

# Public Use and Hunting Regulations

## *Kofa National Wildlife Refuge*



### General Information

Kofa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established in 1939 and is managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The refuge encompasses 666,641 acres of Sonoran desert habitat and is home to the desert bighorn sheep, Sonoran pronghorn and the California fan palm. Other notable wildlife species found in the area include roadrunner, desert tortoise, desert mule deer, and desert kit fox. A wide variety of plant life is found throughout the refuge.

Bighorn sheep are found primarily in the two mountain ranges that dominate the refuge landscape—the Kofa and Castle Dome Mountains. Although these mountains are not especially high, they are extremely rugged and rise sharply from the surrounding desert plains, providing excellent bighorn sheep habitat. Endangered Sonoran pronghorn were reintroduced in 2011 to a semi-captive breeding pen on the refuge. The first Sonoran pronghorn on Kofa were released into the wild in 2013; they now roam free on Kofa NWR and adjacent lands. The wild population has grown to over 100 animals through successful reproduction and additional releases.

Water is scarce in the desert. By improving natural water holes and creating new ones, refuge managers have increased the availability and reliability of water for wildlife.

Many wildlife species have benefitted from these water developments. A long-term average of approximately 400-800 desert bighorn sheep live on the refuge. Beginning in the 1950s, the refuge has provided over 560 desert bighorn sheep for transplanting to other parts of Arizona and neighboring states.

Palm Canyon, at the west end of the Kofa Mountains, is well known for its stand of California fan palms, the only native palm species in Arizona. Fewer than 100 trees remain in Palm Canyon; these palms are probably remnants from an era when this area was wetter and cooler.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, numerous silver, gold and lead mines were established throughout the refuge. The most notable was the

“King of Arizona Mine,” which produced 3.5 to 4.0 million dollars in gold between 1897 and 1910. The Kofa Mountains are a contraction from the name of the “King Of Arizona” gold mine.

Most refuge roads are not maintained. Many are passable only by four-wheel drive vehicles. Some roads may be passable by two-wheel drive, high clearance vehicles (see map). Vehicles may be damaged by brush or rocks, or may become stuck in sandy areas. Private lands (inholdings) occur within the refuge. Before traveling on the refuge, visitors should contact refuge staff to learn about current road conditions. There are no facilities on the refuge for towing, gasoline, sanitation, or drinking water. Cellular phone coverage is absent over most of the refuge. Visitors are advised to let someone know where they are going and when they plan to return.

### Public Use Regulations

The following is a summary of refuge regulations. For additional detail or clarification, contact the refuge. All public access, use or recreational activity, unless specifically authorized, is prohibited.

#### Wilderness

Passage of the 1990 Arizona Desert Wilderness Act included 547,700 acres of the Kofa NWR. Wilderness status acknowledges the relatively pristine character of the refuge and dictates some management restrictions. No vehicular travel, including bicycles, is permitted into wilderness areas. Only foot or horseback travel is permitted.

#### Vehicles

Vehicular traffic is limited to designated roads which can be identified by numbered markers at junctions. **Off-road vehicle travel is strictly prohibited.** Vehicles may pull off and park only up to 100 feet from designated roads. This includes all motorized or wheeled vehicles, such as ATVs, UTVs, quadtracs, motorcycles, bicycles etc. No vegetation or other refuge features may be damaged. All motor vehicle operators must be **licensed** and **insured** for **highway** driving. Speed is limited to 25 MPH, or less as posted.

#### Animal and Plant Life

Collecting, possessing, molesting, disturbing, injuring, destroying, removing or transporting any

plant or animal or part thereof (alive or dead) is prohibited (except for legally taken game).

#### Firearms and Explosives

Carrying, possessing, or discharging explosives (including fireworks) on the refuge is prohibited. Persons may possess, carry, and transport firearms, in accordance with all Federal and state laws. Unauthorized discharge of firearms or **target practice is prohibited.** For additional information see the Hunting Regulations section.

#### Weapons Other than Firearms

Use or possession of other weapons, such as crossbows, bows and arrows, and airguns is only permitted in conjunction with authorized and permitted hunting activities.

