

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

2026 STATE PARK DEER MANAGEMENT HUNT INFORMATION SHEET



Indiana Department
of Natural Resources

Chain O'Lakes State Park
260-636-2654

THIS IS A FIREARMS ONLY HUNT

Please print a copy of this document for your reference. You are responsible for understanding all the following information.

Important Note

We appreciate your willingness to help manage the impact from deer browsing. For this management hunt to be effective, please harvest any deer that presents a safe and ethical shot (within established bag limits), especially those that are antlerless. Please make every effort to be present during the management hunt. The number of hunters allowed at each park is strategically calculated. Your absence affects how successfully we reach our objective of a balanced ecosystem. Our No. 1 concern during this hunt is safety. With this in mind, the following information and rules apply:

- General: All Indiana DNR Property Rules and Indiana Hunting Regulations will be enforced. Hunters are permitted to harvest deer only. No other animals may be taken during the management hunt. Friends and family will not be permitted to wait for hunters on the property during the hunt periods.
- Date & Time: The 2026 deer management hunts will be conducted on November 16 & 17 and on November 30 & December 1. The park will be closed to the general public starting from 8 p.m. ET (7 p.m., CT) on Sunday, November 15 before the first hunt period through 8 a.m. ET (7 a.m. CT) on Wednesday, November 18 and 8 p.m. on Sunday, November 29 before the second hunt period through 8 a.m. ET (7 a.m. CT) Wednesday, December 2 following the second hunt period. **ALL HUNTERS WILL NEED A PHOTO ID TO ENTER AND EXIT THE PROPERTY.**
- Hunt Hours: Hunting hours are ½ hour before sunrise until 4 p.m. ET (3 p.m. CT) on the days of the hunt. Hunters will not be able to enter the field any earlier than 5:30 a.m. ET, although registration will begin at 5 a.m. ET. **Hunters must be out of the park by 6 p.m. ET.**

Open House: An informational open house will be held on the Sunday before each hunt period. Attendance is not mandatory but is encouraged. For additional questions and information, please contact the property office.

For hunters drawn for November 16 and 17, there will be an open house at the park on Sunday, November 15. The open house is from **1 p.m. to 3 p.m. ET** at the Chain O'Lakes Park Headquarters.

For hunters drawn for November 30 and December 1, there will be an open house at the park on Sunday, November 29. The open house is from **1 p.m. to 3 p.m. ET** at the Chain O'Lakes Park Headquarters.

Hunter Sign-In: Hunters **must** sign in (and out) at the park entrance gate. **A photo ID and hunting license will need to be shown to enter the property.** Please follow property staff instructions to park, and bring identification items into the gatehouse for signing-in. During sign-in, please be sure to provide a mobile number that we can reach you at the day of the hunt, if you have one available.

Bag Limit: During each hunt period for which you have been drawn you are allowed to take up to three deer, only one of which can be antlered. These deer do not count against your regular state deer hunting license or bag limit. Please do not pass on antlerless deer for deer with antlers.

Firearms: Hunters are permitted to use firearms that meet the specifications set forth in IC 14-22-2-8 and described in the 2026-2027 Indiana Hunting & Trapping Guide). Archery equipment will NOT be permitted for these hunts, including the use of crossbows.

Check Station: All deer must be transported to the check station in the designated location on the property for biological data collection prior to leaving the property. You will be asked the sex of the deer and whether it is antlered or antlerless. Legal check-in is the responsibility of the hunter and is described below. The check station is located at park headquarters.

Deer Check-In: Hunters who successfully harvest a deer at state park deer management hunts must bring the deer to the designated location on the property for biological information to be recorded. The deer must have a temporary transportation tag completed and attached immediately upon harvest. Temporary transportation tags are provided below. The deer must also be checked in through the online check-in system. Staff at parks are only keeping tallies of harvested deer, not checking them in. It is the hunter's responsibility to complete the legal check-in.

