

Text Copy Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge Hunt Regulations Brochure 2023- 2024

NOTE: You must: buy a Florida license or be exempt; buy a Go Outdoors Florida Refuge Quota Hunt Permit; and each hunter is responsible for everything in this regulations brochure and carry one on their person. Hunts are contingent upon law enforcement coverage.

The Annual Hunter Working Group meeting will be held at Refuge Headquarters on the third Thursday in April, at 2 pm. Contact the Refuge Manager (703-622-3896) to attend. Hunters can voluntarily provide their contact info for periodic updates at: <https://www.friendsofrefuges.org/hunter-signup.html>

General Information

Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge's (LSNWR) 53,000 acres along the Suwannee River in Dixie and Levy Counties has over 200 miles of roads and trails that provide vehicle, foot, or bicycle access to many habitat types open to a variety of public hunting and recreation opportunities.

All general Refuge and state regulations, mapped restrictions, and mapped designations apply unless specifically addressed in this leaflet. Please note that forest management or maintenance activities, including prescribed burns, mowing, and logging operations may occur at any time during the year. The Refuge reserves the right to temporarily close roads or land areas for any management reason without prior notification. Share the woods, the Refuge is open to other public uses during hunt seasons.

The following regulations supplement Florida state hunting regulations and general regulations governing hunting on LSNWR set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations.

Permit Requirements

Every adult hunter must purchase and possess a LSNWR Hunting Permit and a State of Florida Hunting License, unless otherwise exempt. A current LSNWR Hunt Regulations Brochure must be in possession in hard copy or electronically by all hunters age 16 and older. A LSNWR quota hunt permit is required for ages 16 and older during all Refuge hunts.

Quota permits can be purchased through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) licensing website <https://gooutdoorsflorida.com/>; <https://myfwc.com/license/limited-entry/> or other outlets that sell state licenses (Permit Vendor Code is 7800).

Youth hunters 15 and under are not required to possess a LSNWR hunt permit. Unless otherwise exempt, hunters are required to have appropriate archery, muzzleloader, deer, and turkey stamps/permits. Unless exempt, waterfowl hunters are required to have appropriate State and Federal waterfowl stamps.

Successful hunters are required to report their bag to the FWC's Harvest Reporting System within 24 hours of harvest. The FWC's Florida Hunting Regulations handbook is available at <https://myfwc.com/media/21998/deer-harvest-log.pdf> for deer harvest reporting instructions. These reports allow us to better determine population health, numbers, and stability.

NOTE: Absence of accurate and timely bag reports will result in shortened seasons or cancelled hunts.

General Hunting Regulations

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuges must comply with all provisions of State and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with Refuge regulations.

All motorized land vehicles must be state-legal and are restricted to designated primary roads shown on the map. Vehicles must park so they do not block roads or gates. If gates are closed you may walk or bike in. All-terrain vehicle use (ATV/UTV, etc.) is prohibited.

Hunters (including persons accompanying hunters) must comply with State of Florida fluorescent orange safety clothes requirements during all Refuge deer hunts except archery.

In addition to State of Florida hunter education requirements, hunters under the age of 16 must be supervised by an adult 18 years of age or older and must remain within sight and normal voice contact of the youth hunter. During Waterfowl, Small Game, and Family Hunts, one adult may supervise no more than two youth hunters. During Archery, Muzzleloader, General Gun, and Spring Turkey Hunts, the adult may supervise only one youth hunter.

Dogs may only be used as an aid to take raccoons during the raccoon night-hunting season and for waterfowl season. Otherwise, dogs must always be leashed under the direct control of the handler.

Hunters using the Refuge are subject to inspection of licenses, permits, hunting equipment, bag limits, vehicles and their contents, during compliance checks by a law officer.

Closed gates will be open one week before archery season.

Temporary tree stands may be left on the Refuge starting one week before Archery Season and must be removed one day after the end of General Gun Season. Temporary tree stands may be left on the Refuge starting one week before Wild Hog Season and must be removed one day after the end of that season. Gates will then be closed. All tree stands left on the refuge must display the hunter's hunting license number legibly written on or attached to the stand. Tree stands not in compliance may be confiscated and disposed of according to Federal Regulation.

The Refuge is not responsible for damage to or theft of stands.

Flagging, reflective markers, paint, litter, or pins may NOT be used for marking in any manner on refuge property. Clothes-type pins or removable clips with reflective or colored markings can be used for the temporary marking of vegetation to identify a route of travel to or from a tree stand. These pins must be removed by the end of each scheduled hunt season. Each clothes-type pin or clip must contain the hunter's hunting license number.

Hunters may enter no earlier than 1 and 1/2 hours before legal sunrise and must be out of the woods no later than 1 and 1/2 hours after legal sunset.

Special needs hunts are considered; call the Refuge to discuss such requests.

Prohibited Actions

- All commercial activities including guiding or participating in a guided hunt are prohibited.
- Target practice or any non-hunting discharge of a weapon is prohibited.
- Use of organized drives for hunting to take or attempting to take game is prohibited.

