

General Introduction

Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1980, is located in the Tensas River Basin in northeastern Louisiana. The refuge is composed of extensive bottomland hardwood forests intermingled with sloughs, swamps and lakes that support a tremendous diversity of wildlife. Public Use, including hunting and fishing, is governed by this brochure and the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) mentioned below.

General Regulations

Hunting and fishing regulations are designed to protect the sportsman and wildlife populations. The regulations below supplement the general regulations which govern hunting the National Wildlife Refuge System as set forth in Title 50 of the CFR. Hunting will be in accordance with applicable State regulations subject to the following conditions. All activities are prohibited unless permitted by this brochure. Prohibited activities include but are not limited to littering, camping/overnight parking, fires, use of metal detectors and unleashed pets.

Required Permits

Annual Public Use Permit

(Required for all hunters and fishermen 16 years of age and older)

An Annual Public Use Permit is required for participation in any refuge hunting or fishing season. This permit allows users to participate in all refuge hunts (except Quota Modern Firearms Deer Hunts) and other permissible activities, and acknowledges your understanding of the regulations contained in this brochure.

Permits are available online at <https://tensas.isportsman.net>. Money orders are no longer accepted at the Visitor Center to purchase the Annual Public Use Permit. Permit cost is \$20 per person and includes the ability to use an ATV on designated trails. This permit is required of anglers and boaters who park a vehicle and/or launch from anywhere on the refuge. Office hours are from Tuesday-Thursday, 8 am until 3:30 pm. It is advised to call ahead before traveling to the Visitor Center to ensure it will be open during the listed times.

Self-Clearing Permit (Required)

An orange Self-Clearing Permit (OMB Control No. 1018-0153) is required for all activities (hunting, fishing, hiking, bird watching, sight-seeing, etc.) on the Refuge unless otherwise specified. Self-Clearing Permits are not required for persons only traveling through the refuge provided that the most direct route is taken and no activities or stops take place. Self-Clearing Permits can be obtained at refuge entry points and at the Visitor Center. Self-Clearing Permits consist of three portions: Check-In, Check-Out and a Vehicle Tag.

Check-In Portion: This top portion must be completed daily and put in a permit box prior to the day's activity.

Check-Out Portion: This middle portion must be carried by each person while on the refuge. To complete the self-clearing process, both front and back of the check-out portion must be completed. Please completely fill out the card with information including whether or not game was harvested, hours spent, species hunted and method used. This completed portion must be put in a permit box immediately upon exiting the refuge at the end of each day.

Vehicle Tag Portion: Each person parking an automobile on the refuge must leave their vehicle tag (bottom portion of card) on the dashboard of the vehicle used to enter the refuge with the date and permit number facing up so that they can be easily read from outside of the vehicle. Each person riding in the vehicle should also display their vehicle tag so that all permit numbers can be read from outside of the vehicle. This must be done only when the vehicle is parked and left unattended on the refuge.

Refuge Access During Hunting Season

Users may access the refuge from 4 am until two hours after legal sunset, unless they are participating in the night raccoon hunt or frog hunt (see Frog Hunting). During refuge-wide open youth, antlerless, quota modern firearm and primitive weapon deer hunts, all other public use (including but not limited to small game hunting, scouting, birdwatching, hiking, etc.) is prohibited. Refuge roads including Quebec, Crystal, Fina and the Mill road will be closed from 9 pm until 3 am. Parish roads are not subject to this restriction. This provision does not apply to private inholders providing a copy of their Special Use Permit.

Refuge Access Outside of Hunting Season

Users utilizing the refuge outside of hunting season may access the refuge from 1 hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset. Refuge roads including Quebec, Crystal, Fina and the Mill road will be closed from one hour after sunset until one hour before sunrise. Parish roads are not subject to this restriction. This provision does not apply to private inholders providing a copy of their Special Use Permit.

Motor Vehicles and ATVs

All motor vehicles are restricted to normal passenger vehicle roads. Roads and trails may be closed to vehicle use due to adverse conditions.

