoot .40 caliber or larger single bullet generating 400 ft. lbs. of muzzle energy; or an arrow or bolt with a sharpened metal or metal-edged broadhead at minimum of 300 fps at release. Air guns are only allowed during the state's firearm season (the refuge has some firearm hunt dates outside of the state's firearm season).
- Hunters with an archery license may use vertical bows and hunters with a crossbow license may use crossbows.
- Vertical bows (long bows, compound bows, or recurve bows and arrows) must have a draw weight of 35 lbs. minimum and arrows must have metal, metal edged, napped flint, chert, or obsidian broadheads.
- Crossbows must have a draw weight of 125 lbs. minimum.

- Hunters with a military/refuge license, bonus antlerless, and deer bundle license may use any of the equipment listed above. Lifetime and Youth Comprehensive licenses contain all available licenses.
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- *For a complete list of equipment regulations please refer to the [Indiana Hunting & Trapping Guide](#).

Bag Limit:

Each hunter has the option of using/buying military/refuge licenses (these are already included as part of the suite of deer tags available for Lifetime License and Youth License holders); hunters can use two (2) military/refuge licenses per hunt day. Hunters can earn an extra buck with the harvest and check-in of an antlerless deer during the firearms hunt. Without the check-in of an antlerless deer, the limit is one (1) buck/hunter during the refuge firearm hunts.

If you were selected for a firearm hunt you will be permitted to hunt on **one or two** successive days depending on the date(s) drawn. You may use a state firearm license, bonus antlerless license, deer license bundle, and/or your military/refuge licenses to take up to 2 deer per day (daily bag limit is 2 deer if hunter has appropriate tags).

You may use the state firearm season license only during the State Firearm Season (Nov. 18 to Dec. 3 in 2023) to harvest a buck; military/refuge licenses may be used to take deer of either sex on the refuge. You cannot use a bundled license to take a buck with a firearm outside of the State Gun Season at Big Oaks NWR. Bonus Antlerless licenses can also be used to harvest antlerless deer on Big Oaks NWR. See above for buck bag limits.

The use of a military/refuge license(s) allows you to harvest multiple deer of either sex on the refuge and still use your other deer license(s) to hunt elsewhere in the state. Hunters who choose not to purchase a military/refuge license must use their regular firearms, bonus antlerless, archery license, or deer license bundle during the appropriate time periods. Military/refuge licenses are available on-line and from any license agent who sells deer licenses. **Big Oaks NWR does not sell deer licenses.**

Hunting Hours:

- The hunting hours are one half-hour before sunrise to one half-hour after sunset.

Hunt Information:

The buddy system is required. Do not show up by yourself. The refuge can accommodate 420 hunters (210 drawn hunters plus their 210 hunting partners). A map delineating hunt areas is available at the end of this document. There will be a date that the drawn hunter calls the refuge office and reserves a hunt unit. All hunters are required to hunt with a partner, view the refuge safety briefing once per calendar year. A \$20 Refuge Hunt Permit (\$10 for holders of the America the Beautiful Interagency Senior Pass or Access Pass) is required for hunting; the refuge office only accepts cash. Fees are waived for those 15 or younger.

The Refuge Hunt Permit can also be used for turkey and squirrel hunting. It is important to view the safety video before the day of your hunt. The safety video will be shown at the refuge office on public use days and hunt days. The office is open from 7 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. on public use days. Specific instructions for the day of the hunt will be given during the hunt safety briefing. There are 2 avenues to hunt at Big Oaks NWR:

- The first is to enter state-drawn hunts (available through the Indiana Division of Fish & Wildlife's website during July 2, 2023-Aug. 6, 2023).
- The second option is to attend a no-show drawing that is held to fill available

slots. The refuge can accommodate 420 deer hunters per day and the refuge typically has open slots for deer hunters.

Area Information: The 50,000 acre refuge is overlaid on the closed Jefferson Proving Ground. The area offers a variety of deer habitats to hunt. Because of the history of the site, safety briefings are required.

Directions: The entrance to Big Oaks NWR is located on U.S. Highway 421 approximately 5 miles north of Madison, Indiana. The refuge office is north of Madison, Indiana, in Building 125 in the southern portion of the former Jefferson Proving Ground (JPG) (the cantonment area). Be aware that smartphones and GPS units will direct travelers to closed gates—please use the following directions:

- From Madison, drive north on Highway 421 to the Main Entrance of the former JPG, enter through this entrance and follow the brown refuge directional signs. Go west on Ordnance Drive, then turn right onto the circle and then turn right on Meridian Road. Take a left on Niblo Road and the refuge office is located in Building 125.

Contact:

If you have further questions, please contact the Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge office at 812-273-0783 or email bigoaks@fws.gov.

