

Deer Hunt Draw Information

Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge

This page includes information and instructions for those interested in or selected to participate in a reserved draw hunt opportunity. 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:

You must be property licensed to hunt deer prior to applying. Youth hunters may apply but an adult (age 18 or older) must directly supervise a youth while hunting. Please visit our [Deer Hunting](#) page to learn more about deer hunting requirements.

Restrictions:

Allowed Equipment:

Equipment	Specifications
Rifle	Bullet diameter: .219" minimum • Full metal jacketed bullets are illegal • Maximum of 10 cartridges can be carried
Handgun	Barrel length: 4" minimum Bullet diameter: .243" minimum Cartridge length: 1.16" minimum, except for 10 mm • 10 mm also legal cartridges • Rifles with barrel less than 18" are NOT considered handguns • .25 – 20 Winchester, .32 – 20 Winchester, .30 carbine, and .38 special ammunition are prohibited.
Shotgun	Bore: 10, 12, 16, 20, or 28 gauge, or .410 • Shooting slugs and sabot bullets only • Combination rifle-shotguns are allowed
Muzzleloading Rifle/Shotgun	Barrel caliber: .40" minimum Bullet diameter: .357" minimum • Single bullet, loaded from muzzle. Powder may be loaded from the breech. • Saboted bullets permitted

Muzzleloading Handgun	Barrel length: 12” minimum, 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: .50” minimum Bullet diameter: .44” minimum Loaded from muzzle and single shot
Airguns	Using non-ignited compressed air or other gas charged by external high compression power source Projectiles: Must shoot .40 caliber or larger single bullet generating 400 ft. lbs. of muzzle energy; or an arrow or bolt with sharpened metal or metal-edged broadhead at minimum 300 fps at release
Vertical Bow	Long bows, compound bows, or recurve bows and arrows Draw weight: 35 lbs. minimum Bows drawn, held or released by means other than by hand or hand-held releases may be used Arrows must have metal, metal-edged, napped flint, chert, or obsidian broadheads
Crossbow	Defined as a device for propelling an arrow by means of limbs mounted on a stock and a string, and having a working safety that may be drawn or held Draw Weight: 125 lbs. minimum

Bag Limit:

- Bag limit is one deer a day. There is a limit of 1 antlered deer during each specific refuge hunt season (1 antlered deer during the refuge archery hunt; and 1 antlered deer during the refuge firearm hunt). This is by refuge season and not by equipment.
- Hunters with a military/refuge license may use any of the equipment listed above during the corresponding hunts.
- The use of a military/refuge license allows you to harvest deer of either sex on the refuge and still use your other deer license(s) to hunt elsewhere in the state. Deer taken under a military/refuge license are in addition to other statewide limits. A valid military/refuge license must be possessed for each deer harvested.
- Big Oaks NWR does not sell deer licenses. Hunters will check-in deer themselves [on-line](#) or at a [check station](#). Field dressed deer or quartered deer with head must be physically shown to the staff at the refuge.

Hunting Hours and Dates:

- Hunt hours are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.
- Hunt Dates:
 - Archery: October 19 and 20
 - Firearm: November 9 and 10

Hunt Information:

- Hunt dates offered and the number of permits issued have been reduced due to a significant [EHD](#) event effecting the Refuge deer population.
- Successfully drawn hunters must hunt with a partner (partner can hunt). All hunting partners must be properly licensed.
- A hunting partner is required, do not show up by yourself. 75 hunters will be drawn for archery and 75 hunters for the firearms hunt. A map delineating hunt areas is available at the end of this document.
- Hunters can hunt in any numbered hunt unit on a first-come first-served basis.
- Hunters must complete 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; cash only. Fees are waived for those 15 or younger. The refuge permit can also be used for turkey and squirrel hunting.
- It is recommended to complete the safety briefing before the day of your hunt. After you have been drawn you can complete the safety briefing at the Refuge entrance gate on Mondays or Fridays from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Only drawn hunters and partners can hunt. We will not hold a no-show drawing.

Area information:

