

# Trump pushes expanded hunting, fishing in wildlife refuges

Wildlife refuge could see goose hunting

By MONICA SAMAYOA  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

A proposed rule to open or expand millions of acres of hunting and fishing opportunities in national wildlife refuges and national fish hatcheries is open for public comment.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed to open or expand more than 2.3 million acres to hunting and fishing opportunities in 97 national wildlife refuges throughout the nation — eight which have never been opened before.

The rule would introduce or expand hunting in three national wildlife refuges in Oregon. It would also open and expand fishing and hunting opportunities on the lands and rivers associated with nine fish hatcheries, five which are in Washington state.

This proposed rule would result in the service's largest expansion of hunting and fishing in history, creating what the Trump administration is calling nearly 900 "distinct new hunting and fishing opportunities."

Last year, the administration expanded hunting and fishing in 77 national wildlife refuges across more than 1.4 million acres nationwide.

"America's hunters and anglers now have something significant to look forward to in the fall as we plan to open and expand hunting and fishing opportunities across more acreage nationwide than the entire state of Delaware," U.S. Secretary of Interior David L. Bernhardt said in a press release in April.

Steve Pedery, conservation director of Oregon Wild, a conservation organization, said he worries about how land managers will be able to manage and ensure



Hunters at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge last November.

Brent Lawrence/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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the public are following the new rules. He said he has not seen a management plan from any wildlife refuge outlining how the agency went through and analyzed these lands.

Pedery said without a management plan, increased human activity could have devastating results in Western locations where wildfire is a big problem.

"If you are being a responsible land manager,

you don't just do this on the spur of the moment, you should have a plan for how you're going to roll it out and then how you're going to ensure that people use these lands responsibly," he said.

In Oregon the rule would propose to open the Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge 32 miles southwest of Portland to hunting for the first time. Waterfowl hunting would open on approx-

imately 275 acres in alignment with state regulations.

In southeast Oregon, Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge would add migratory bird hunting of duck, goose and coot for the first time on the refuge. The rule would propose to expand upland game hunting of chukar and California quail as well as big game hunting of deer, antelope and bighorn sheep in designated areas.

Sport fishing would also be

allowed.

On the Oregon Coast, Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge would propose to open the refuge to goose hunting for the first time on 137 acres that are currently open to waterfowl hunting. It would also add an additional 32 hunting days.

In Washington state, land and waters associated with three national fish hatcheries located in the Columbia River Gorge's Skamania County — Spring Creek, Willard and Little White Salmon — would open for sport fishing or game hunting for the first time.

The Willapa National Wildlife Refuge on Washington state's south coast would propose to open and expand deer and elk hunting on new designated areas. The Abernathy Fish Tech-

nology Center in the lower Columbia River town of Longview, Washington, would offer sport fishing for the first time.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, specific management plans have been developed for each specific refuge prior to opening it to hunting or sport fishing. The agency ensures continued compliance by the development of comprehensive conservation plans, step-down management plans and biannual review of hunting and sport fishing programs and regulations.

Public comment for the proposed rule is opened through June 8. The agency will review and consider all information and comments as they move forward with developing a final rule.

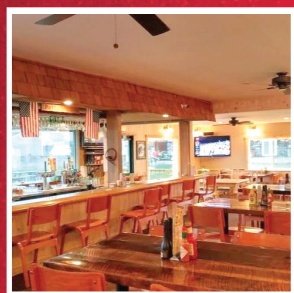
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Questions? E-mail Jonathan Williams at [jwilliams@dailystorian.com](mailto:jwilliams@dailystorian.com)