We allow ATV travel on designated trails for hunting and/or fishing access only from October 7 to February 29 (from 4 am until two hours after legal sunset) by permit only. ATV travel is prohibited on refuge roads. Motor vehicle access is allowed on the Wildlife Drive from sunrise until sunset, except during firearm deer hunts when the refuge

is closed to all other activities. The Wildlife Drive is open to foot traffic and bike use. Temporary closures may occur due to biological monitoring and will be posted on the Tensas River Refuge Association website.

We define an ATV as an off-road vehicle not legal for highway use designed to travel on 3 or 4 wheels, having a seat designed to be straddled by the operator and handlebars for steering control with factory specifications not to exceed the following: 750 pounds, 85 inches long, 48 inches wide and tires no larger than 26" x 12" with maximum 1" lug height and maximum allowable tire pressure of 12 PSI. The use of UTVs (side-by-sides) is prohibited. The speed limit on all refuge roads and ATV trails is 25 MPH unless otherwise posted.

No trailers may be pulled behind an ATV. Using an ATV or bike to travel off of a designated trail in order to retrieve game, or for any other reason, is strictly prohibited.

Bicycles (non-motorized and motorized)

Non-motorized and motorized, electric bicycles (E-bikes) are permitted on roads and **maintained** trails, including ATV trails. A **maintained** road, fire break, or trail is defined as one which has been mowed, disked, or bulldozed and is free of trees. Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 E-bikes, as defined by 15 U.S.C. 2085, are allowed where other types of bicycles are allowed, and are prohibited where other types of bicycles are prohibited. Non-motorized and motorized, electric bicycles (E-bikes) are allowed year-round.

All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Permit

Annual Public Use Permits (see Required Permits) are now required instead of a separate ATV permit. To use an ATV on the Refuge, hunters must purchase their Annual Public Use Permit (see Required Permits) which allows them to use ATVs on designated trails without an additional sticker or permit.

Louisiana Black Bears

It is unlawful for anyone to take, harass, disturb, and/or harm any Louisiana black bear. All refuge users are encouraged to carry bear spray and visit the refuge website for more information. **NEVER FEED OR APPROACH BEARS.**

Always use good hunter ethics and make sure of your target. The Louisiana black bear can be mistaken for a black feral hog in palmetto or heavy cover, so always clearly identify your target. Read the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service brochure "Hunting in Louisiana Black Bear Habitat" for more information.

Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge
2312 Quebec Road
Tallulah, LA 71282

318-574-2664

<https://fws.gov/refuge/tensas-river>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

<http://www.fws.gov/southeast>

1 800/344 WILD

July 2023



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Tensas River

National Wildlife Refuge Hunting and Fishing Regulations 2023-2024



All Refuge hunters and fishermen 16 years of age and older are now required to purchase an Annual Public Use Permit. These permits are available online at <https://tensas.isportsman.net>. Cost is \$20 per person. This permit allows individuals to participate in open (non-quota) hunting and fishing seasons in accordance with all other rules and regulations.

Specific Fishing Regulations

Sport Fishing - State creel limits and regulations apply.

Trotlines - Trotlines must be attached with a length of cotton line that extends into the water, must be tended at least once every 24 hours and reset when exposed by receding waters. Trotlines must be removed when not in use.

Frog Hunting - Frog hunting may occur by any legal means in the Tensas River and Indian Lake only. State bag limits and seasons apply.

Boating - State regulations apply. Boats may not be left overnight on the refuge. We allow non-motorized boats, electric motors, and outboard motors not greater than 10 HP to be operated in all refuge lakes, streams and bayous with the exception of Indian Lake and the Tensas River. Outboard motors greater than 10 HP may be used in Indian Lake and the Tensas River according to state regulations.

Specific Hunting Regulations

Hunters are authorized to take only species listed within this brochure. Harming or needlessly disturbing any plants or other wildlife is prohibited.

