Union County State Fish and Wildlife Area

History

The Union County State Fish and Wildlife Area was acquired by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in the late 1940s and developed a wintering goose population in excess of 50,000 birds by 1964. Since then, controlled harvest through the quota system and continued provision of quality winter sanctuary and food produced a total southern Illinois winter population of more than 600,000 Canada geese. The Union County segment of this population grew to nearly 150,000. Today, with changes in migration patterns, habitat, and environmental factors north of the site, visitors can expect to see more ducks than geese. The Union County Public Hunting Area remains consistently among the top clubs in the State for number harvested waterfowl.

The Area

Union County State Fish and Wildlife Area encompass 6,202 acres in the Lower Mississippi River bottomlands division of Illinois. Numerous shallow sloughs and other water areas totaling approximately 1,100 acres are scattered throughout the area. More prominent water areas include Grassy Lake with 350 acres and Lyerla Lake with 275 acres.

Of the 5,350-acre land area, approximately 2,400 acres are cultivated. The remaining acreage is in timber, brush or permanent grass cover. By far the most intensive activity on the area is farming. Each year, a variety of hard grain and green forage crops are planted and left standing to provide food for wintering geese. More than 2,400 acres of corn, sunflower, wheat, clover and other crops are established for this purpose.

Union County State Fish and Wildlife Area is a haven for many diverse forms of wildlife. The most prominent throughout five months of the year is the phenomenal flock of Canada geese and other waterfowl that winter on the area. Visitors commonly observe white-tailed deer, bald eagles, and many other interesting types of wildlife.

Public use of interior gravel roads is restricted except when permission is granted for special circumstances such as research and site tours. All such activities must be approved in advance by scheduling with the Site Superintendent. Call the site office at (618) 833-5175 with inquiries.

Refuge

Public use of the refuge is limited to sightseeing and wildlife photography, and is permitted along the main road only. No hunting is allowed. In order to avoid disturbance of waterfowl on the area, no day use or overnight facilities have been developed.

Throughout the fall and winter months, very large flocks of Canada geese and ducks are concentrated along the Refuge Drive. Few places in Illinois exist where so many wild geese and ducks can be closely observed and photographed in their natural habitat.

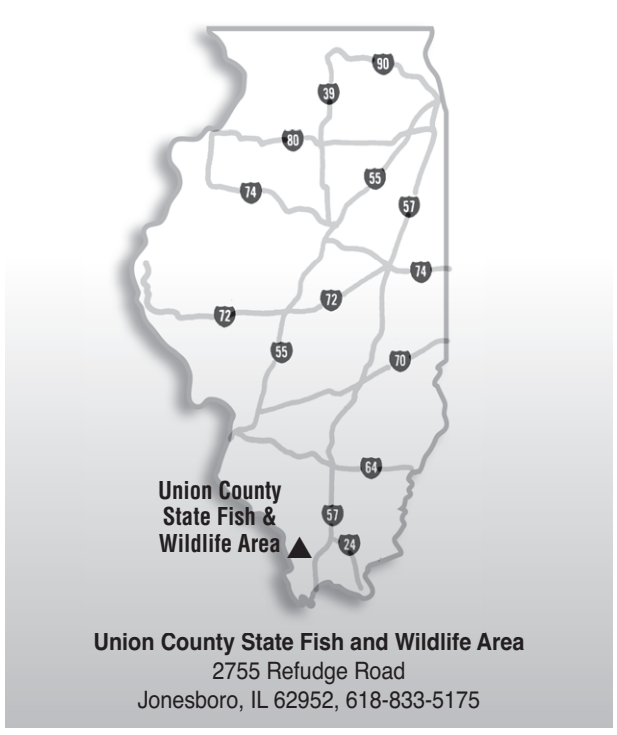
Fishing

Fishing is permitted in Grassy Lake from March 1 to October 15. Outboard motor size is limited to 10 horsepower or less. Grassy Lake is a shallow, fertile bottomland lake with catfish being the primary sport fish attraction.

Excellent early spring and late summer bluegill and crappie fishing exists in Lyerla Lake. Fishing is permitted from March 1 to October 15, with outboard motor size limited to 10 horsepower or less. A boat launch is available on Lyerla Lake adjacent to Reynoldsville Road.

Hunting

Approximately 2,050 acres at the south end of the site are designated as a public hunting area. Duck hunting with non-toxic shot is on a permit basis, with permits being issued from the Springfield office upon application by interested hunters. A daily permit fee is required with blinds and transportation to the field provided. There is a daily charge for rented decoys



Union County State Fish and Wildlife Area
2755 Refudge Road
Jonesboro, IL 62952, 618-833-5175

- At least one responsible adult must accompany each group of 15 minors.
- Pets must be kept on leashes at all times.
- Actions by nature can result in closed roads and other facilities. We hope you enjoy your stay. Remember, take only memories, leave only footprints.
- For more information on state parks, write to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, One natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702, or visit its website at http://dnr.illinois.gov.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-2CONNECT.
- Deaf and hearing-impaired individuals may call the Department of Natural Resources' TTY number, (217) 782-9175, or use the Ameritech Relay Number, 1-800-526-0844.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, IDNR, One Natural Resource Way, Springfield, IL. 62702-1271; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.

