



## Special Hunt Area Rules Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie 2008 Turkey Hunting

Welcome to the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. The U.S. Forest Service is pleased to offer 7,200 acres of the Prairie to general public access in 2008, including 800 acres opened in June 2007. Any lands open to the public are open to hunting, unless otherwise posted. NOTE that turkey hunting on public lands alternates between the east and west sides of Midewin; not all of the public lands at Midewin are open to hunting on any one day.

The Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie is managed by the U.S. Forest Service and is a federal facility. State hunting laws as outlined in the Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations 2007-2008 are enforced at Midewin with the following additions.

Special Hunt Area rules have been developed for all hunting at Midewin consistent with U.S. Forest Service policies and guidelines for recreation and public access. Other supplemental and short-term policies have also been developed because the Army continues to clean up contamination within Midewin's boundaries and because the Prairie is undergoing restoration to native habitats. All of these conditions combine to provide a unique recreational experience at Midewin for all visitors.

Questions regarding the Midewin hunting program should be directed to:

U.S. Forest Service  
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie  
30239 S. State Route 53, Wilmington, IL 60481  
(815) 423-6370 (815) 423-6389 TTY  
mlwitt@fs.fed.us www.fs.fed.us/mntp/

In case of medical emergency, always call 911 first.  
Midewin After-Hours Phone Line: (815) 263-4060.

### GENERAL RULES & PROCEDURES

#### HUNTING SEASONS

Midewin is open for turkey hunting from Monday, April 14 through Thursday, May 15:

1st	Monday, April 14 - Friday, April 18
2nd	Saturday, April 19 - Thursday, April 24
3rd	Friday, April 25 - Wednesday, April 30
4th	Thursday, May 1 - Wednesday, May 7
5th	Thursday, May 8 - Thursday, May 15

Hunting with handguns is not permitted at Midewin.

Shooting any game or nongame species other than turkey at Midewin is prohibited.

## AREAS OPEN TO HUNTING

All areas open to the general public are also open to hunting. A total of 7,200 acres is currently open to the public.

Hunters must sign in and out of hunting for the day at the information bulletin boards in the six public parking lots.

Daily sign-in begins two hours before sunrise, and all turkey hunters must sign out no later than 3:00 p.m. Exact sunrise and sunset times are listed on pages 43-46 of the Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations 2007-2008.

### **EAST Side: ODD-numbered Calendar Days Only**

Hunting on odd-numbered calendar days is restricted to public lands on the East Side of Midewin.

There are 4,347 acres open to the public on the east side of Midewin, and two parking lots:

- Hoff Road Trailhead, located two miles east of State Route 53; and
- The new Iron Bridge Trailhead, located about 2.5 miles north of the Midewin office and just north of the iron railroad overpass.
- In addition, a new access point into Midewin is now available from the Wauponsee Trail at Road 1 North or Offner Road on Midewin's eastern boundary; however, there is no parking available at this access point and the Forest Preserve District of Will County currently prohibits carrying weapons on the Wauponsee Trail.

Hunters on the east side of Midewin must sign in and out of designated hunting zones.

- The sign in/out list for Zones 1 and 2 is located at the Iron Bridge Trailhead.
- The sign in/out list for Zones 3 through 7 is located at the Hoff Road Trailhead.
- Hunters may hunt anywhere within their designated zone.
- Changing zones requires returning to the trailhead to sign into the new zone.

### **WEST Side: EVEN-numbered Calendar Days Only**

Hunting on even-numbered calendar days is restricted to public lands on the West Side of Midewin.

There are 2,870 acres open to the public on the west side of Midewin, and four parking lots:

- Explosives Road Trailhead (P5) west of State Route 53; and
- P1, P3, and P4 north of River Road between I-55 and State Route 53.

Hunters on the west side of Midewin must sign in and out of designated hunting locations (posted sites).

- Hunters must hunt within 50 yards of the posted site number.
- Moving from one hunting site to another requires returning to the trailhead to sign into the new location.

It is very important to consult the provided maps for detailed information on the boundaries of the open areas. Lands outside these boundaries are not open to public access and trespassers may be cited and fined.

In addition to Forest Service boundary maps, the four topographic maps (\$6 each) or a water-resistant composite (about \$16) for lands within the Midewin boundaries are available for sale at the Midewin Welcome Center.

## **PERMITS & PASSES**

All turkey hunting permits at Midewin are issued through the Illinois DNR lottery system for Special Hunt Areas.

In addition, all hunters must obtain a hunting pass from the Midewin Welcome Center. There is no charge for this pass. Hunters must show their state-issued hunting license in order to get a Midewin hunting pass.

The pocket portion of the pass must be carried at all times while hunting at Midewin. The larger portion of the pass must be placed in clear view through the front windshield. At the end of the season, this pass must be completed and returned to Midewin by June 15, 2008.

Hunting hours at Midewin are the same as state regulations: ½ hour before sunrise to 1:00 p.m. The Midewin hunting pass entitles hunters to be on site from two hours before sunrise -- earlier than the general public. This is to allow time for hunters to hike to their hunting sites before the hunt begins.

Any violation of the rules and regulations may result in the forfeiture of hunting privileges at Midewin and issuance of a citation.