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- Marking any tree, or other Refuge feature with carving, flagging, litter, paint, or blaze is prohibited.
- Possession, intoxication, or use of alcoholic beverages is prohibited while on the Refuge.
- Camping, fires, littering, and horses are prohibited.
- Collecting or harvesting any articles of antiquity, plants, animals or parts thereof is prohibited unless specifically authorized by a Refuge permit.
- Cutting trees, removing wood or other plant matter from the Refuge is prohibited.
- Hunting or shooting from within 150-feet of Refuge roads, open to public vehicle travel, is prohibited.
- Hunting from a tree in which a metal object has been inserted is prohibited.
- Field dressing or discarding an animal carcass or parts thereof within 1000 feet of any developed public recreation area, game check station, gate, or within 100 feet of a road or trail, open to the public, is prohibited. Dumping of game carcasses is prohibited.
- Construction of permanent blinds or stands is prohibited.
- The placing of, or hunting with the aid of ingestible attractant (feed, bait, salt, oil) is prohibited.
- Driving any vehicle or boat on marshes or emergent aquatic vegetation, or through the forest off of public driving roads is prohibited.

Specific Hunt Regulations

HOGS: NO SIZE OR BAG LIMIT FOR HOGS

Shoot them all; take hogs during any season except Spring Turkey and Waterfowl.

In designated Archery Only Areas (see map), only bows and crossbows allowed. Coyote may be taken during Archery, Muzzleloader, General Gun, and Family Hunt seasons.

There is no taking of Swamp or Skunk Apes.

Legal Deer

Legal deer must have an antler with at least 2 points, 1 inch or more in length. Hunters 16 years of age and older may not take, during any season or by any method, an antlered deer not meeting this criterion. Youth 15-years-old and younger may harvest 1 deer annually not meeting antler criteria but having at least 1 antler 5 inches or more in length. Antlerless deer are deer that do not have antlers or have antlers less than 5 inches in length. It is illegal to take spotted fawns.

Waterfowl

State waterfowl season; ducks and coots only. Decoys and boats must be removed daily. Hunters must use and possess only shells containing non-toxic shot; <https://myfwc.com/hunting/regulations/birds/>

Archery

September 16 - October 15, 2023.

Archery and crossbow equipment allowed. Legal to take antlered or antlerless deer, wild hog, coyote, gray squirrel, rabbit, armadillo, opossum, and raccoon. Archery hunters can hunt all refuge lands open to hunting and during any season. Archery Only Areas (see map) are open during all hunts with approved archery equipment only.

Muzzleloader

October 21 – 29, 2023.

Muzzleloader firearms and archery equipment only; legal to take antlered deer and hogs.

General Gun (GG)

GG No. 1: November 4 - 12, 2023.

Legal to take antlered deer and hogs.

Thanksgiving GG - Family / Senior Hunt / Disabled Veterans

November 17 - 19, 2023.

Up to 2 youth hunters (less than 16 years old) may hunt but must be supervised by an adult 18 years of age or older.

Supervising adults may also hunt but must accompany at least 1 youth hunter.

Senior adult hunters (65 years of age or over) and Disabled Veterans may also hunt and may be accompanied by 1 companion of any age that may also hunt.

Allowed: legal deer, antlerless deer, and hogs. The FWC's Antlerless Deer Season (Deer Management Unit C3) bag limits apply during this hunt.

GG No. 2: Happy Thanksgiving

November 21 - 27, 2023

Legal to take antlered deer and hogs (no antlers on hogs...)

Wild Hog Hunt (take 'em all!)

January 27 – February 11, 2024

Legal to take hogs only (no size or bag limit).

Small Game

January 27 – February 11, 2024

Legal to take gray squirrel, armadillo, opossum, rabbit, and raccoon.

Raccoon/Opossum

January 27 – February 10, 2024

Night dog hunting only, from sunset until midnight. State regulations, weapons, and ammunition requirements apply. Limit two raccoons per night.

Youth Spring Gobbler Hunt

March 9 - 10, 2024

Only youth under 16 years of age may hunt and must be under the supervision and in the presence of an adult 18 years of age or older.

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The youth hunter must carry the firearm.

Accompanying adults must have required licenses and permits for the Refuge but may not harvest a wild turkey. Shooting hours from ½ hour before legal sunrise until legal sunset. Bearded turkeys only.

Only bows, crossbows, pre-charged pneumatic air guns propelling a bolt or arrow, and shotguns using a #2 or smaller shot size may be used for hunting.

Turkey (Spring Season)

March 16 – April 7, 2024

Bearded turkeys only. Shooting hours from 1/2 hour before legal sunrise until legal sunset.

Only bows, crossbows propelling a bolt or arrow, pre-charged pneumatic air guns, and shotguns using a #2 or smaller shot size may be used for hunting.

Questions/Concerns, reports of violations:

Report Violations to: 888-404-3922 or *392 Questions/Feedback: Andrew Gude, Refuge Manager 703-622-3896

Need a paper copy of this brochure?

Send a self-addressed stamped envelope for each brochure to:

Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge
16450 NW 31st Place, Chiefland, Florida 32626

Phone: 352-493-0238 ext. 224, or call/text 703-622-3896.

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