



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

ORDER NO. 3447

Subject: Expanding Hunting and Fishing Access, Removing Unnecessary Barriers, and Ensuring Consistency Across the Department of the Interior Lands and Waters

Sec. 1. **Purpose.** This Order reaffirms and strengthens the Department of the Interior's (Department) longstanding commitment to expanding high-quality hunting and fishing opportunities for the American public while ensuring responsible stewardship of the Nation's wildlife and natural resources.

The Order directs all Bureaus and Offices to:

- a. Identify and remove unnecessary regulatory or administrative barriers to hunting and fishing on Department-managed lands and waters;
- b. Expand access and opportunities where compatible with law, refuge purposes, park enabling statutes, reclamation area requirements, safety, and conservation needs;
- c. Improve coordination and regulatory alignment with State, Tribal, and Territorial wildlife agencies; and
- d. Elevate any proposed reduction or incompatibility determination involving hunting or fishing to appropriate Bureau or Office leadership for transparent and accountable review.

The Department's policy is clear: public and federally managed lands should be open to hunting and fishing unless a specific, documented, and legally supported exception applies.

This Order builds upon prior Secretary's Orders (SO) and modernizes them with a renewed focus on access, cooperation, accountability, and deregulation.

Sec. 2. **Authority.** This Order is issued under:

- a. Section 2 of Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1950 (64 Stat. 1262).
- b. The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, as amended.
- c. National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended.
- d. Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).
- e. National Park Service Organic Act of 1916, as amended.

- f. Reclamation Act of 1902 and subsequent project authorities.
- g. Other applicable statutes and regulations governing Department-managed lands and waters.

Sec. 3. **Background.** Hunting and fishing are foundational components of the Nation’s conservation tradition. For generations, sportsmen and women have contributed to wildlife and fisheries management through license sales, excise taxes on equipment, and voluntary conservation efforts. Expanding opportunities for the public to hunt and fish on Department-managed lands not only strengthens conservation outcomes, but also supports rural economies, public health, and access to America’s outdoor spaces.

While previous SOs have made meaningful progress, continued improvements are needed. Certain Department-managed lands remain constrained by:

- outdated or unnecessarily restrictive regulations that exceed what is required by statute or resource protection needs;
- inconsistent application of compatibility or planning requirements;
- variability in coordination approaches with State, Tribal, local government, and Territorial partners including gateway communities, as recognized in SO 3434, titled “Strengthening Coordination with Gateway Communities” dated June 25, 2025; and
- access barriers such as closures, duplicative permits, or misaligned methods of take.

This Order directs a Department-wide review, improved coordination, and modernization of policies to expand opportunities for the public while maintaining statutory obligations, safety requirements, and responsible resource stewardship.

Sec. 4. **Department-Wide Directives.** All Bureaus and Offices shall initiate the following actions, consistent with governing laws and regulations:

- a. **Expand Hunting and Fishing Opportunities.** Within 60 days, each Bureau and Office shall:
 1. Identify lands and waters where new or expanded hunting and fishing opportunities may be available, including big game, upland game, waterfowl, small game, and recreational fishing.
 2. Prioritize opportunities recommended by State, Tribal, and Territorial wildlife agencies; State, Tribal, and local governments; and gateway communities consistent with statutory authorities and unit purposes.
 3. Review outdated or unnecessary restrictions in existing plans, superintendent’s compendiums, station-specific regulations, and other site-level policies that may limit access or methods of take beyond what is required.