Prohibited Activities:

- Hunting, or shooting within 150 feet of a designated public road, refuge maintained road, trail, fire breaks, dwellings, above ground oil, gas, electrical transmission facilities or designated public facility. A **maintained** road, fire break, or trail is defined as one which has been mowed, disked or bulldozed annually and is free of trees.
- Possession or distribution of bait while in the field and hunting with the aid of bait, including any grain, salt, minerals or any non-naturally occurring food attractant on the refuge
- Spot-lighting; use of artificial light to locate wildlife
- Blocking trails, gates or roadways with vehicles
- Use or possession of night vision equipment
- Possession of limb saws, tree cutting saws or any other equipment of this nature
- Man-drives for game
- Use or possession of deer or male turkey decoys
- Use of or installation of all trail cameras
- Collection or the take of any articles of antiquity, plants, wildlife or their parts is prohibited unless specifically authorized
- Use or possession of alcohol while hunting or fishing
- Trapping

- Target practice
- Use or possession of any type of material to be used as flagging or trail markers and reflective tape, except bright eyes and clip-on trail markers clearly labeled with the hunter's name, LDWF license number and I-Sportsman permit number
- Field dressing game or cleaning fish within 150 feet of parking areas, maintained roads or trails

Youth Hunters

All individuals 17 years of age and younger are defined as youths and must be under the direct supervision of an adult. Supervising adults must be 18 years of age or older with proof of successful completion of a hunter education course approved by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Individuals born before September 1, 1969 may also supervise youths as long as they possess a valid hunting license. Youths ages 16 and 17 must also have hunter education certification in accordance with state regulations. Youths under the age of 16 may hunt with or without hunter education. Youth hunters applying for the youth lottery hunt must be 8-15 years old before the 1st day of the hunt.

Direct supervision means that the person being supervised is within a normal audible voice contact and in direct line of sight of the supervising person at all times while hunting. The supervising adult is responsible for ensuring that youth hunters do not engage in conduct that would constitute a violation of refuge regulations. Persons supervising youth hunters are responsible for violations of laws and regulations committed by the youth hunter(s) they are supervising while on the refuge. Please see hunting season tables for specific supervision requirements.

Physically Challenged Hunters

Hunters under 60 years of age who wish to use the refuge's Mobility Impaired ATV trails must possess LDWF's Physically Challenged Hunter Permit (or similar out of state equivalent). More information about this program can be found at <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/speciallicenses-and-permits>. The application for this permit must be completed by a Physician licensed to practice medicine by the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners. Hunters 60 years of age and older may use the trails without LDWF's Physically Challenged Hunter Permit. Physically challenged users may bring one person along to assist them.

Firearms and Ammunition

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on Refuge must comply with all provisions of state and local laws. Refuge

users may only possess approved nontoxic shot while on the refuge, with the exception that lead shot is allowed during turkey hunting season only. Use and/or possession of buckshot is prohibited.

Tree Stands and Ground Blinds

Deer hunters may not leave deer stands unattended before the first day of the refuge-wide, open youth deer hunt and must remove stands by the last day of the refuge archery season. Each hunter can only bring one stand. If left unattended, the stand must be clearly labeled with the hunter's name, LDWF license number and I-Sportsman permit number. Portable stands must be removed from trees and placed flat on the ground at the end of each day's hunt and free-standing stands must be placed in a non-hunting position when unattended (a non-hunting position is one in which a hunter could not hunt from the stand in its present position).

Use or possession of nails, spikes, or any screw-in device for climbing trees or for attaching a stand to a tree is prohibited. Hunting from deer stands left attached to trees (climbing or leaning) or in free-standing stands left in hunting position overnight is prohibited.

Ground blinds must be placed in non-hunting position when unattended. If left unattended, the blind must be clearly marked with hunter's name, LDWF license number and I-Sportsman permit number. Deer hunters hunting from concealed ground blinds must display a minimum of 400 square inches of solid hunter orange above or around their blinds that is visible from 360 degrees.

