



The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
The Status of Hunting Land Access in Kentucky
Report Required by KRS 150.0241 (6): No Net Loss of Hunting Land

September 4, 2025

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' mission is to conserve, protect and enhance Kentucky's fish and wildlife resources and provide outstanding opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, boating, shooting sports, wildlife viewing, and related activities.

Background

In the 2010 Regular Legislative Session, the Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill 64, which among other things, established a state policy of requiring "No Net Loss" for hunting land access in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) was an early supporter of the No Net Loss policy in the 2010 General Assembly, and included it with its official agency-legislation proposals. Kentucky's passage of Senate Bill 64 in 2010 made us the ninth state to establish such a policy. Currently, thirteen No Net Loss states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, and West Virginia (<https://www.nra.org/gun-laws/>).

The concept of No Net Loss has consistently been a focal point of hunters and sportsman across the country, and has also been considered a key legislative agenda item for the National Rifle Association (NRA). In short, the No Net Loss policy requires that states maintain at least the same level of available public hunting land that currently exists. The end result is to assure hunters that the opportunities they now have will not be eliminated.

In Senate Bill 64, the Kentucky Legislature saw fit to include various reporting requirements to maintain a constant focus on hunting land access in the Commonwealth. For example, any state agency that owns or manages lands shall submit a written report by October 1 of each year to the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission, the Legislative Research Commission, and the Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Environment describing the following:

1. A list of properties that were open for hunting during the previous fiscal year;
2. A list of properties that were not open for hunting during the previous fiscal year; and
3. The acreage for each property and the county where each property is located.

Additionally, KDFWR specifically is required by October 1 of each year to submit to the Legislative Research Commission and the Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Environment a written report describing:

1. The acreage managed by the commission that was closed to hunting during the previous fiscal year and the reasons for the closures; and
2. The acreage managed by the commission that was opened to hunting to compensate for closures of existing land pursuant to subsection (4) of this section.

Operationally, Section 4 of Senate Bill 64 that became law on July 10, 2010 requires that any land-management decisions “shall not result in any net loss of habitat land acreage available for hunting opportunities on commission-managed lands that exists on the effective date of this Act.” This was eventually codified as KRS 150.0241. The department is glad to have this opportunity to offer this report of the available hunting lands in Kentucky as of September 4, 2025. Some baseline acreages may be adjusted from last year’s report due to minor cartographic, boundary clean-up. In these instances, the actual acreage available for hunting opportunities was unchanged.

Table 1. Total of Wildlife Management Areas Owned or Co-owned by KDFWR

Area Name	County	2024 Acres	2025 Acres
Ballard WMA	Ballard	8,014.26	8,014.26
Beechy Creek WMA	Calloway	118.77	118.77
Big Rivers WMA and State Forest ¹	Crittenden,Union	7,573.65	7,573.65
Blackford Oaks WMA	Crittenden,Webster	565.02	565.02
Boatwright WMA ²	Ballard	6,782.31	6,782.51
Buck Creek WMA	Pulaski	850.36	850.36
Burchell-Beech Creek WMA	Clay	1,240.74	1,240.74
Cedar Creek Lake WMA	Lincoln	795.51	795.51
Clay WMA	Bath,Fleming,Nicholas	8,978.68	8,978.68
Clear Creek WMA	Hopkins	858.2	858.2
Coil Estate WMA	Ballard,Carlisle	795.49	795.49
Cranks Creek WMA	Harlan	2,155.04	2,155.04
Curtis Gates Lloyd WMA	Grant	1,104.98	1,104.98
Decker WMA	Boone	299.55	299.55
Dennis-Gray WMA	Adair	101.59	101.59
Dix River WMA	Lincoln	401.33	401.33
Doug Travis WMA	Carlisle,Hickman	4,131.60	4,131.60
Dr. James R. Rich WMA	Owen	2,264.42	2,264.42
Dr. Norman and Martha Adair WMA	Boone	634.88	634.88
Ed Mabry - Laurel Gorge WMA	Elliott	1,485.97	1,485.97
Ferguson Creek WMA	Livingston	614.7	614.7