#### Disposal of Waste

Littering and the dumping of sewage or liquid wastes on the refuge are prohibited. Do not bury trash—wildlife will dig it up! Do not burn cans or plastic—please pack it out. Bury all human waste and burn toilet paper or pack it out. Please “leave no trace.” Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

#### Government Property

Destruction, injury, defacement, disturbance, or removal of any government property is prohibited. Accidents involving damage to property, personal or public; injury to the public or wildlife should be reported as soon as possible to: 800/637-9152.

#### Camping

Campers may select their own campsites. However, camping within 1/4 mile of water is prohibited by State law. **Vehicles must remain within 100 feet of designated roads.** Camping is limited to 14 days in any 12-month period.

#### Commercial Activity

No commercial activities are allowed without a special use permit. The refuge is also closed to mineral entry. Prospecting, removal, or disturbance of sand, rock, gravel, or minerals is prohibited.

#### Fires

Campfires are permitted, but only *dead, down, and detached wood* may be used. Collecting wood from wilderness lands is prohibited. Uprooting dead stumps, trees, and bushes is also prohibited.

No wood may be removed from the refuge. Wood is very scarce; please consider bringing your own firewood.

#### Geocaching

Geocaching is prohibited on the refuge. In addition, because most of Kofa NWR is designated wilderness, nothing man-made may be left behind.

#### Pets

Pets are permitted only if they are confined or leashed. Dogs may be off-leash when they are participating in quail and cottontail hunting.

#### Wildlife Observation, Photography, Interpretation, and Education

These activities are permitted on all areas of the refuge except closed areas, patented mining claims and other private inholdings. The use of any automatic or remotely-controlled cameras (trail cameras) on the refuge is prohibited.

#### Drones - Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)

Launching, landing, or operating any aircraft including unmanned aircraft (drone) from or on lands and waters administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is prohibited, 50 CFR 27.34.

#### Rockhounding and Rock Collecting

Recreational (noncommercial) rock or mineral collecting is restricted to the 1.5 square mile **Crystal Hill Area** north and east of Junction #77 (see map). Possession of rocks is limited to 10 specimens or 10 pounds (whichever occurs first) in any 12 month period. Rock or mineral collection is limited to materials that are exposed and collectable **without the use of tools** (metal detectors are considered tools). **Digging**, including the use of simple hand tools, is prohibited. The collection of any rocks or minerals is prohibited on the remainder of the Kofa NWR.

Persons are prohibited from searching for or removing objects of antiquity, Indian artifacts, or paleontological objects anywhere on the refuge.

#### Disturbance of the Peace

Disturbance of the peace or other disorderly conduct on the refuge is prohibited. No person who is intoxicated shall enter or remain upon the refuge.

#### Stargazing

Many clear nights, relatively unobstructed by city lights, make the refuge an excellent location for amateur astronomy and stargazing.

