

Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge (RWR)

Visiting Researcher Information

Permits and Approvals to Research at RWR

To conduct research at RWR, you may need a series of permits to carry out your work.

1. Complete a formal RWR research request via the online form provided.
2. You should have the proper IACUC permits from your respective college/university/agency to conduct humane research with live animals.
3. You may need a Louisiana Scientific Collecting Permit depending on your project (<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/permit/scientific-collecting-permit>).
4. Due to a recent change in law, any person 18 years of age or older visiting a Refuge or Wildlife Management Area in the state of Louisiana must have in his/her possession a valid Louisiana Hunting License, Louisiana Fishing License or Louisiana Wild Stamp unless this is a function sponsored or hosted by LDWF. Also, anyone 17 years of age or older visiting a Refuge or Wildlife Management Area in the state of Louisiana must have in his/her possession a WMA Access Permit; this permit is included in the Sportsman's Paradise License, Senior Hunt/Fish License and all Lifetime Licenses; and can be purchased annually or as a 5-day permit.

Directions and Travel to RWR:

From Lafayette (~1.5-2.0 hours driving time)

GPS Address: 5476 Grand Chenier Highway, Grand Chenier, Louisiana 70643

1. From Lafayette, drive west on I-10 for 14 miles to Rayne (Exit 87). From the off ramp, turn left (south) on Highway 35.
2. Travel 1.75 miles (south) on Highway 35 and then turn right (west) on US90 for 200 feet.
3. At the first stop light, turn left (south) to stay on Highway 35.
4. Travel 7.1 miles south on Highway 35. At the stop light, turn right (west) on Highway 92 for 0.5 miles.
5. Turn left (south) to stay on Highway 35 for 8.1 miles. You will make several turns through Kaplan (a right, left, and another right), but you will stay on Highway 35.
6. After leaving Kaplan, you will continue south on Highway 35 for 11.2 miles and then Highway 35 will turn to Highway 82. *Note: Kaplan has the last gas station until you get to Pecan Island, ~18.5 miles away.
7. Continue driving south on Highway 82. You will cross over the Intracoastal Waterway Bridge and Old Intracoastal Waterway Bridge.
8. After ~15.25 miles, you will veer right (west) and stay on Highway 82 into the community of Pecan Island. *Note: This is the last gas stop before you get to RWR, ~25 miles away.
9. From Pecan Island Grocery/Gas, continue 24.6 miles west on Highway 82 until you get to RWR Headquarters (building on south side of road).

From Lake Charles (~1.0 hours driving time)

GPS Address: 5476 Grand Chenier Highway, Grand Chenier, Louisiana 70643

1. From Lake Charles, drive east on I-10 for ~5.5 miles (Exit 36) to Cameron/Creole. From the off ramp, turn right (south) on Highway 397.
2. Drive south on Highway 397 for 5.6 miles. At the roundabout take the 3rd exit (east) on to Highway 14.
3. Drive 2.75 miles and veer right (south) to stay on Highway 14.
4. Drive 2.1 miles south on Highway 14 and then Highway 14 will turn left (east) and you will continue south and the road will become Highway 27.
5. Continue south on Highway 27 for 24.7 miles (passing through a 4-way stop in the town of Creole).
6. When you reach the “T”, you will turn left on Highway 82 and travel for 18.25 miles.
7. RWR Headquarters is located on the south side of the road.

Airports

The closest airport to RWR is Lake Charles Regional Airport (LCRA) (~1-hour driving distance from RWR). American Airlines and United Airlines service LCRA, with direct service to Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) and Houston Intercontinental (IAH), respectively. LCRA is located at 500 Airport Blvd. #104, Lake Charles, Louisiana.

If you choose to fly into Houston (either George Bush Intercontinental Airport, IAH or William P. Hobby Airport, HOU), the drive is ~3.0-3.5 hours from RWR, excessive Houston traffic may delay your travel beyond the time quoted here.

Grocery Stores and Restaurants near RWR

The closest food store around RWR is Canik’s Grocery (337-542-4290) (20.6 miles from RWR); they mainly provide “staples” and thus, may not be adequate for some dietary preferences. They do provide a menu of convenience store food such as pizza, hamburgers, chicken strips, etc.

The closest grocery stores (i.e., Walmart, Kroger, Market Basket, etc.) to RWR are located in Kaplan and Lake Charles, both ~1 hour away. Therefore, for most researchers staying for extended periods of time, packing coolers and bringing food is most likely going to be the best option. The dormitories have refrigerators and freezers for food storage.

Gas Stations near RWR

The nearest gas stations are Pecan Island Food Store (25 miles east of RWR HQ at 27024 Hwy 82, Kaplan, La.; 337-737-2396) and Chesson’s Grocery (33.6 miles west and north of RWR HQ at 1005 LA-27, Bell City, La.; 337-598-2719).

Dormitory

RWR has West End Dormitory available for visiting researchers to stay. Contact the office (337-508-3401) for information pertaining to availability and dormitory rules. The cost is \$10 per person per night; no fee if you are collaborating on research with a RWR Biologist.

You are responsible for any damages and should such occur, you will reimburse the Department for the cost of repair.

The West End Dormitory is a 17-bed facility. It contains four rooms with two single beds and bath; two rooms with three single beds and bath; two rooms with one double bed with bath and one room with queen bed with handicapped accessible bath.

All lines and towels are provided and a full kitchen is available with cooking utensils, pots/pans, a microwave, refrigerator, and freezer. There is a large living/meeting area with TV, dining room, laundry room (bring your own detergent and dryer sheets), and WIFI internet connection.

No pets allowed in the dormitory. No ice chests allowed in the building.

Laboratory

Although limited, the facility offers space for laboratory-associated work, however most research is primarily field-oriented. Bring all lab supplies/reagents and dissecting tools needed for your project. We have no way to dispose toxic reagents or sharps, so plan to take these items back to your lab.

Storing and Transporting Biological Samples

RWR has an ice machine to keep samples cool and a -20 degree C freezer to store biological samples (e.g., blood, specimens). We do not have access to dry ice or liquid nitrogen to transport samples, so researchers should arrange to have these items if needed.

Accessibility of RWR for Field Site(s)

Most of RWR is only accessible by boat/airboat, and thus, this may provide some logistical difficulties if you plan to do research at RWR. An airboat/boat and operator may be available if you are collaborating with a staff biologist. If you do not plan to collaborate with a staff biologist, then visiting researchers will have to provide their own boat/airboat and operator. However, we have several areas that provide walk-in access to different marsh types:

1. unmanaged brackish/salt marsh (at the end of Price Lake Road; GPS 29.67742 N, -92.85004 W),
2. managed brackish marsh (Unit 2; GPS 29.71425 N, -92.81375 W),
3. managed intermediate marsh (Unit 14 Road; GPS 29.64888 N, -92.571533 W);

All of these areas are not accessible to the public and are located behind locked gates.

Other Tips

Check the weather before you plan fieldwork. For example, during the winter, we often have strong north winds that can be quite cold, but also drive water levels out of the marsh; the latter may limit your ability to get your boat to a field site. During the summer, it is very hot and humid (85-90 degrees and muggy), so pack lightweight clothes and plenty of water. Shorts are usually impractical due to insects and vegetation when in the field.

Be sure to bring plenty of water, mosquito repellent, communication devices (AT&T cell service is good across the refuge, others can be spotty), and any maps/GPS coordinates needed. Our staff is limited on Fridays and no staff work weekends, so it is preferred that researchers conduct fieldwork Monday through Thursdays in case of an emergency. If there is an issue while in the field on Fridays and weekends (e.g., boat breaks down), there will be a delayed response time.