Fleming WMA	Fleming	1,907.28	1,907.28
Gabbard Branch WMA	Butler	809.07	809.07
Griffith Woods WMA	Harrison	745.53	745.53
Harris-Dickerson WMA	Hopkins,Muhlenberg	1,837.26	1,837.26
Hensley-Pine Mountain WMA	Harlan,Letcher	4,847.67	4,847.67
Higginson-Henry WMA	Union	5,445.78	5,445.78
Horsemill Branch WMA	Morgan	640.19	640.19
John A. Kleber WMA	Franklin,Owen,Scott	4,463.01	4,463.01
John C. Williams WMA ²	Hardin,Nelson	729.66	729.66
Jones-Keeney WMA	Caldwell	2,055.17	2,055.17
Kaler Bottoms WMA	Graves	1,904.16	1,904.16
Kentucky Ridge Forest WMA ¹	Bell	3,504.50	3,504.50
Kentucky River WMA	Henry,Owen	3,642.59	3,642.59
Knobs State Forest and WMA ¹	Bullitt	1,536.82	1,536.82
L. B. Davison WMA	Ohio	136.95	136.95
Lee K. Nelson WMA	Webster	59.84	59.84
Little Sexton Creek WMA ³	Clay,Jackson,Owsley		1,114.28
Marion County WMA and State Forest ¹²	Marion	1,340.67	1,340.67
Marrowbone State Forest and WMA ¹	Cumberland,Metcalf	1,955.21	1,955.21
Meadow Creek WMA	Wayne	231.53	231.53
Miller Welch-Central Kentucky WMA	Madison	1,846.53	1,846.53
Mud Camp Creek WMA	Cumberland	572.18	572.18
Mullins WMA	Grant,Kenton	259.28	259.28
Obion Creek WMA	Carlisle,Fulton,Hickman	4,257.75	5,326.01
Old Trace Creek WMA	Lewis	873.52	873.52
Peabody WMA ²	Hopkins,Muhlenberg,Ohio	39,246.39	39,246.39
Ping-Sinking Valley WMA	Pulaski	805.67	805.67
R. F. Tarter WMA	Adair,Russell	1,170.66	1,170.66
Rockcastle River WMA	Pulaski	2,923.64	2,923.64
Rolling Fork WMA	Larue,Nelson	2,896.25	2,896.25
Ross Creek WMA	Estill,Lee	934.74	934.74
Shillalah Creek WMA	Bell,Harlan	2,534.65	2,534.65
Simon Kenton WMA	Mason	981.57	981.57
Sloughs WMA ²	Henderson,Union	6,283.28	6,283.28
South Shore WMA	Greenup	97.72	97.72
Stephens Creek WMA	Gallatin	397.53	397.53
Stone Mountain WMA and State Natural Area ¹	Harlan	1,017.45	1,017.45
Sunny Brook WMA	Rowan	142.39	142.39
T. N. Sullivan WMA	Franklin	145.03	145.03
Tradewater WMA	Christian,Hopkins	726.96	726.96
Twin Eagle WMA	Owen	169.56	169.56
Veterans Memorial WMA	Scott	2,497.33	2,497.24

West Kentucky WMA ²	McCracken	3,190.25	2,503.21
Winford WMA	Ballard, Carlisle	236.28	236.28
Yatesville Lake WMA ²	Lawrence	51.6	51.6
Yellowbank WMA ¹²	Breckinridge	7,554.49	7,554.49
	Total	169,373	170,868

¹ These areas are co-owned with another state or county agency.

² These areas have additional tracts of land that are leased, and those specific acres are listed below in Tables 2 or 3.

³ New areas or tracts added since last report.

Changes include opening of Little Sexton Creek WMA (1,114.28 acres) and Land swap for 1068.26 new acres at Obion Creek WMA in exchange for 687.04 acre tract at West Kentucky and loss of other leased tract listed in table 2 below.

Table 2. Wildlife Management Areas with a Long-Term State or Federal Lease.

Area Name	County	2024 Total	2025 Total
Barren River Lake WMA	Allen, Barren	8,734.80	8,734.80
Beaver Creek WMA	McCreary, Pulaski	17,752.77	17,752.77
Boatwright WMA	Ballard	2,064.37	2,064.37
Buckhorn Lake WMA	Leslie, Perry	3,570.66	3,570.66
Cane Creek WMA	Laurel, Pulaski	6,677.29	6,677.29
Carr Creek Lake WMA	Knott	2,879.92	2,879.92
Cumberland Forest WMA	Bell, Harlan, Knox, Leslie, Whitley	54,389.02	54,136.41
Dale Hollow Lake WMA	Clinton, Cumberland	5,632.11	5,632.11
Dewey Lake WMA	Floyd, Pike	9,171.85	9,171.85
Fishtrap Lake WMA	Pike	13,137.86	13,137.86
Grayson Lake WMA	Carter, Elliott	8,025.14	8,025.14
Green River Lake WMA	Adair, Taylor	21,019.13	21,019.13
John C. Williams WMA	Hardin, Nelson	343.08	343.08
Kentucky Lake WMA	Calloway, Marshall	4,044.00	4,044.00
Lake Barkley WMA	Lyon, Trigg	906.92	906.92
Lake Cumberland WMA	Clinton, McCreary, Pulaski, Russell, Wayne	38,788.53	38,788.53
Livingston County WMA and State Natural Area	Livingston	2,430.18	2,430.18
Martins Fork Lake WMA	Harlan	764.35	764.35
Martins Fork WMA and State Natural Area	Harlan	1,598.93	1,598.93
Mill Creek WMA	Jackson	13,009.12	13,009.12
Nolin River Lake WMA	Edmonson, Grayson, Hart	6,455.62	6,455.62
Ohio River Islands WMA	Livingston	1,264.48	1,264.48
Paintsville Lake WMA	Johnson, Morgan	11,219.83	11,219.83
Paul Van Booven WMA	Breathitt, Perry	2,286.77	2,286.77

