

Land & Water Access Rule Proposals for 2027-2028

G1. General Regulations Regarding Hunting on Game Lands – Vegetation Protection

15A NCAC 10D .0103 GENERAL REGULATIONS REGARDING HUNTING ON GAME LANDS

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Prohibit attaching nails, screws, bolts, or applying paint to vegetation on game lands.

JUSTIFICATION

Game land users are more frequently attaching items like stand location markers and business marketing signs to vegetation and game lands kiosks. Most of these signs or markers are never retrieved - those that are often leave behind the fasteners in trees. This prohibition would not apply to mounting hardware for game cameras, lag screw steps, or portable stands that are removed after use with no metal remaining in or attached to the vegetation.

G2. General Regulations Regarding Hunting on Game Lands – Impairing Substances

15A NCAC 10D .0103 GENERAL REGULATIONS REGARDING HUNTING ON GAME LANDS

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Change the statutory reference in 15A NCAC 10D .0103 (a) (1) from G.S. 20-4.01 (48b) to G.S. 20-4.01 (14a) so that hunting on game lands is prohibited while using or under any level of influence of an impairing substance.

JUSTIFICATION

G.S. 20-4.01(48b) defines an impairing substance as “Under the Influence of an Impairing Substance. – The state of a person having his physical or mental faculties, or both, appreciably impaired by an impairing substance.” G.S. 20-4.01(14a) more inclusively defines an impairing substance as, " Impairing Substance. – Alcohol, controlled substance under Chapter 90 of the General Statutes, any other drug or psychoactive substance capable of impairing a person's physical or mental faculties, or any combination of these substances.” The updated reference does not require the individual to be appreciably impaired, they only must have consumed alcohol, controlled substance under Chapter 90 of the General Statutes, any other drug or psychoactive substance capable of impairing a person's physical or mental faculties, or any combination of these substances to be in violation. This prevents individuals from hunting on game lands after immediately consuming alcohol or other impairing substances. This change could be considered a

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“zero-tolerance” policy as it does not distinguish between for those who have consumed ANY amount of alcohol or impairing substance and those who are noticeably impaired.

This proposed rule change is to prevent game land users from actively consuming alcohol or drugs while hunting.

G3. Butner-Falls of Neuse Game Land – New Light Beach

15A NCAC 10D .0211 BUTNER-FALLS OF NEUSE GAME LAND IN DURHAM, GRANVILLE, AND WAKE COUNTIES

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Restrict use of New Light Beach on the Butner-Falls of Neuse Game Lands to hunting, fishing, and trapping.

JUSTIFICATION

The New Light Beach portion of Buter-Falls of Neuse Game Land is frequently used by the public for large social gatherings that result in trash, litter, and habitat damage. These gatherings restrict the ability of hunters, anglers, and trappers to use the property.

G4. Johns River Game Land – Permit Only

15A NCAC 10D .0239 JOHNS RIVER GAME LAND IN BURKE COUNTY

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Restrict non-hunting recreational use of Johns River Game Land during hunting season.

JUSTIFICATION

Johns River Game Land is a permit-only, 6,480-acre property in Burke County. It is located just north of Morganton and experiences significant non-hunting recreational use. During hunting season, these other uses have caused conflicts, safety concerns and wildlife disturbances. Restricting use of the game land to permit hunting only during hunting season will improve the quality of the hunts.

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G5. Nantahala Game Land – Antlerless Deer Season

15A NCAC 10D .0251 NANTAHALA GAME LAND IN CHEROKEE, CLAY, GRAHAM, JACKSON, MACON, AND SWAIN COUNTIES

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Remove the antlerless deer season on Nantahala Game Land in Transylvania County and specify that Nantahala Game Land does not have an antlerless deer season.

JUSTIFICATION

Historically, Nantahala Game Land has not had an antlerless deer season; however, changes to the western deer seasons and lack of specificity in the Nantahala Game Land rule have unintentionally created a one-day antlerless season necessitating that we specify that Nantahala Game Land does not have an antlerless deer season.

G6. Northwest River Marsh Game Land – Target Shooting

15A NCAC 10D .0257 NORTHWEST RIVER MARSH GAME LAND IN CURRITUCK COUNTY

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Prohibit target shooting on the Northwest River Marsh Game Land.

JUSTIFICATION

This proposal originated from constituent concerns about safety, littering, trash accumulation, and disturbance of wildlife due to the number of target shooters using this game land.

G7. Pisgah Game Land – Horseback Riding and Target Shooting

15A NCAC 10D .0260 PISGAH GAME LAND IN AVERY, BUNCOMBE, BURKE, CALDWELL, HAYWOOD, HENDERSON, MADISON, MCDOWELL, MITCHELL, TRANSYLVANIA, WATAUGA, AND YANCEY COUNTIES

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Prohibit horseback riding and target shooting on the Roaring Creek and Lutz tracts.

