



# **IDNR Announces Health and Safety Protocols and Procedures Implemented for Waterfowl Hunting Sites**

October 13 2020 2:11 PM

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) today announced updated health and safety protocols and procedures that have been developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for implementation during the 2020-21 waterfowl hunting seasons at IDNR sites.

The procedures outlined below are intended to minimize or eliminate direct contact among site users and IDNR staff, helping keep all individuals safe and ensuring that hunting can take place at IDNR sites.

Some of the new procedures may represent significant changes from previous hunting seasons and the IDNR appreciates hunters' patience and flexibility in following the new requirements. Since opening day at public waterfowl hunting sites is always the busiest day of the season, hunters should plan to arrive early and be patient as some procedures may require additional time before hunting can begin.

Hunters should follow all public health guidelines issued by the Illinois Department of Public Health, including wearing masks when social distancing cannot be achieved, carrying hand sanitizer, and refraining from congregating in parking lot areas. Through responsible actions, hunters can help ensure that site hunting programs continue to offer Illinoisans healthy outdoor recreation opportunities.

There will be no traditional public participation drawings for hunting blinds or stakes. Hunting location assignment will be allocated individually (see below and check with sites for specific details).

Site check-in procedures and harvest reporting information will be posted on the IDNR website on the public hunting sites' webpages, as well as being posted at each site.

General information is available for most waterfowl hunting sites below. To review specific procedures at each site, please visit the IDNR website here:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/FactSheets/Pages/AllRegions.aspx>

Or HuntIllinois.org here:

<https://huntillinois.org/waterfowl/>

Click on “Waterfowl Specific Regulations”

Procedures for each site are also listed on site-specific pages.

**Follow these guidelines at sites that do not assign hunt locations (freelance or first-come, first-served sites):**

Hunters must remain at their vehicles until the time specified when hunters may enter the site.

Hunters will use contactless check-in (if required; sign-in/sign-out, harvest card, etc.) and proceed directly to their preferred hunting location, avoiding contact with other hunters.

Sites: Cache River SNA, Campbell Pond SHA, Cape Bend SFWA, Carlyle Lake SFWA, Chauncey Marsh SNA, Chouteau/Gabaret/Mosenthein Islands SFWA, Clinton Lake SRA (excluding Salt Creek management unit), Coffeen Lake SFWA, Copperhead Hollow SWMA, Cypress Pond SNA, Deer Pond SNA, Devil’s Island SWMA, Dog Island SWMA, Eldon Hazlet SRA, Fort de Chartres SHS, Fort Massac SP, Fox Ridge SP, Freeman Mine SHA, Henderson Creek SFWA, Hidden Springs SF, Kaskaskia River SFWA (excluding Doza Creek management unit), Kickapoo SFWA, Kinkaid Lake SP, Matthiessen SP, Mermet Lake SFWA – walk-in units, Middle Fork SFWA, Newton Lake SFWA, Oakford SHA, Ray Norbut SFWA, Saline County SFWA, Sam Dale Lake SFWA, Sanganois SFWA – Walk-in unit, Shelbyville SFWA – West Okaw and Kaskaskia Units, Sielbeck Forest SNA, Stephen A. Forbes SRA, Ten Mile Creek SFWA, Turkey Bluffs SFWA, Union Co. SFWA – Firing Line unit, Weinberg-King SP – Spunky Bottoms Unit, Wise Ridge SNA.

**Public Duck and Goose Hunting Area Permit program sites (pre-season waterfowl lottery):** The following changes in regulations will apply to all IDNR state sites participating in the Public Duck and Goose Hunting Area Permit program ([Link](#)), which uses an online application process to distribute permits for days throughout Duck or Goose seasons:

At permit sites where hunting locations are pre-assigned, hunters should follow the same site-specific contactless procedures for sign-in and harvest reporting as in the past. Please refer to Hunter Fact Sheets for information.

Sites impacted: Clinton Lake – Salt Creek unit, Embarras River Bottoms SHA, Kidd Lake Marsh SNA – west unit, Larry D. Closson SHA, Moraine Hills SP - Black Crown Marsh, marsh-based and land-based.

At permit sites where standby drawings have traditionally occurred there will be no standby drawings this season; hunting will be limited to those individuals that applied for and received a free waterfowl permit via the Springfield-based lottery drawings. At some sites “Hunt Position” will be assigned on the permit received.

Hunters will select specific hunting blinds or stakes based on their “Hunt Position.” Hunters will remain in their vehicles, proceed to a check point when summoned, select a hunting blind/stake and then proceed to the hunting area.