Pioneer Weapons WMA	Bath,Menifee	7,730.89	7,730.89
Redbird WMA	Clay,Leslie	24,033.02	24,033.02
Robinson Forest WMA	Breathitt,Perry	2,002.65	2,002.65
Rough River Lake WMA	Breckinridge,Grayson,Hardin	4,179.51	4,179.51
Sloughs WMA	Henderson,Union	4,890.12	4,890.12
Taylorsville Lake WMA	Anderson,Nelson,Spencer	9,417.09	9,417.09
West Kentucky WMA	McCracken	3,235.21	2,689.55
Yatesville Lake WMA	Lawrence	13,139.10	13,139.10
Total		304,794	303,996

* Adjusted as a result of minor cartographic, boundary clean-up and/or new boundary information from landowner.

** End loss of DOE leased tract at West Kentucky WMA.

Table 3. Total of Wildlife Management Areas with a Short-Term Private Lease.

Area Name	County	2024 Acres	2025 Acres
Ashland WMA*	Lee	2,506.12	
Boone Forestlands WMA	Bell,Clay,Harlan,Leslie	31,663.82	31,663.82
Elk Forest WMA	Bell,Clay,Harlan,Knox,Leslie	16,587.22	16,587.22
Fortner-Davis WMA	Bell	1,357.87	1,357.87
Hoskins WMA	Harlan,Leslie	5,292.47	5,292.47
Legacy WMA	Floyd,Martin,Pike	21,816.54	21,816.54
Peabody WMA**	Hopkins,Muhlenberg,Ohio	2,077.05	1,497.58
Pocahontas WMA	Floyd,Harlan,Johnson,Martin,Pike	60,231.22	58,014.16
University of the Cumberlands WMA	McCreary,Whitley		10,275.06
Total		141,532	146,505

* Loss of Ashland WMA

** Reduced acreage in McHenry tract at Peabody WMA.

*** New WMA for 2025.

Table 4. Non-Wildlife Management Areas Available for Public Hunting.

Owner	2024 Acres	2025 Acres
Army Corps of Engineers	4,098.98	4,098.97
Department of Defense	159,248.51	159,247.88
Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources	2,221.40	2,221.39
Division of Forestry	33,018.19	33,018.06
Kentucky Department of Parks	8,750.92	8,750.88
Kentucky National Guard	523.36	523.36

Lawrence County Fiscal Court	563.07	563.06
National Park Service	30,300.81	30,300.69
Private ²	97,266.45	94,028.90
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	11,774.45	11,774.40
U.S. Forest Service ¹	747,864.71	747,861.72
	<u>1,095,631</u>	<u>1,092,389</u>

¹ Adjusted as a result of minor cartographic, boundary clean-up and/or new boundary information

² Reflects loss of 3,237.55 acre Beechy Fork Tract at Czar HAA.

No Net Loss Baseline for Hunting Access

As depicted above, KDFWR was fortunate to have a gain in areas owned by the agency that are open to public hunting and access. Compared to the 2010 baseline of 1,006,642 acres of hunting lands, KDFWR has added 702,315 acres for a total of 1,708,957 acres of hunting access lands in 2025. In closing, it is important to note that if hunters are not aware of the access opportunities outlined in this report, then the department, our customers (both current and future) and the Commonwealth as a whole will not see the maximum benefit. This is why KDFWR strives to publish guides and other announcements to reflect the hunting opportunities available. The department also makes this and more information available on our website at <https://fw.ky.gov/Hunt/Pages/Public-Land-Hunting.aspx>. By accessing the department's website, hunters are able to view actual maps of the area, obtain driving directions, download GPS coordinates, and find contact information for area managers.

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources recognizes that approximately 94 percent of Kentucky's land and water area is in private ownership. Additionally, state surveys consistently report that "lack of access" is the number one constraint to hunters going afield. Because of these two factors, the department has continued to focus our efforts on providing public access for all sportsmen, but especially hunters in Kentucky. Our department and commission system have long held the belief that every hunter, angler and sportsmen should have a place to go participate in their outdoor activity within thirty minutes of their home. With this continued focus, and with the No Net Loss

of Hunting Land requirement in Kentucky, KDFWR hopes to greatly add to the successes in providing public access we've already enjoyed.