



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Charles M. Russell and UL Bend National Wildlife Refuges

2026 Hunting Regulations

Welcome

Encompassing approximately 1,100,000 acres in northeastern Montana, Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge provides a rare opportunity to experience wild lands and wildlife in a natural setting. The Refuge includes prairies, forested coulees, river bottoms, and badlands, all portrayed in the paintings of the artist for whom the Refuge is named.

For current information and maps visit the refuge website.

Accessibility

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. For more information please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, www.doi.gov/accessibility.

**Charles M. Russell
National Wildlife Refuge**
PO Box 110
333 Airport Road
Lewistown, MT 59457
Lewiston - 406/ 538 8706
Sand Creek - 406 / 557 5181
Fort Peck - 406 / 526 3464

**UL Bend
National Wildlife Refuge**
www.fws.gov/refuge/ul-bend
cmr@fws.gov
www.fws.gov/refuge/charles-m-russell
www.fws.gov/refuge/ul-bend

For State Transfer Service
TTY / Voice: 711
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
www.fws.gov
For Refuge Information
1-800-344-WILD

March 2026

This is a unit of the National Wildlife
Refuge System, a network of lands
and waters managed for the benefit of
wildlife and people.



General Information

Many recreational opportunities are offered at Charles M. Russell and UL Bend National Wildlife Refuges (NWR), including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and hiking.

To protect Refuge natural resources and to safeguard visitors, please observe the following regulations.

Mechanized Vehicles

- Traveling on closed roads and off-road travel is prohibited, including traveling on shorelines and to retrieve game.
- All mechanized vehicles (except for snowmobiles) are allowed only on numbered Refuge roads that are designated as open.
- Snowmobiles are prohibited on all Refuge lands and roads. Snowmobiles and mechanized vehicles are allowed on the ice of Fort Peck Reservoir below Soda Creek Bay.
- Vehicles may be driven, using the most direct route, up to 100 yards from an open road to establish and utilize temporary overnight campsites, except in designated wilderness areas.

All-terrain Vehicles

- All-terrain vehicles (ATV) include motorcycles, quadracycles, UTVs, etc.
- To operate on open Refuge roads, ATV operators must follow all mechanized vehicle regulations.
- Operators must possess a proper driver's license.
- ATVs owned by Montana residents must be street legal and must have a license plate, brake lights, and rear-view mirror.
- ATVs owned by non-residents must be legally licensed from the state of origin. If you cannot license an ATV in your state, contact Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks to get a temporary permit or visit <https://ols.fwp.mt.gov/>.

Bicycles

Bicycles (including eBikes) are permitted year-round on numbered roads only, including seasonally closed roads that are numbered. Bicycles are not allowed in designated wilderness areas on UL Bend Refuge.

Aircraft

- The use of aircraft over Refuge lands to disturb, harass, drive, pursue, rally, or hunt wildlife or to locate wounded animals is prohibited.
- It is illegal to operate uncrewed aircraft systems (drones) on or over Refuge lands.
- Aircraft may not land on Refuge lands. Landing of fixed-winged aircraft is only allowed on the surface of Fort Peck Reservoir in the Landing Area and in Landing Zones that are defined in the Charles M. Russell NWR Guide Map brochure.

Hunting

- Hunting is allowed for antelope, bighorn sheep, coyotes, elk, migratory birds, mountain lion, mule deer, turkey, upland game birds, waterfowl, and white-tailed deer. All other wildlife is protected; this includes, but is not limited to, badger, bear, bobcat, cottontail rabbit, jack rabbit, moose, prairie dog, snake, and wolf.
- Hunting is subject to Federal and State regulations. Consult all current Federal and State regulations prior to hunting on the Refuge. A Montana hunting license is required.
- Refuge-specific hunting regulations are available on the Refuge website or at the Refuge headquarters and field stations by May 1 of each year.
- Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of State and local law. Possession of a firearm in a federal building is prohibited. Persons may only discharge firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32). Firearms may ONLY be fired in conjunction with a legal hunt for which the hunter is licensed.
- Archery target shooting is allowed during archery season. All other target shooting is prohibited.
- Youth hunts as described in the Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Regulations are valid on the Refuge.
- Trapping is not allowed.
- The use of artificial lights to attract, search for, or spot wildlife is prohibited.
- Trail cameras are not allowed.
- Non-motorized game carriers are allowed, except on UL Bend NWR designated wilderness areas.

Big Game Hunting

- Big game hunting seasons and harvest quotas on the Refuge may be more restrictive than State regulations.
- Portable tree stands and ground blinds are allowed and must have the user's name, address, phone number, and automated licensing system (ALS) number marked on the stand/blind and must be visible from the ground.
- Each hunter is limited to three portable tree stands and/or ground blinds. Portable tree stands or ground blinds can be installed on August 1 and must be removed by December 15 of each year. The construction or use of any permanent tree stand, ladder, or blind and the use of nails, wire, or screw-in spikes is prohibited.

Alcoholic Beverages and Marijuana

- The use or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.
- Possession and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages by persons under the age of 21 is prohibited. Buying, selling, providing, distributing, or allowing underage persons to possess or consume alcohol is prohibited.
- Possession and or use of Marijuana / Cannabis / THC on National Wildlife Refuge System lands is prohibited under Federal law.