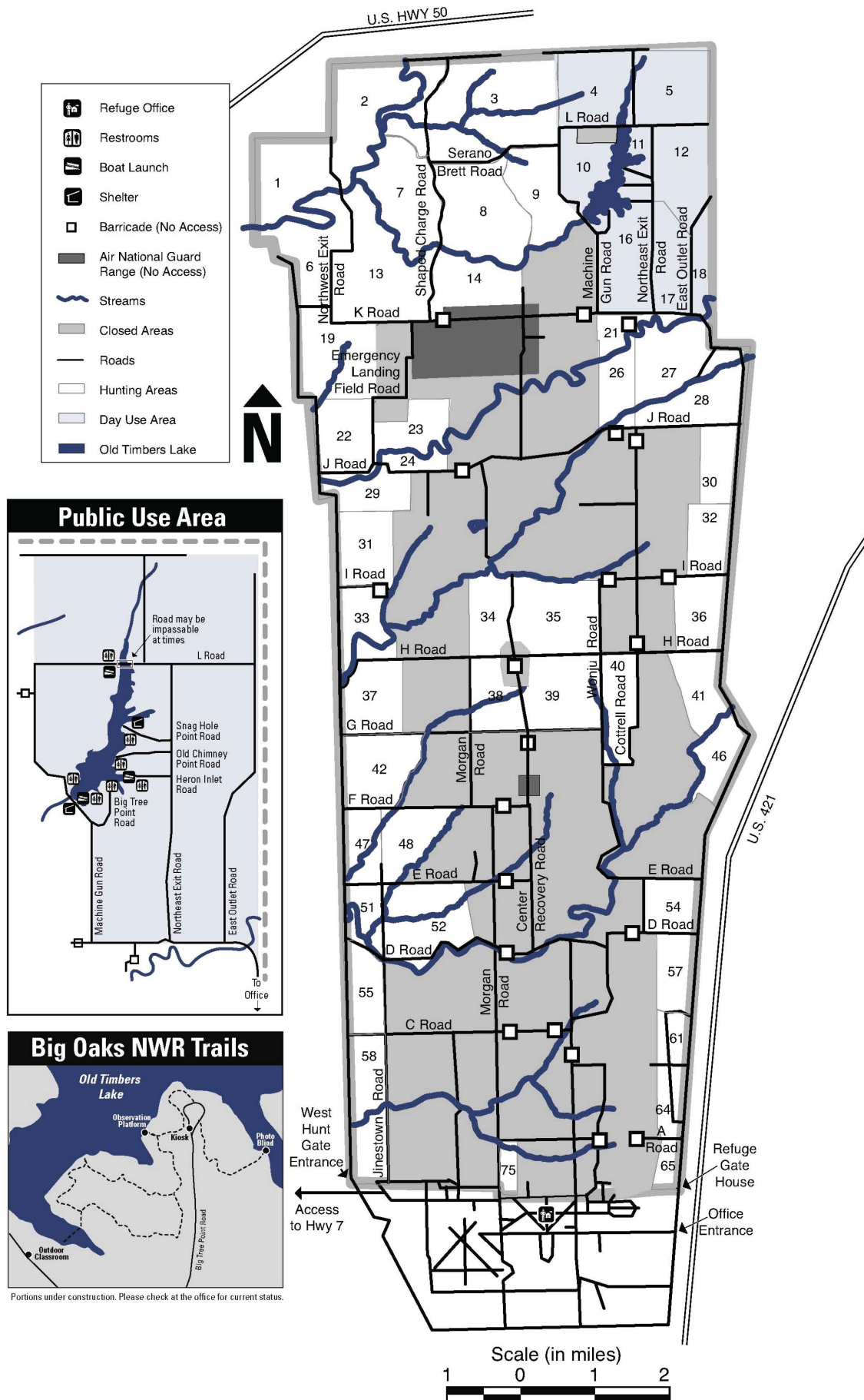
The 50,000 acre refuge is overlaid on the closed Jefferson Proving Ground. The area offers a variety of deer habitats. Because of prior military use, safety briefings are required.

Information for Drawn Hunters:

- Drawn hunters can hunt in any numbered hunt unit on a first come first serve basis. Archery hunters can enter the gate at 5:30 am and must check out of the refuge by 8 p.m. Firearm hunters can enter the gate at 4:30 a.m. and must check out by 7 p.m. We ask that all hunters be respectful to each other when selecting areas to hunt. All numbered hunt areas on the refuge map are available for public hunting in 2026. Big Oaks is on Eastern Standard Time.
- Hunters will check-in deer themselves on the State DNR self-check portals. Field dressed deer or quartered deer with head must still be physically shown to staff at the refuge gate. Be sure you are checking deer in the Big Oaks NWR special hunt category and in the correct county.
- Portable deer stands are allowed for both archery and firearm hunts, but they need to be removed daily after each hunt. Tree steps or screw-in steps are prohibited. Intoxicants (including beer), fires, and ATVs are not permitted on the grounds during hunting.
- You are responsible for knowing and abiding by all refuge regulations. State regulations apply regarding Hunter Safety requirements and use of hunter orange. Pre-scouting is not permitted. We require all refuge hunters to hunt with a partner (and the partner can hunt). Deer hunters must possess and carry a compass/GPS to hunt at Big Oaks NWR.
- Big Oaks NWR is located on the former Jefferson Proving Ground where munitions were tested and unexploded munitions can still be found. **Do not touch or disturb any metal object.**

Contact:

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



Portions under construction. Please check at the office for current status.