Signs Protect Visitors and Resources

Millions of people visit national wildlife refuges each year. The impact of human activity, if not regulated, can degrade these wildlands. Signs control recreational activities while protecting natural resources on the Refuge. Please respect the refuge signs identified in this brochure.



This sign marks the outer refuge boundary. Public entry by foot is generally authorized during legal hours on Tensas River NWR. Boundaries are also designated by yellow paint on trees.



This sign means that the area is closed to all public entry. Do not trespass behind this sign for any reason other than emergency. Closed Areas are also designated by red paint on trees.



This sign means that the area is closed to hunting. This area can be walked across as long as your firearm is unloaded.

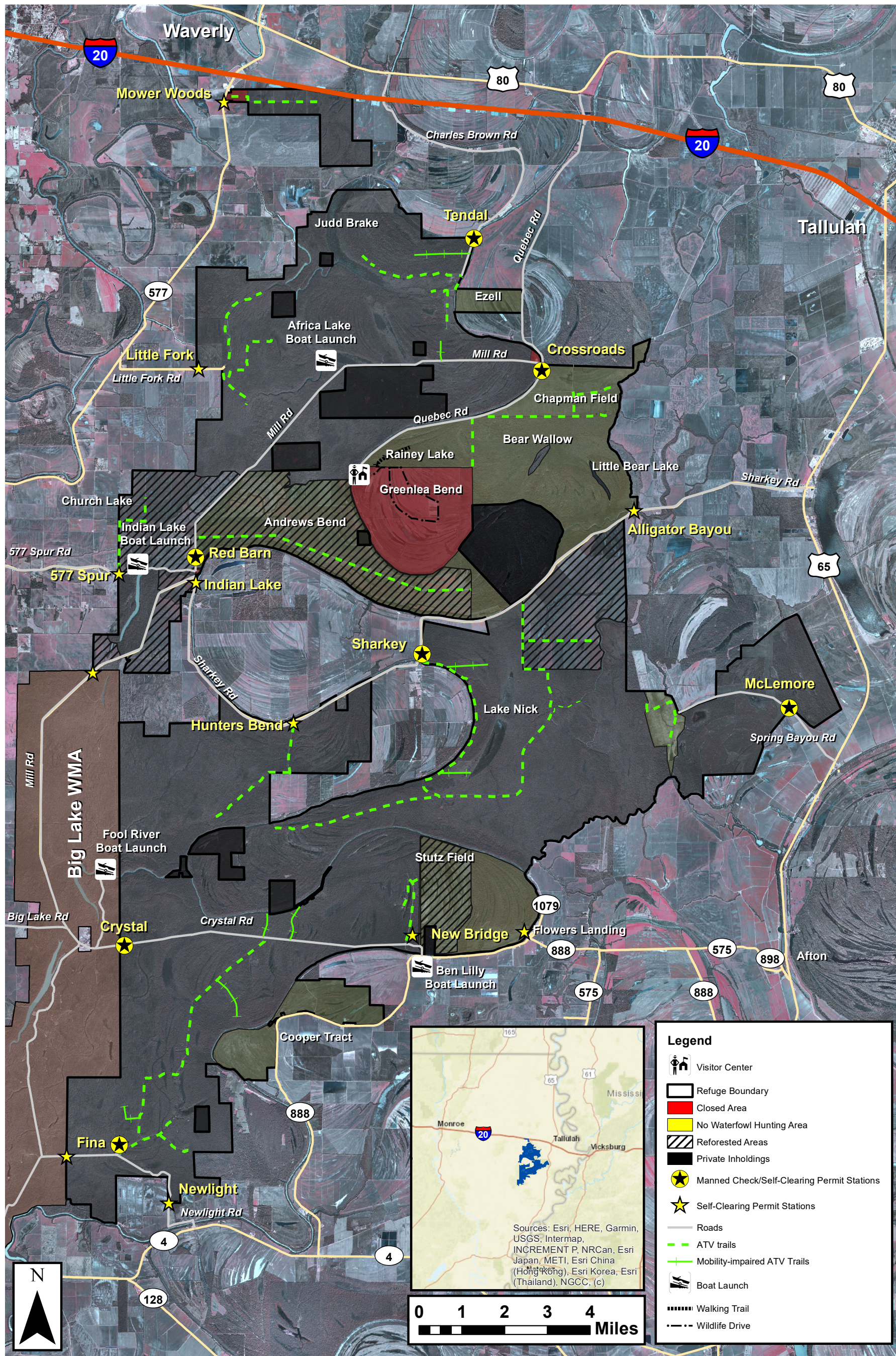
2023-2024 Hunting Seasons

State tagging system, bag limits, and regulations apply unless otherwise specified.

Within 72 hours the hunter must validate the harvest. Hunters may validate deer by utilizing text-to-tag, tagging through the LDWF web portal or the LDWF web portal via LA Wallet or by calling the validation toll free number, 225-267-9998 or using the validation website: www.LouisianaOutdoors.com, even if checked at a manned check station.

Hunt	Season Dates	Bag Limits	Regulations
Small Game - Squirrel and Rabbit (without dogs)	October 7–December 31, 2023	State bag limits apply	No small game hunting in closed areas. Each adult may supervise no more than 2 youth hunters. Closed during refuge-wide open youth, antlerless, quota modern firearm and primitive weapon deer hunts.
Small Game - Squirrel and Rabbit (with or without dogs)	January 1–February 29, 2024	State bag limits apply	Solid hunter orange or blaze pink cap required. No more than 3 dogs per hunting party. No small game hunting in closed areas. Each adult may supervise no more than 2 youth hunters.
Night Raccoon	January 6–February 29, 2024	State bag limits apply	Use of dogs and lights is approved. Horses and mules allowed from legal sunset to legal sunrise. Hunters must attempt to take treed raccoons. No more than 3 dogs per hunting party.