Deer can be checked in 3 ways:

- Online CheckIN Game System: GoOutdoorsIN.com

- Traditional check stations: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/fish-and-wildlife/hunting-and-trapping/hunting-trapping-guide/hunting-check-stations/>
- Phone-in option at 260-368-5880 (no fee)

To check in state park deer management harvests, use the following information:

- For county of harvest, please note that some properties span multiple counties
- You must select “Public – State” when asked for land type
- Select the appropriate property
- For license type, choose either “Early Park Reduction Hunt” or “Late Park Reduction Hunt.” Do not choose “Deer Reduction Zone.” The early hunt is November 16 & 17, and the late hunt is November 30 & December 1; choose accordingly.

After submitting your information, you will be given a Confirmation Number that must be recorded on your temporary transportation tag and kept on the carcass until processing.

If you need assistance checking in a harvested deer, please email INHuntFish@dnr.IN.gov.

Accessibility:	If you have special needs, you should call the property office before November 12, 2026, for the first hunt and before November 26, 2026, for the second hunt, so we can try to accommodate any special needs you may have. If desired, drawn hunters who possess a persons with disabilities hunting permit may bring a non-hunting individual at least 18 years of age by November 16, 2026, to assist them.
Tree Stands:	Portable tree stands may be used by those drawn for the hunts. The tree stand, steps, fasteners, and any other equipment, may not penetrate more than ½ inch into the tree. A safety harness is highly recommended. Any stand left overnight in the park must have the owner’s name, address, and phone number, or your DNR Customer ID number, attached to the stand in some manner. We strongly suggest you place a lock on your stand. The park does not provide security for tree stands and is not responsible for missing or damaged stands. Tree stands may be installed one week prior to the first day of the hunt period for which you were drawn. Tree stands must be removed by the end of the last day of the hunt period for which you were drawn.
Ribbon/Flagging:	Flagging tape/ribbon will be allowed, but each flag/ribbon must contain your name and phone number. Any flag/ribbon that does not contain your name and phone number will be removed . Each flag/ribbon must be taken down the last day of the hunt.

Ground Blinds:	Ground blinds will not be allowed for these management hunts.
Non-Hunters:	If you encounter any non-hunters, other than those accompanying drawn hunters, please contact property personnel, and they will handle it.
Hunter Orange:	Hunters must wear both a solid hunter orange head covering (hat or cap) AND a solid hunter orange outer garment, such as vest, coat, or coveralls, during the time they are hunting in the park. This gear should be worn at all times.
Lodging:	Camping will not be allowed at Chain O'Lakes State Park during the hunt dates. Lodging is available nearby in Albion, Columbia City, and Kendallville.
Alcoholic Beverages:	Absolutely NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES shall be possessed or consumed in the park or during the hunt.
Scouting:	Pre-hunt scouting will be allowed and is encouraged. All normal park fees apply. Trail cameras may not be used for the management hunts.
Safety Zones:	Safety zones have been established, and you may not enter these areas except to retrieve a deer. Loaded firearms are not permitted in safety zones, buildings, or service areas. Do not shoot toward the safety zones if you are hunting near the boundaries. Shooting is not permitted into or across roadways, into or across waterways, toward permanent man-made structures, or into or across private property. Refrain from hunting within 50 feet of property boundaries. Safety zones are indicated on the map below. It is the hunter's responsibility to know where the safety zones are located. Contact park headquarters immediately if you need to retrieve a deer from a safety zone or outside park boundaries.
Park Boundaries:	Park boundaries are indicated on the map below. It is the responsibility of each hunter to know these boundaries and to safely confine all hunting activities to these prescribed areas. Public scrutiny demands you act as responsible hunters. Respect the property of adjacent landowners. Refrain from hunting within 50 feet of property boundaries.
Field Dressing:	Please do not field dress deer in any mowed or public area; field dress at least 50 feet from any road or trail and cover the entrails with leaf litter. Field dressing should occur out of sight from trails, roads, and off property residences. All items and equipment used to dress a harvested deer must be removed by the hunter upon departure.
Retrieval:	You are responsible for retrieving your deer from the field. All deer must be brought to the check station prior to leaving the park. Never leave a

wounded deer down inside the property. DO NOT leave the property and trespass on private property in an attempt to retrieve a downed deer. Contact the check station, park personnel, or Law Enforcement personnel immediately. In order to receive assistance from park personnel, please move the deer to a park trail or road and call Park Headquarters at 260-636-2654 to give them a detailed description of the location, and an effort will be made to provide assistance.