## **TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT CLOSURES**

Management activities, volunteer workdays, and public programs will occur periodically throughout the hunting season. The Forest Service may temporarily or permanently close areas to hunting. The system of alternating hunting days between the two sides of Midewin should reduce the need to close areas. Refer to the bulletin boards in the parking lots or call the Midewin Welcome Center for the most up-to-date information.

## **PUBLIC ACCESS**

All hunting areas are open to the general public. The following guidelines must be observed and will be enforced to ensure a safe and enjoyable recreational experience for all visitors.

Access to public lands at Midewin is by nonmotorized means only – hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, snow shoeing, or cross country skiing.

There are nearly 22 miles of interim trails available for recreational access, including about 17 miles for shared use by hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians (east side only), and about 5 miles for hikers only (both east and west sides).

Equestrians and bicyclists are required to stay on these designated interim trails at all times of the year. Non-hunting hikers are restricted to trails only during firearm hunting seasons. All visitors during hunting season are advised to wear blaze orange for safety.

Many hunters use bicycles on the shared use trails to get closer to hunting areas on the East Side (there are no trails for bicycles yet on the west side). If hunters leave the trail, however, bicycles must remain and can be secured beside the trail.

Hunters using bicycles or horses to get part way to their hunting sites must also obey state laws regarding transportation of firearms. Firearms must be unloaded and completely cased while riding horses or bicycles at Midewin.

The Forest Service prohibits shooting in or within 150 yards of any building, developed recreation site, or occupied area. At Midewin, this means no shooting when hikers, bicyclists, or equestrians are within 150 yards of a hunter. Shooting across roads, bodies of water, and cemeteries is also prohibited.

There is no camping at Midewin, including the parking lots. Hunters may begin using any of the five parking lots one hour before sign-in time (three hours before sunrise).

## **ACCESSIBLE HUNTING BLINDS**

Accessible hunting blinds may be reserved for hunters with an Illinois P2 or P2A card. Reservations must be made at the Midewin Welcome Center. Hunters must also sign in and out of the accessible blind at the parking lot trailhead on the day of their hunt.

Only hunters with a reservation may use an accessible blind. No other hunters may hunt within 50 yards of an accessible blind when it is occupied, with the exception of the companion assisting the hunter reserving the accessible blind.

## **SUCCESSFUL HUNT**

Successful hunters must follow state regulations to register their harvest. In addition, hunters should report their harvest to Midewin by calling (815) 423-2176 and leaving a message.

Forty turkey hunting permits were issued for the 2008 spring turkey hunt at Midewin, eight hunters per season.

## **PRAIRIE UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

The Forest Service, together with the Illinois DNR and the support of hundreds of volunteers and partner agencies, businesses, and organizations, is working to restore the prairie to the Prairie State.

You can watch this process in action over the years during your visits to Midewin. It may look more like a construction site in some areas, but the activities you will see are actually important steps in rebuilding the natural habitats, biodiversity, and landscape. A variety of “construction” activities are part of the restoration process.

- demolition of abandoned buildings,
- cutting of non-native or invasive trees and brush,
- application of herbicide to non-native or invasive plants,
- earthmoving equipment restoring the shape of the land,
- cattle grazing to maintain grassland bird habitat,
- farm equipment planting, mowing, spraying Roundup, and harvesting to restore desired or keep out unwanted plant species, and
- Army cleanup of contamination.

Visitors may observe equipment, supplies, flagging, or structures placed to support these restoration activities or research. Please respect private property and ongoing work by not disturbing these materials.

Some hunters are concerned that vegetation changes will reduce wildlife habitat and population. While short-term disturbance may drive animals to less busy areas, the long-term restoration is not expected to significantly affect the size of the game population at Midewin.

## **OTHER RULES**

No motorized vehicles may be used for recreation at Midewin. Visitors may, however, see vehicles being used for the ongoing work of restoring the prairie.

Some activities are not allowed at Midewin, including camping, fishing, swimming, collecting plants, and pursuits that may disturb the soil, such as metal detection. If you have a question about whether an activity is permitted at Midewin, please ask at the Welcome Center.

**Heritage Resources:** Disturbing or removing any prehistoric, historic, or archaeological resource, site, artifact, property, or structure is prohibited.

**Dogs:** Dogs are currently welcome at Midewin as long they are on a maximum 8-foot leash and stay on the trail.

**Livestock & Gates:** Cattle are helping maintain grassland bird habitat by keeping grass at the height preferred by different bird species for nesting and feeding. Please keep pasture gates closed and do not disturb the cows.

**Traffic:** Operators of heavy equipment on the roads and in the fields may not be able to see or hear visitors. Stay well away from this equipment. Some areas may be posted closed during project work.

**Arsenic contamination:** Commercial weed-killing sprays used along security fencelines and railbeds in the 1960s contained high concentrations of arsenic, which remain in the soil in some areas. Arsenic contamination may not be apparent because of growing vegetation. Do not disturb the soil at Midewin.

We expect interest in hunting at Midewin to continue to grow. Successful management of this program will depend on all recreationists – hunters, hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians – understanding the rules and being considerate of each other.

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).*

*To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