Woodcock	December 18, 2023–January 31, 2024	State bag limits apply	No more than 3 dogs per hunting party. Each adult may supervise no more than 2 youth hunters.
Waterfowl (Ducks, Geese, Snipe and Coots)	Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays of regular State Season until 2 pm	State bag limits apply	No hunting in closed areas or areas designated as no waterfowl hunting areas (see map). Constructing and/or hunting from permanent or pit blinds is prohibited. Portable blinds and decoys must be removed daily by 3 pm. No more than 3 dogs per hunting party. Each adult may supervise no more than 2 youth hunters. Closed during refuge-wide open youth, antlerless, quota modern firearm and primitive weapon deer hunts
Waterfowl - Youth	November 11, 2023 and February 3, 2024	State bag limits apply	Each youth must be 8-17 years old before the 1st day of the hunt. All youths must be supervised by an adult 18 years or older. Each adult may supervise no more than 2 youth hunters.
Turkey	April 6-14, 2024	Limit 1 gobbler per day, 2 gobblers per season	Adult may supervise no more than 1 youth hunter. Use and/or possession of male turkey decoys is prohibited. Use of lead shot is allowed.
Turkey - Youth	March 29-31, 2024	Limit 1 gobbler per day, 2 gobblers per season	Each youth must be 8-17 years old before the 1st day of the hunt. All youths must be supervised by an adult 18 years or older. See youth definition under Special Hunting Regulations. Adult may supervise no more than 1 youth hunter.
Incidental Species (coyote, beaver, raccoon, opossum, feral hog, nutria, armadillo)	October 7, 2023-February 29, 2024 and during refuge turkey season	State bag limits apply	Incidental species may be harvested with weapons legal for the day. No incidental species may be harvested during nighttime raccoon hunts.

Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge



2023-2024 Deer Hunting Seasons

State tagging system, bag limits, and regulations apply unless otherwise specified.

Within 72 hours the hunter must validate the harvest. Hunters may validate deer by utilizing text-to-tag, tagging through the LDWF web portal or the LDWF web portal via LA Wallet or by calling the validation toll free number, 225-267-9998 or using the validation website: www.LouisianaOutdoors.com, even if checked at a manned check station.