Sites impacted include: Anderson Lake SFWA, Banner Marsh SFWA, Double T SFWA, Horseshoe Lake SFWA (Alexander Co.), Mermet Lake SFWA, Rice Lake SFWA Walk-ins, Snakeden Hollow SFWA, Union County SFWA.

In the past, standby drawings were held to fill vacant positions remaining at sites, but these drawings are not permitted with the new health and safety protocols.

The number of permits issued for some sites has been increased to the number of blinds or stakes available to maximize opportunity for hunters at those sites.

Hunters and their hunting partners accustomed to participating in stand-by drawings at permit waterfowl sites should reserve dates using the first-come, first-served permit system to ensure they are able to hunt at preferred sites.

Permits remaining after the third drawing are available first-come, first-served as of Oct. 1, 2020 via the IDNR website ([Link](#)).

At some sites vacant positions may be filled first-come, first-served after permit holders have claimed hunting positions.

Check site webpages, signage at sites, or with site staff for specific procedures at each site.

### **Daily hunt location assignment:**

As hunters arrive at the site, they will remain in their vehicles and register with site staff at a drive-through check-in point (face masks required by staff and hunters; greater than 6 feet between staff and vehicles).

Hunters will be assigned a group number corresponding to a lottery ball or chip and proceed to a parking area to await further instruction.

Upon completion of registering hunters, site staff will draw lottery balls/chips and a FM transmitter or bullhorn will be used to summon the corresponding group to a drive-through check point to select their hunting blind/stake, receive a harvest reporting card and proceed to their selected hunting area.

After hunting, hunters will complete harvest cards and drop them in a locked box to be retrieved by staff.

Registration times and drawing times will be announced and posted at the site.

Sites impacted: DePue SFWA – Three-I Basin, Donnelley SFWA, Horseshoe Lake SP (Madison Co., blinds not occupied by blind builders), Marshall SFWA, Mazonia /Braidwood SFWA, Powerton Lake, Rend Lake SFWA, Sangchris Lake SP, William Powers SFWA (blinds not occupied by blind builders), Woodford SFWA

### **Pre-season hunt location assignment:**

Site will announce a pre-season email or mail registration period.

Registered hunters will be entered into a drawing by site staff, which will randomly draw registered hunters, assign them a blind or hunting stake and contact hunters with those assignments.

No drawings will take place on hunting days; only hunters assigned a blind/stake through this pre-season drawing will be allowed to hunt.

After hunting, hunters will sign-out and deposit harvest cards in a locked box.

Sites impacted: Kaskaskia River SFWA – Doza Creek unit (first 4 days of season, then first-come, first-served).

### **At sites with annual, bi-annual or tri-annual allocation blinds:**

No traditional standby drawings will be conducted; check the site's specific webpage for more details.

Hunting location assignment will be allocated individually; check with sites for specific details.

Similar to flooded conditions or non-check station sites, blind builders will proceed to their blinds and occupy them by one hour prior to legal shooting hours each day.

Unoccupied blinds may be claimed by other hunters after one hour before legal shooting time each day.

Depending on site-specific regulations, hunters may be required to sign-out and report their harvest after the completion of each day's hunt.

Sites impacted: Anderson Lake SFWA, Chain O'Lakes SP, Clear Lake SWMA, DePue SFWA, Des Plaines SFWA, Horseshoe Lake SP (Madison Co.), Kankakee River SP,

Meredosia Lake SFWA, Mississippi River Area SFWA (all check station and non-check station sites), Momence Wetlands, Pekin Lake SFWA, Redwing Slough/Deer Lake SNA, Rice Lake SFWA (main lake), Sanganois SFWA, Shabbona Lake SP, Sinnissippi Lake SFWA, Spring Lake SFWA, Starved Rock SP, William Powers SFWA.

**First-come, First-served to claim blinds or stakes:**

At sites with hunting locations usually allocated through a daily drawing, hunters will pick up a harvest card at sign-in/sign-out boxes located throughout the site.

These cards will be placed on the dashboard of the vehicle while hunting or left at the sign-in box/kiosk.

Hunters will proceed to parking areas associated with hunting blinds/stakes and proceed directly to blinds/stakes at times specified when hunters may enter sites.

Upon completion of hunting, hunters will deposit completed harvest cards in the locked sign-out boxes.

Sites impacted: Heidecke Lake SFWA, Jim Edgar Panther Creek SFWA, Pyramid SP (all units), Sanganois SFWA – Baker unit.

***This press release serves as public notice for the Modification of Waterfowl Hunting on State Sites pursuant to Administrative Rule Section 110.185 Emergency Modification of Site Rules.***