4. Ensure that any proposed limitation on hunting or fishing access is supported by clear, documented justification based on statutory requirements, public safety, or resource conditions and that all proposed limitations are reviewed by the Bureau or Office heads.
- b. **Reduce Unnecessary Regulatory Burden.** Within 150 days, each Bureau and Office shall review its hunting and fishing regulations, policies, and internal directives to identify opportunities to:
1. Remove or revise duplicative or outdated regulatory requirements that are not required by law or necessary for resource protection.
 2. Improve regulatory alignment with State and Tribal wildlife management frameworks to the greatest extent legally practicable.
 3. Increase consistency among units within the same State or region where appropriate.
 4. Enhance clarity and enforceability of provisions to ensure the public can easily understand and comply with applicable requirements.
- c. **Land Use Planning Integration.** All Bureaus and Offices shall ensure that hunting and fishing access is appropriately considered in applicable land-use planning and decision-making processes, including Bureau of Land Management (BLM) resource management plans, refuge comprehensive conservation plans, National Park Service (NPS) compendiums, and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) project operations policy. Specifically:
1. Planning processes shall explicitly evaluate the impacts of proposed actions on hunting and fishing access.
 2. Opportunities for expansion shall be considered when compatible with law, enabling statutes, and resource conditions.
 3. Bureaus and Offices shall avoid imposing access restrictions that exceed statutory mandates or the minimum necessary for public safety or resource protection.

Sec. 5. Bureau-Specific Directives.

- a. **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).**
 1. **Compatibility Determinations (CDs).**
 - Any proposed negative (incompatible) CD involving hunting or fishing shall be elevated to the Director for review and approval prior to issuance.
 - CDs proposing restrictions must be supported by clear, documented justification, citing specific statutory requirements,

public safety concerns, or biological considerations directly relevant to the unit and activity.

- Regions and field stations shall ensure CDs are applied consistently and transparently and are not used to impose restrictions beyond what is required by law or necessary for public safety or resource protection.

2. **Annual Hunting and Fishing Rulemaking.**

- FWS shall identify and advance all viable new openings and expansions through the annual hunting and sport fishing rulemaking process, with the objective of completing all feasible actions within two rulemaking cycles.
- Regions shall use the Service Hunt/Fish Opportunity Tool and related planning resources to identify opportunities for alignment with State fish and wildlife agency regulations and seasons.
- Regions shall prioritize the expansion of hunting and fishing opportunities recommended by State wildlife agencies; Tribal, Territorial, State, and local governments; and gateway communities, consistent with refuge purposes and statutory authorities.

3. **Lead Ammunition and Tackle.**

- Restrictions on lead ammunition or tackle may not be included in station-specific regulations, except in rare circumstances when:
 - (i) site-specific and species-specific scientific evidence demonstrates a direct population-level impact on wildlife; or
 - (ii) required to align with State or Tribal law in the interest of regulatory consistency.
- All lead ammunition or tackle restrictions must be approved by the Director based on aforementioned documented justification.
- FWS may continue implementing voluntary lead-free incentive programs at units where such programs already exist and shall evaluate their effectiveness before proposing any further changes.

b. **BLM.** BLM shall take the following actions consistent with FLPMA, unit-specific authorities, and State wildlife management frameworks:

1. Review all discretionary closures, supplemental rules, and special regulations that limit hunting or fishing access, methods of take, or

seasons, and identify where such restrictions exceed what is required by statute, public safety, or resource protection needs.

2. Prioritize the expansion of hunting and fishing opportunities recommended by State wildlife agencies; Tribal, Territorial, State, and local governments; and gateway communities, consistent with multiple-use and sustained-yield principles.
 3. Eliminate unnecessary administrative barriers, including redundant permits, seasonal closures, or access conditions, where such measures are not required by law, are outdated, or are no longer supported by current biological or safety considerations.
- c. **NPS.** NPS shall act in accordance with the National Park Service Organic Act, applicable unit enabling statutes, and relevant congressional authorizations:
1. Review all superintendent's compendiums and park-specific regulations to identify restrictions on hunting or fishing that exceed statutory mandates or unit enabling authorities, and determine where modifications may be appropriate. Reviews of Superintendent's Compendiums shall be submitted to the Office of the Deputy Secretary on a rolling basis as completed, with all submissions due no later than 120 days from the date of this Order.
 2. Identify and evaluate all NPS units where Congress authorizes hunting or fishing—including national preserves, national recreation areas, national seashores, national lakeshores, wild and scenic rivers, and other applicable units—and provide recommendations for expanding opportunities. Recommendations shall be submitted to the Office of the Deputy Secretary on a rolling basis as evaluations are completed, with all submissions due no later than 120 days from the date of this Order.
 3. Elevate any proposed new closure, limitation, or reduction in hunting or fishing access to the Director for review and approval, including closures proposed through the compendium process or other discretionary authorities.
 4. Ensure that decisions related to hunting and fishing are coordinated with State wildlife agencies; Tribal, Territorial, State, and local governments; and gateway communities to the maximum extent legally practicable and grounded in site-specific analysis.
- d. **BOR.** BOR shall undertake the following actions in accordance with reclamation project authorities, contracts, and cooperative management agreements:
1. Identify all reservoirs, project lands, and associated recreation areas that currently allow public fishing or may be suitable for expanded recreational fishing access and evaluate opportunities consistent with project purposes and existing agreements.