Collection of Natural Items and Artifacts

- Collection of antlers and animal skulls is illegal. These items are an important source of renewable calcium for elk, deer, and other wildlife.
- Harvesting of any berries, mushrooms, or plants (including edible), is prohibited.
- Removing any natural items such as fossils, rocks, drift wood, and black diamond willow is prohibited.
- There are many interesting historic buildings on the Refuge. Please enjoy them as they are, and do not remove parts of the buildings or artifacts found within or around them.

Camping

- Any camping unit and/or party is limited to 14 days within any 30-day period. Any property, including camping equipment, boats, trailers, and other personal property left unattended for more than 72 hours, is subject to removal.
- Select a safe place for campfires. Campfires must be attended at all times and make certain that your fire is completely out when you leave. Please check www.mtfireinfo.org or the Refuge website for fire restrictions during dry periods.
- All human waste, including tissue paper, must be buried immediately.
- Dumping of RV tanks (gray or black water) is prohibited.
- Collection and use of dead and downed wood for campfires is allowed. Cutting standing timber, live or dead, is prohibited.
- Pack out all trash and restore your campsite to a natural condition when you leave.

Developed Campgrounds

Developed camping areas near the Refuge are available at James Kipp Recreation Area (managed by the Bureau of Land Management Monument Office, Fort Benton, MT 406 / 622 4000 or 877 / 256 3252), Crooked Creek, Devils Creek, Forchette Bay, The Pines, Nelson Creek, McGuire Creek, Rock Creek, Fort Peck Recreation Areas (all managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Peck, MT 406 / 526 3411) and Hell Creek Recreation Area (managed by the Montana Little Shell Chippewa Tribe, 406 / 557 2362).

Dispersed Camping and Backcountry Camping

- Camping outside of a developed campground is allowed unless the area is designated as closed.
- Camping with a vehicle must take place within 100 yards of numbered roads that are designated as open. Direct access by mechanized vehicles from a numbered route is allowed to establish and utilize temporary overnight campsites. Select the most direct route to avoid damage to soils and vegetation.
- Backpacking and horse camping are allowed, except in closed areas.

Hunting with Horses

- All horses, mules, llamas, and other types of pack animals must be tied, hobbled, or confined while in camp. Pens are provided at some U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recreation sites.
- To prevent the spread of noxious weeds, only certified noxious-weed-seed-free forage is allowed. Visit the Montana Department of Agriculture website <https://agr.mt.gov/> for a list of approved forage vendors.

Accessible Wildlife Viewing and Hunting Blinds

The Refuge has two wildlife viewing/hunting blinds. Both are open to the public with visitors with disabilities having priority use. The blinds are available year-round on a first come, first serve basis. For detailed information, call the Refuge or visit the Refuge website.

- The Hell Creek Blind is located in the bottoms of Hell Creek, approximately 25 miles north of Jordan, Montana, close to Hell Creek Recreation Area.
- The Manning Blind is located along the Missouri River (Manning Bottoms) on the western side of the Refuge and is approximately 10 miles east of Highway 191 and the Fred Robinson Bridge.

These regulations are in addition to or clarify State regulations. All hunting licenses and permits are issued by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. No additional Refuge licenses or permits are needed. All wildlife species not specifically listed in these regulations are protected.

Activity	Hunt Areas	Season Dates	Other Regulations
Antelope	HD 480, 481, 620, 630, 650, and 700	Archery Only – Same as State season. Rifle – Same as State season.	
Bighorn Sheep	HD 482, 622, and 680	Same as State season	HD 622 closed to bighorn sheep hunting.
Bird Hunting - Waterfowl, upland game, turkey, and webless game migratory birds	Refuge-wide	Same as State season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunters must use and may possess only approved non-toxic shot in the field for all shotgun hunting on the Refuge. • The use of dogs for hunting waterfowl and upland game birds is permitted. Dogs must be under the control of their owner at all times and cannot be left unattended at any time. • Bird dog training using game birds, wild and/or captive-reared, is prohibited.
Coyote	Refuge-wide	First day of antelope rifle season through March 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours: ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset. • No permit required. • Coyotes cannot be hunted with the aid of dogs, aircraft, or mechanized vehicles.
Elk Permits	HD 410, 417, 621, 622, 630, and 700	Archery Only – Same as State season. Rifle – Same as State season. Muzzleloader Only - Same as State season.	State elk hunting permits are valid on CMR, except 620-20 not valid.
License	HD 417, 650, and 652		General Elk license valid per state regulations. B licenses are valid on CMR with exceptions below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State licenses 004-00, 410-02, 698-00 and 007-00 are NOT valid on the Refuge. • Late Season licenses are NOT valid on the Refuge
Mountain Lion	HD 410, 600, 620, 621 and 700	Archery Only Season Without Dogs - Same as State season. Fall Season Without Dogs – Same as State season.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter Season is not valid on the Refuge. • Use of dogs or recorded animal sounds to hunt mountain lion is prohibited.
Mule Deer Permits	HD 410, 417, and 652	Archery Only – Same as State season. Rifle - Same as State season. Muzzleloader Only - Same as State season.	State Permit required with General Deer License, antlered buck mule deer only. Mule deer B License NOT valid on the Refuge.
License	HD 621, 622, 630, 650, and 700		Antlered buck mule deer only with General Deer License. Mule deer B License is NOT valid on the Refuge.
White-tailed Deer	HD 410, 417, 621, 622, 630, 650, 652, and 700	Archery Only – Same as State season. Rifle - Same as State season. Muzzleloader Only - Same as State season.	Either-sex white-tailed deer with General Deer License. White-tailed deer B License is valid on Refuge.