JUSTIFICATION

Currently there is little to no horseback riding on these tracts; however, neither tract has purpose-built trails or infrastructure for horseback riding. The soil on this game land is highly erodible, and horseback riding would result in habitat damage.

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Target shooting has a negative impact on game lands, including but not limited to trash and spent shells being left behind, damage to trees and introduction of lead to the environment.

The proposed changes to the game land rule will make regulations on all state-owned tracts of Pisgah Game Land consistent.

G8. Tillery Game Land – Quail and Woodcock

15A NCAC 10D .0284 TILLERY GAME LAND IN HALIFAX COUNTY

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Make quail and woodcock hunting at Tillery Game Land by permit only.

JUSTIFICATION

As identified in the 2025 NC Wildlife Action Plan, Bobwhite Quail are a species of greatest conservation need and American Woodcock are a priority species with a knowledge gap. Habitat management work at Tillery has led to more early successional habitat, and a positive quail response. Staff have observed a significant increase in hunting pressure on this 7 days a week game land, leading to some concern for these species.

A point-of-sale (non-quota) permit will allow staff to collect useful information from hunters to assist in making data-driven management decisions on quail and woodcock hunting at the game land.

G9. White Oak River Game Land – Waterfowl Impoundment

15A NCAC 10D .0290 WHITE OAK RIVER GAME LAND IN ONSLOW COUNTY

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Make all hunting on the posted waterfowl impoundment at White Oak River Game Land permit only.

JUSTIFICATION

Confusion exists about the need for permits at the posted impoundment during the early teal season. By removing some of the rule language and adding a permit requirement for the impoundment during this season, confusion should be reduced. This change will make language consistent on the Huggins and Morton tracts of this game land.

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G10. Big Swamp Game Land – Establishment

15A NCAC 10D .0296 BIG SWAMP GAME LAND IN ROBESON COUNTY

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Establish the Big Swamp tract as a game land.

JUSTIFICATION

The Big Swamp tract is a new 2,519-acre acquisition that is ready to be designated as a game land. This will be a Three days per week area with no deer or bear hunting with dogs allowed.

G11. Bear Hunting on Game Lands – Clarification

15A NCAC 10D .0202 ANGOLA BAY GAME LAND IN DUPLIN AND PENDER COUNTIES

15A NCAC 10D .0210 BULLARD AND BRANCH HUNTING PRESERVE GAME LANDS IN ROBESON COUNTY

15A NCAC 10D .0213 CAPE FEAR RIVER WETLANDS GAME LAND IN PENDER COUNTY

15A NCAC 10D .0214 CARTERET COUNTY GAME LAND IN CARTERET COUNTY

15A NCAC 10D .0221 CROATAN GAME LAND IN CARTERET, CRAVEN, AND JONES COUNTIES

15A NCAC 10D .0222 CURRITUCK BANKS GAME LAND IN CURRITUCK COUNTY

15A NCAC 10D .0229 GOOSE CREEK GAME LAND IN BEAUFORT AND PAMLICO COUNTIES

15A NCAC 10D .0241 JUNIPER CREEK GAME LAND IN BRUNSWICK AND COLUMBUS COUNTIES

15A NCAC 10D .0246 LIGHT GROUND POCOSIN GAME LAND IN PAMLICO COUNTY

15A NCAC 10D .0254 NEW LAKE GAME LAND IN HYDE AND TYRRELL COUNTIES

15A NCAC 10D .0256 NORTH RIVER GAME LAND IN CAMDEN AND CURRITUCK COUNTIES

15A NCAC 10D .0257 NORTHWEST RIVER MARSH GAME LAND IN CURRITUCK COUNTY

15A NCAC 10D .0270 SAMPSON GAME LAND IN SAMPSON COUNTY

15A NCAC 10D .0279 SUGGS SUTTON LAKE GAME LAND IN NEW HANOVER AND BRUNSWICK COUNTIES

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Change “Bear shall not be harvested on Sunday” to “Bear shall not be taken on Sunday” in 14 game land rules.

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JUSTIFICATION

The current rule language makes enforcement of restrictions on Sunday bear hunting only possible once a hunter has harvested a bear. “Take” is statutorily defined as “All operations during, immediately preparatory, and immediately subsequent to an attempt, whether successful or not, to capture, kill, pursue, hunt, or otherwise harm or reduce to possession any fisheries resource or wildlife resource”. Using “take” will allow for more proactive enforcement in situations where someone is bear hunting but has not yet harvested an animal.