

Voluntary Public Access & Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)



Frequently Asked Questions

General Program Questions

Q: *What is the Voluntary Public Access program?*

A: Voluntary Public Access (VPA) is a voluntary program that provides financial incentives to private landowners who allow public access onto their properties. Wisconsin received \$1.3 million to implement this program through funding that was authorized through the 2014 Farm Bill.

Q: *What is Habitat Incentive?*

A: These are additional incentives to adopt a specified set of USDA NRCS habitat practices on VPA lands, such as contour buffer strips, wildlife shrub establishment, wetland restoration, and more. These practices increase the value of enrolled private lands for wildlife and human users.

Q: *What activities are allowed on VPA properties?*

A: Hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife observation are the only allowed activities on VPA properties.

Q: *What lands are eligible to enroll into VPA?*

A: Priority will be given to properties greater than 40 acres with at least 25% usable cover, and those located near existing public hunting or fishing grounds. Grassland, wetland, forestland, and in some cases agriculture land are eligible land types for enrollment into VPA. Land enrolled in other conservation programs such as CRP, WRP, or MFL may also be eligible for enrollment.

Q: *How long are lease agreements?*

A: All leases will terminate on 8/31/2020 with the potential to renew if funding is available.

Q: *What are the payment rates for VPA?*

A: Annual lease rates are determined by land type: Agriculture Land: \$3/acre, Grassland/Wetland: \$10/acre, Forest land: \$15/acre. An up front, lump sum payment will be made with 60 days of signing a lease agreement.

Q: *Does the public have to ask permission from the landowner to hunt on enrolled VPA lands?*

A: VPA users are not required to ask permission of the landowner. By enrolling in the program, the landowner agrees to open the property to public access.

Landowner Questions

Q: *How do I enroll in VPA?*

A: Contact your local Public Access Liaison or call the VPA Program Coordinator at (608) 266-5463 for additional information.

Q: *Do I have to enroll my entire property into VPA?*

A: No, VPA is completely voluntary and you can choose the amount of land you enroll.

Q: *What am I liable for if I enroll into VPA?*

A: Wisconsin Statutes 895.52 provides liability protection for landowners from injury or death of individuals occurring during participation in outdoor recreational activities on their land.

Landowner Questions Cont.

Q: Can I get a tax break for enrolling into VPA?

A: Participants do not receive tax breaks for enrolling into VPA.

Q: Can I restrict the number of hunters, activities, or species hunted on VPA lands I enroll?

A: As with state wildlife areas, there are no restrictions on the number of hunters on a VPA property at any given time. All four activities (hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife observation) must be open to all users and all huntable species can be hunted on VPA lands during open seasons.

Q: Can I continue to have a permanent tree stand and ATV access on lands I enroll into VPA?

A: As a landowner, you may have a permanent tree stand on land enrolled in VPA and may continue to use ATVs to access the property.

Q: Can I terminate my lease if I no longer want to participate in the VPA program?

A: Yes, you can terminate your lease agreement by providing a 60-day written notice to the DNR. A prorated refund to the DNR will be required for the remaining days on the lease.

Q: What if my crops or property enrolled in VPA are damaged by a user?

A: The DNR agrees to pay for damages that occur on VPA lands as a result of opening them to public access. The landowner must provide a written notice within 10 days of the incident.

Q: What happens to the lease if I sell the property?

A: The lease remains with the property. The seller will need to address this with the new landowner prior to closing.

Q: Can I continue to walk or train my dogs or ride horses on my property enrolled in VPA?

A: Yes, as a landowner you are not restricted on the activities you choose to do on your land.

VPA User Questions

Q: Can I put up a tree stand or blind on VPA properties?

A: Constructing or erecting blinds, stands or other structures is not allowed. Portable structures are acceptable but don't damage trees and take blinds or stands with you when you leave each day.

Q: Is ATV or vehicle access/travel allowed on VPA properties?

A: Access and travel is limited to **foot travel only** on VPA properties.

Q: Can I harvest wild edibles (berries, mushrooms, plants) on VPA properties? Harvesting wild edibles is not an allowed activity on VPA properties. You must ask permission from the landowner to harvest wild edibles.

Q: Where do I park my vehicle when using VPA properties?

A: Park wisely on the shoulder of a public road or in a designated parking area. Do not block access to farm fields or pastures.

Q: Am I required to use non toxic shot during the dove season on VPA properties?

A: On lands specifically managed by the WDNR for doves (sunflower plots, etc.), all hunters using the property are required to use non toxic shot. Any lands not specifically managed for doves where hunters are opportunistically shooting doves, using non toxic shot is not required.

VPA User Questions Cont.

Q: *Can I walk or train my dog or ride horses on VPA properties?*

A: Horses are not allowed on VPA properties. Dogs are not allowed on VPA lands unless they are being used for hunting purposes which does not include dog training.

Q: *Where can I find VPA properties open to public access?*

A: Visit <http://dnr.wi.gov> and search “VPA”

Q: *Do I need a public access or private lands antlerless tag for deer hunting on VPA properties?*

A: Private lands open to public hunting that are enrolled in the Managed Forest Law, Forest Crop Law or Voluntary Public Access programs are considered public lands for the purpose of deer hunting and where antlerless tags are valid.