This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the DNR Clearinghouse at (217)782-7498 for assistance.

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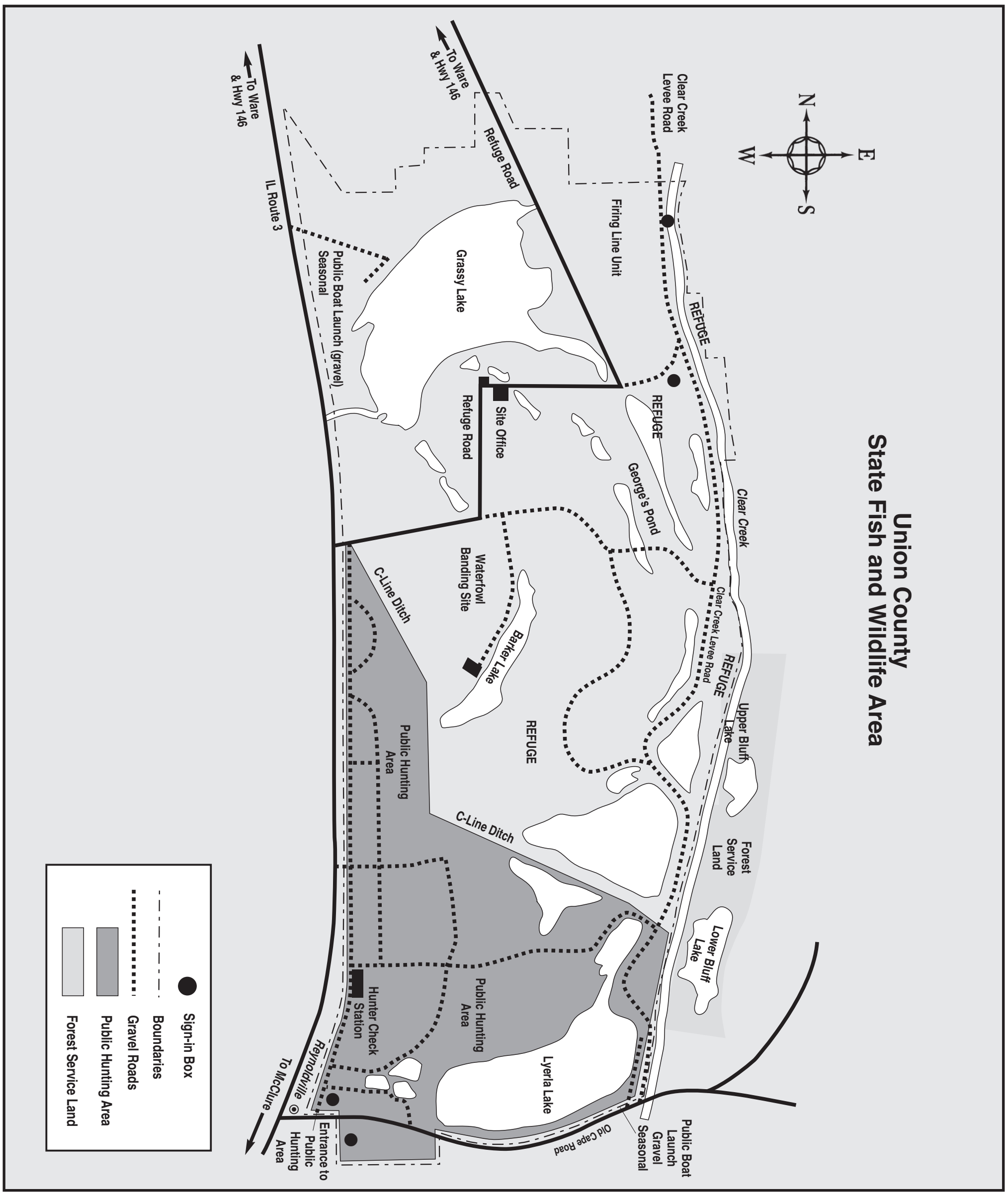
State of Illinois
Department of Natural Resources

Union County

STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AREA

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

if hunters do not bring their own. A total of 35 blinds can accommodate 70 hunters each day. A drawing is held each morning to allocate blinds to permit holders. A wheelchair accessible blind is also available, with an accessible outdoor restroom and check station. Call the site for details.

Additional hunting opportunities exist for deer, squirrel, ducks and doves both on the Public Hunting Area in the Firing Line Unit, and the two satellite locations: Devil's Island WMA and Cape Bend SFWA. Collection of artifacts, flora and fauna is strictly prohibited on the site. All hunters must sign in and out at the hunters' registration boxes on the site. For specific regulations on mushroom and antler shed collecting and for all other questions, contact the site office.

For more information about this site, contact Refuge Manager, 2755 Refuge Road, Jonesboro, IL 62952, phone (618) 833-5175.