Assigned Unit: There are no assigned hunting units for these management hunts. You may hunt anywhere, except safety zones.

Meat Handling: You must take possession of all deer you harvest. All hunters will be responsible for the processing of their own meat. No harvested deer should be left at the park. Please consider donating your deer to Hunt for Hunger (on.IN.gov/huntforhunger) if your freezer is full by the time of the hunt. When leaving the property with harvested deer, please cover them with a tarp or other suitable material. Hunters staying overnight in the area will be able to hang deer at Park Headquarters; contact the check station the day of for more information.

CWD: Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a fatal infectious disease affecting the nervous systems of white-tailed deer. This untreatable disease is caused by misfolded prions shed from infected deer through bodily secretions like saliva and urine. CWD was first detected in Indiana in 2024. Since then, cases have been detected in multiple counties across the state. You can see up-to-date detections at on.IN.gov/CWD.

CWD prions are highly resistant to disinfectants, freezing, and heat; cooking or burning will not inactivate them. Although it is not currently known to infect humans, DNR recommends testing your harvested deer for CWD. If the deer tests positive, DNR suggests not eating the meat. If you would like to have your harvested deer tested for CWD you can:

- Submit your deer's head to a DNR drop-off cooler (all hunting seasons).
- Submit samples to select private businesses across the state (all hunting seasons).
- Submit samples directly to Purdue's Animal Disease Diagnostic Lab (ADDL) for a fee.
- See on.IN.gov/CWD for more details about CWD, where it has been found, and testing locations.

For the Chain O'Lakes State Park deer management hunts, a cooler will be on-site for dropping off samples for CWD testing. Information on sample submission will be available at the check station at park headquarters.

- Hunter Image: Please leave a positive image of deer hunters for other park users by removing any trash at the conclusion of your hunt, picking up all spent shells and casings, and covering any harvested deer while leaving the property. As a general rule, please take out anything you bring into the park. Please practice “leave no trace” ethics to ensure a clean and high quality park.
- Parking: You may park only in designated areas. Designated areas can be found on the map below. **Please note the Department of Corrections area is off limits.** Park only in a designated parking area.
- Other Information: *All* entry and exit from Chain O’Lakes State Park must be through the Main Entrance Gate off Indiana 9. Trail cameras may **NOT** be installed at Chain O’Lakes State Park. Boats (electric motor only) are allowed in the park during the deer hunts. These boats are not to be used to hunt from, but rather for use as transportation.