A leashed dog may be used to retrieve wounded or unrecovered deer during legal hunting hours and until 2 hours after legal hunting hours; however, no person accompanying a dog after legal hunting hours may be in possession of a firearm, bow, crossbow or any other means of take while in the field. Any leashed dog used to trail or retrieve wounded or unrecovered deer must wear a collar bearing the owner's name, address and phone number.

Hunt	Season Dates	Bag Limits	Regulations
Deer - Archery	November 4, 2023– January 31, 2024	Limit 1 deer per day, antlered or antlerless	Closed during Refuge-Wide Youth and Quota Modern Firearm deer hunts. Use and/or possession of pods, chemical drugs or explosive tips is prohibited. Hunters using archery equipment during the Antlerless Gun hunt must follow additional regulations. See below: Longbow, compound bow, and crossbow or any bow drawn, held, or released by mechanical means are legal means of take. Persons possessing, transporting or carrying firearms on the refuge must comply with all provisions of state and local laws.
Deer - Youth (Refugewide, Open Youth)	October 28-29, 2023	Limit 1 deer per day, antlered or antlerless	Each youth must be 8-17 years old before the 1st day of the hunt. Adult may supervise no more than 1 youth. Primitive weapon, muzzleloader, or modern firearms are authorized methods of take. Scouting in, hunting in and/or shooting into or across reforested or closed areas is prohibited. All hunters must wear and display 400 square inches of solid hunter orange or blaze pink vest and a solid hunter orange cap or blaze pink cap when in the field. All other public use is prohibited.
Deer - Antlerless (General Gun)	November 11, 2023	Limit 1 deer per day, antlerless	Archery equipment, primitive weapon, muzzleloader, or modern firearm are authorized methods of take. Scouting in, hunting in and/or shooting into or across reforested or closed areas is prohibited. Hunters using primitive weapons or muzzleloaders must follow all modern firearms regulations (no hunting in reforested areas). Hunters using archery equipment must follow all modern firearm regulations (including all hunter orange or blaze pink requirements and no hunting in reforested areas). All hunters must wear and display 400 square inches of solid hunter orange or blaze pink vest and a solid hunter orange or blaze pink cap when in the field. Deer harvested during this hunt must be self-cleared using the orange Self-Clearing Permit (See Self-Clearing Permit section). Adult may supervise no more than 1 youth. All other public use is prohibited.
Deer - Quota (Modern Firearm)	November 24-25, 2023 December 9-10, 2023	Limit 1 deer per day, antlered or antlerless	A valid permit is required for the Deer Quota Hunt in addition to an Annual Public Use Permit, a Self-Clearing Permit, and valid state license and tags. Please see application instructions below. Only those persons with valid Quota Modern Firearm permits may be present on the Refuge during the Quota Modern Firearm hunts. Youths ages 8-17 may apply but MUST be grouped with a person 18 years of age or older who will supervise and be responsible for any violations of laws and regulations committed by the youth. Each adult may only supervise one youth. Primitive weapon, muzzleloader, or modern firearms are the only authorized methods of take. Scouting in, hunting in and/or shooting into or across reforested or closed areas is prohibited. Hunters using primitive weapons or muzzleloaders must follow all modern firearms regulations (no hunting in reforested areas). All hunters must wear and display 400 square inches of solid hunter orange or blaze pink vest and a solid hunter orange or blaze pink cap when in the field. Deer harvested during the November 24-25 Quota hunt must be self-cleared using the orange Self-Clearing Permit (see Self-Clearing Permit section). Deer harvested during the December 9-10 Quota hunt must be checked at a manned check station on the first day (8 am-7 pm) and second morning (8 am-2 pm). Deer may not be skinned/quartered nor have any external body parts removed, including but not limited to feet, legs, tail, head or ears before being checked out during this hunt. Manned check stations include: Tendal, Crossroads, Red Barn, Sharkey, McLemore, Crystal and Fina. Outside of these hours, deer must be self-cleared using the orange Self-Clearing Permit (See Self-Clearing Permit section). How to Apply All Deer Quota Hunts require an application