2. Review and, where appropriate, streamline cooperative agreements, management contracts, and interagency arrangements to remove duplicative or unnecessary restrictions on public fishing access, provided that such changes remain consistent with reclamation law and partnership obligations.
 3. Ensure that any proposed restrictions or closures related to fishing access are clearly justified, documented, and coordinated with affected State fish and wildlife agencies; Tribal, Territorial, State, and local governments; and gateway communities.
- e. **Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).** Where Tribes express interest, BIA shall support Tribal governments that seek to expand hunting or fishing opportunities for Tribal members or for the general public on lands under Tribal jurisdiction, consistent with Tribal law and management objectives.

Sec. 6. Collaboration with States, Tribes, and Territories. Collaboration with State, Tribal, and Territorial wildlife managers is essential to responsible access planning and regulatory clarity. It is similarly important to consult and coordinate with the States, Tribes, local governments, and gateway communities. To ensure consistent coordination across the Department, all Bureaus and Offices shall:

- a. Designate staff or a primary point of contact responsible for coordinating hunting and fishing access matters and for maintaining communication with State, Tribal, and Territorial wildlife agencies; State, Tribal, Territorial, and local governments; and gateway communities.
- b. Engage State and Tribal wildlife agencies early and routinely when considering new opportunities or evaluating potential restrictions on hunting or fishing access, seasons, or methods of take.
- c. Respect State and Tribal authority for wildlife management by avoiding unnecessary or duplicative Federal restrictions where State or Tribal regulations already provide adequate protection, unless additional Federal measures are expressly required by statute, refuge purposes, or public safety considerations.
- d. Ensure that coordination efforts and resulting decisions are transparent, documented, and applied consistently across regions and field offices.

Sec. 7. Implementation and Deliverables. To ensure consistent execution of this Order across all Bureaus and Offices, the following actions are required:

- a. **Initial Access Reports.** Within 60 days, each Bureau and Office shall submit to the Office of the Deputy Secretary a report identifying:
 - o opportunities for new or expanded hunting and fishing access;
 - o any proposed or ongoing research mapping or projects related to wildlife, fisheries, or waterfowl resources which may impact recreational hunting or fishing resources;

- existing barriers or restrictions that may limit such access; and
 - any planning or regulatory processes that may require revision to implement this Order.
- b. **Regulatory Review Reports.** Within 150 days, each Bureau and Office shall submit to the Office of the Deputy Secretary the results of a review of its hunting and fishing regulations, policies, and directives, identifying:
- provisions that are outdated, duplicative, or more restrictive than required by law;
 - recommended changes to streamline or improve clarity; and
 - a timeline for initiating the recommended revisions.

Each Bureau and Office Director is responsible for ensuring timely completion of these deliverables and for coordinating with the Office of the Deputy Secretary on compliance, tracking, and follow-up actions necessary to carry out the purposes of this Order.

Sec. 8. Effect of this Order. This Order is intended solely to improve the internal management of the Department. It does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person. In the event of any inconsistency between this Order and any applicable Federal statute or regulation, the statute or regulation shall control.

Sec. 9. Expiration Date. This Order is effective immediately. It will remain in effect until its provisions are fully implemented, until it is amended or superseded, or until it is revoked.

Jan. 7th, 2026

Date:


Secretary of the Interior