TAKING OF ANTLERED & ANTLERLESS DEER

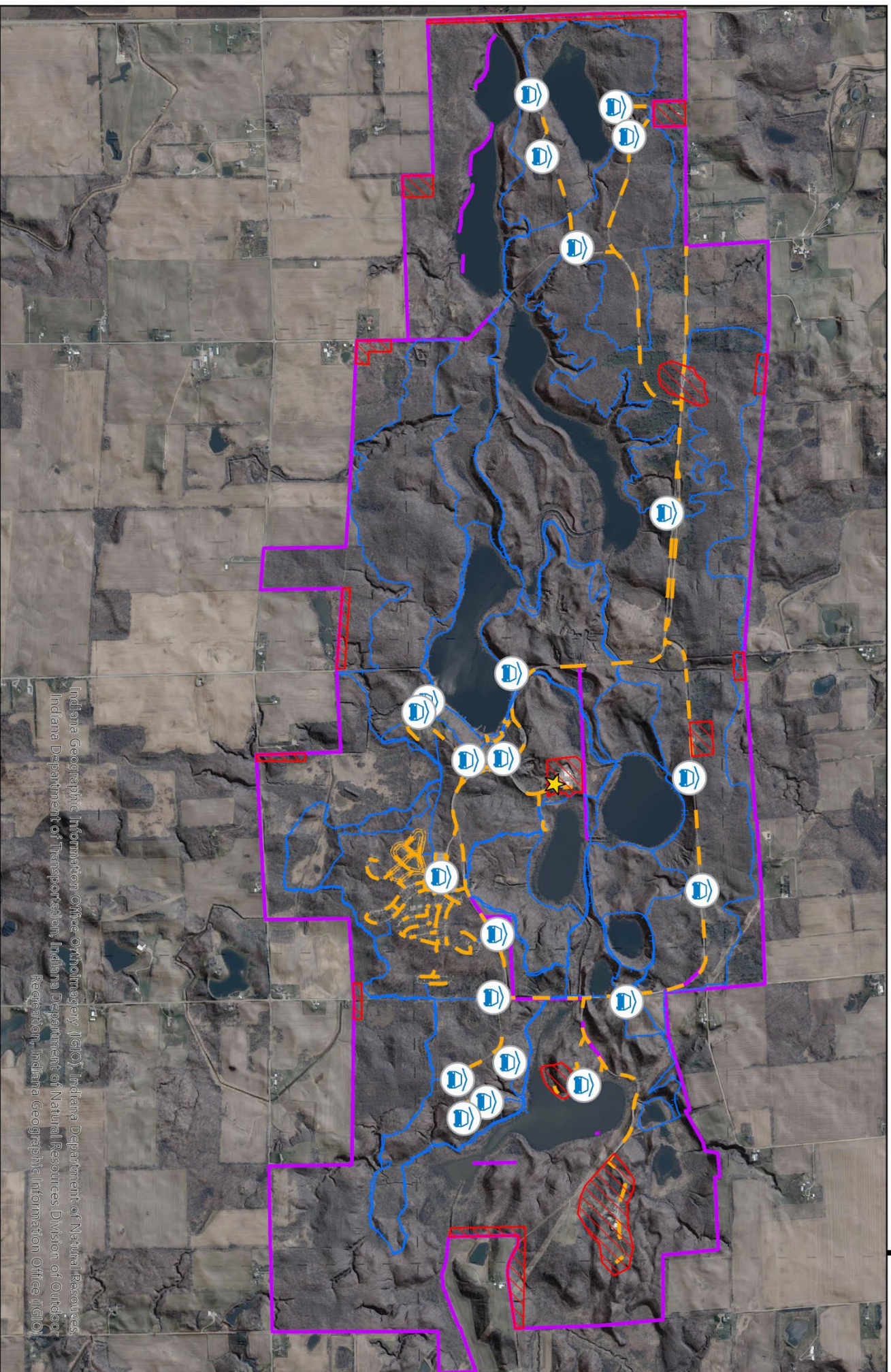
Please keep in mind the purpose of your deer hunting opportunity on Division of State Parks properties is to manage the deer herd in order to prevent overbrowsing and the resulting damage to the properties’ vegetation.

Our primary goal is to take does because they have the largest long-term impact on a population; however, we recognize that antlered deer also directly contribute to the grazing impacts on the properties and appreciate your help with their removal. We are concerned that some hunters may be passing up antlerless deer and deer with small antlers. Those hunters who pass on opportunities to remove deer with no or small antlers are actually hurting our ability to reduce the overbrowsing problem. Whenever you have an opportunity to safely make an accurate, well-placed shot, please help us by taking that deer, regardless of the antler size.

We may also have hunters passing up deer because they have filled their freezer. While we do not want deer to be taken that will be wasted, if you do not need the meat from your second or third deer, please consider trying to locate someone prior to our deer management hunt who needs additional deer meat.

Thank you for your help in this important effort.

Chain O'Lakes State Park Deer Hunt Map





Deer Transportation Tag



Name: _____

Address: _____

License number: _____

Deer harvest information:

Antlered or Antlerless (circle one)

Harvest Date: _____

Harvest Time: _____

Confirmation number* : _____

*Only required when using CheckIN Game



Deer Transportation Tag



Name: _____

Address: _____

License number: _____

Deer harvest information:

Antlered or Antlerless (circle one)

Harvest Date: _____

Harvest Time: _____

Confirmation number* : _____

*Only required when using CheckIN Game



Deer Transportation Tag



Name: _____

Address: _____

License number: _____

Deer harvest information:

Antlered or Antlerless (circle one)

Harvest Date: _____

Harvest Time: _____

Confirmation number* : _____

*Only required when using CheckIN Game