

News Release

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July 13, 2016

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Service Proposes Expansion of Hunting and Fishing Opportunities on National Wildlife Refuges

The value to Americans provided by [national wildlife refuges](#) was highlighted today when U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe announced the agency is proposing to expand hunting and fishing opportunities at 13 national wildlife refuges across the United States. This includes migratory bird, upland game, big game hunting and sport fishing.

Hunting for elk is proposed for the first time in designated areas of Baca National Wildlife Refuge in Colorado, as well as in expanded areas of Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge and Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, both in Colorado.

The proposed rule also includes opening sport fishing of state-regulated species for the first time at Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota, and expanding areas available for sport fishing at Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge in Indiana. In addition, the proposal modifies existing refuge-specific regulations on more than 70 additional refuges and wetland management districts throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Hunting and fishing are just two of the many recreational activities available to the public across an unparalleled network of more than 560 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts. There is a national wildlife refuge within an hour's drive from most major metropolitan areas. The Service manages hunting and fishing programs to ensure sustainable wildlife populations, while offering traditional wildlife-dependent recreation on public lands, such as wildlife watching and photography. In addition, the Service's [Urban Wildlife Conservation Program](#), launched in 2013, is providing new opportunities for residents of America's cities to learn about and take part in wildlife habitat conservation.

"The highly successful North American model of wildlife conservation is founded on our nation's great hunting and fishing heritage," said Ashe. "This tradition was the primary driver behind the creation of the Refuge System that has since set aside millions of acres of land for the conservation of all wildlife, and so where it is compatible with refuge management goals and other recreational activities, we are pleased to be able to expand hunting and fishing opportunities."

Hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities contributed more than \$144.7 billion in economic activity across the United States according to the Service's [National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation](#), published every five years. More than 90 million Americans, or 41 percent of the United States' population age 16 and older, pursue wildlife-related recreation. The Service's report [Banking](#)

[on Nature](#) shows that refuges pump \$2.4 billion into the economy and support more than 35,000 jobs. More than 47 million visits are made to refuges every year.

“With America becoming ever more urban and its citizens increasingly divorced from nature, it is becoming critical that we find ways to foster connections between people and the natural world,” Ashe added. “As any outdoorsman or outdoorswoman will tell you, there are few better ways than to be outdoors sitting by the water’s edge with a rod and reel or wading in the shallows of a natural wetland habitat while waterfowl fly overhead.”

The Service proposes opening the following refuge to hunting for the first time:

Colorado

- [Baca National Wildlife Refuge](#): Open migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is currently closed to public use activities.

The Service proposes opening the following refuge to sport fishing for the first time:

South Dakota

- [Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge](#): Open sport fishing. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting.

The Service also proposes expanding hunting and sport fishing on the following refuges:

Colorado

- [Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge](#): Expand migratory game bird hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting and upland game hunting.
- [Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge](#): Expand migratory game bird hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting and upland game hunting.

Indiana

- [Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge](#) and Management Area: Expand migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting, big game hunting and sport fishing. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting, big game hunting and sport fishing.

Louisiana

- [Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge](#): Expand big game hunting. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting, big game hunting and sport fishing.
- [Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge](#): Expand migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting, big game hunting and sport fishing.

Michigan

- [Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge](#): Expand migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting.

New York

- [Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge](#): Expand migratory game bird hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting, big game hunting and sport fishing.

Oklahoma

- [Washita National Wildlife Refuge](#): Expand big game hunting. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting, big game hunting and sport fishing.

South Carolina

- [Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge](#): Expand migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting and big game hunting. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting, upland game hunting, big game hunting and sport fishing.

Texas

- [Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge](#): Expand migratory game bird hunting. The refuge is already open to migratory game bird hunting and sport fishing.
- [Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge](#): Expand big game hunting. The refuge is already open to upland game hunting.

The Service is seeking comments from the public for 30 days regarding information pertaining to the proposed rule. Please go to www.regulations.gov, docket no. FWS-HQ-NWRS-2016-0007, for additional information. The proposed rule will publish in the *Federal Register* on July 14, 2016, comments must be received by August 15, 2016.

Under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, the Service permits hunting and fishing along with four other types of wildlife-dependent recreation, including wildlife photography, environmental education, wildlife observation and interpretation, when they are compatible with an individual refuge's purpose and mission. [Hunting](#), within specified limits, is now permitted on 336 wildlife refuges. [Fishing](#) is now permitted on 275 wildlife refuges.

To learn more about hunting and sport fishing opportunities on refuges, click [here](#).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through any of these social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#).