to be completed and processed online. Refer to the refuge website for complete application instructions. Every applicant must register for an account which will enable them to check on their status and receive notifications. Please provide an email address when signing up. The application period for quota deer hunts will open on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023 and will remain open through Saturday, September 30, 2023. The drawing will take place the week of October 2nd, 2023. Hunters will be notified of their drawing status no later than 11:59 pm on Saturday, October 14, 2023. Payment: If drawn for the hunt, there is no additional fee. However, hunters MUST purchase a \$20 Annual Public Use Permit (see required permit section) to obtain their Quota Hunt Permit. Permits are nontransferable and non-refundable. 2-5 individuals may apply and be processed as a group or hunt party. Hunters may only enter one application for modern quota firearm hunts. This year, hunters will have the option to select first and second preference for the hunts. No re-draw will be conducted. One drawing will occur per hunt. All other public use is prohibited.
Deer - Primitive Weapon	December 2-3, 2023	Limit 1 deer per day, antlered or antlerless	Archery equipment, primitive weapon, and muzzleloader are authorized methods of take. Hunting in and shooting into or across a closed area is prohibited. Hunters using primitive weapons will be allowed in reforested areas. All hunters must wear and display 400 square inches of solid hunter orange or blaze pink vest and a solid hunter orange or blaze pink cap when in the field. Deer harvested during this hunt must be self-cleared using the orange Self-Clearing Permit (See Self-Clearing Permit section). An adult may supervise no more than 1 youth. Youth are prohibited from the use of modern firearms. All other public use is prohibited. Primitive Weapon Definition 1. Rifles or pistols, .44 caliber minimum, or shotguns 10 gauge or smaller, all of which must load exclusively from the muzzle or cap and ball cylinder, use black powder or approved substitute only, take ball or bullet projectile only, including sabot bullets, including primitive firearms known as "in-line" primitive firearms. 2. Single shot, breech loading rifles, .35 caliber or larger, having an exposed hammer that use metallic cartridges loaded either with black powder or modern smokeless powder. All of the above may be fitted with magnified scopes. 3. Single shot, breech loading shotguns, 10 gauge or smaller, having an exposed hammer, loaded with rifled slug. USE AND/OR POSSESSION OF BUCKSHOT IS PROHIBITED.
Deer - Youth Lottery	December 16, 2023	Limit 1 deer per day, antlered or antlerless	Each youth must be 8-15 years old before the 1st day of the hunt. Both Youth Lottery Hunts require an application to be completed and processed online. Refer to the refuge and I-Sportsman websites for complete application instructions. The application period for Youth Lottery Hunts will open on Tuesday, August 1, 2023 and will remain open through Saturday, Sep. 30, 2023. The drawing will take place the week of Oct. 2nd. Hunters will be notified of their drawing status no later than 11:59 pm on Saturday, Oct. 14, 2023. Each hunter may only apply one time for one hunt. Group applications are not allowed. Primitive weapon, muzzleloader, or modern firearms are authorized methods of take. Areas within 200 yards of the Closed Area boundary are closed to all public access and hunting on the days of these hunts.
Deer - Full-Time Wheelchair User (Wheelin' Sportsmen)	December 2, 2023	Limit 1 deer per day, antlered or antlerless	This hunt is held in conjunction with the Tensas River Refuge Association and the National Wild Turkey Federation. This hunt requires an application to be completed and processed online. Refer to the refuge and I-Sportsman websites for complete application instructions. The application period for the hunt will open from Tuesday, August 1, 2023 and will remain open through Saturday, Sep. 30, 2023. Certification is required through the LDWF Physically Challenged Hunter Program (or similar out of state equivalent) and applicants must be classified as Class 1; wheelchair bound to participate in this hunt. Users must submit proof of eligibility to the NWT (Ronda Johnson 318-349-4829) within 14 days after selection to be eligible for this hunt. Areas within 200 yards of the Closed Area boundary are closed to all public access.