#### Organized Groups

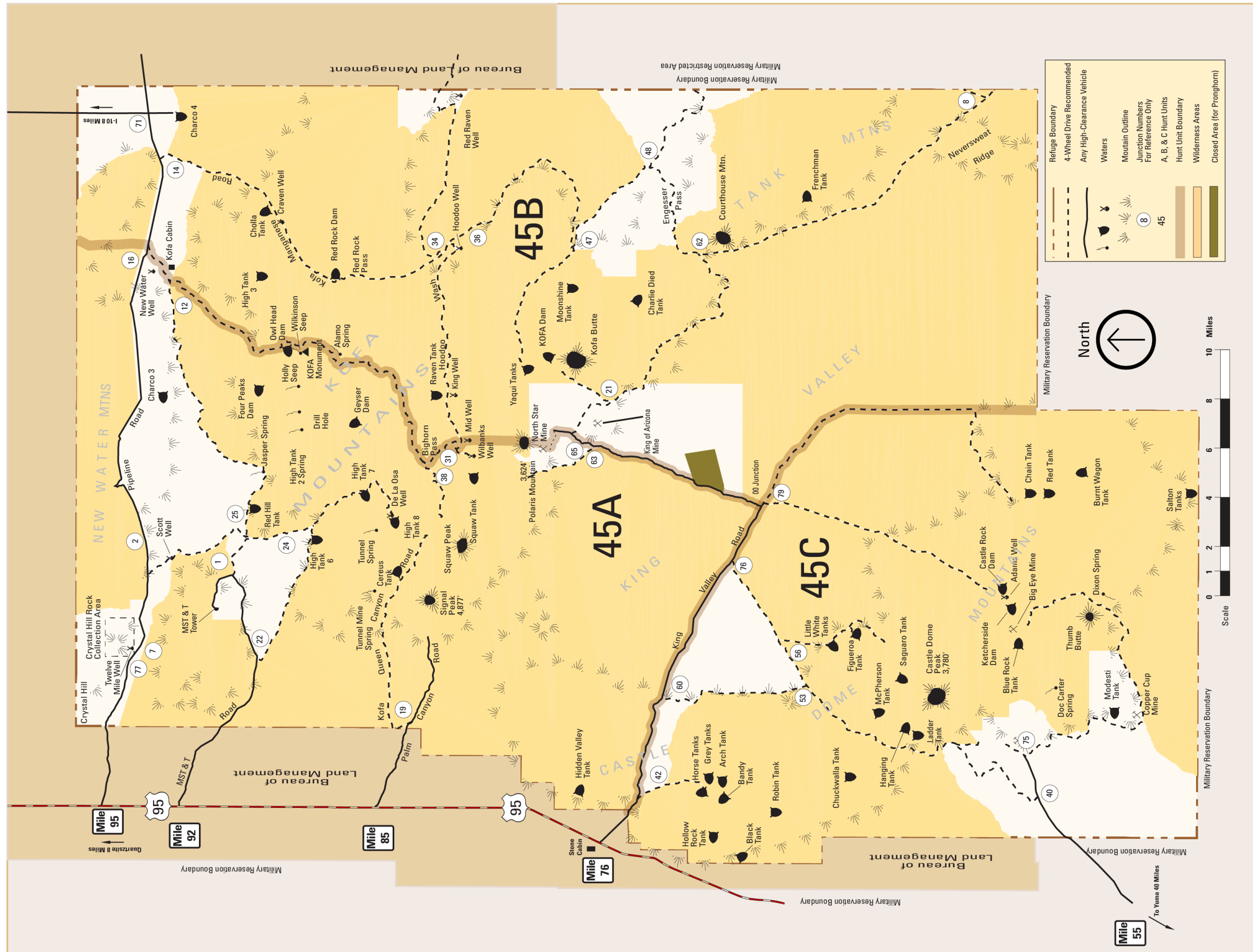
Organized groups, such as jeep clubs, UTV clubs, hiking groups, etc. should contact refuge staff, for additional information, prior to scheduling group activities.

### Hunting Regulations

Regulated hunting is permitted for quail, bighorn sheep, mule deer, cottontail rabbit, coyote, and gray fox. All other wildlife is protected. Hunters must follow all Public Use Regulations and the following Hunting Regulations:

- State hunting licenses (for all hunting) and permits (for deer and desert bighorn sheep) are required.
- Bag limits for predatory animals, quail and cottontail are per State regulations. **Hunting and collecting of reptiles and amphibians is prohibited.**
- Individuals may not be under the influence of alcohol while hunting. Shooting from a vehicle is prohibited. Discharge of firearms is not permitted within 1/4 mile of an occupied structure.
- Deer and other species may be taken by bow and arrow or rifle depending on the hunting season.
- The use of a game cart to retrieve a harvested animal is permitted only in non-wilderness areas of the refuge.
- Cottontail, coyotes and gray foxes may only be hunted during the quail season.
- Trapping is not permitted on the refuge.
- Hunting is allowed near water sources. Individuals should respect other hunters' privileges and leave the area if other hunters arrive at a water source first.
- Hunting seasons for the refuge are listed in current Arizona Game and Fish Department hunting regulations.





- Recreational livestock permitted on the refuge include horses, mules and burros. The use of feeding containers is required and water must be packed in. All waste must be removed from the refuge and all surface disturbances at campsites must be restored. Use of pelletized feed is highly recommended to reduce potential introduction of invasive species. Livestock may not be tethered directly to trees or other vegetation.

**CAUTION: Entering any mine (or cave) on any National Wildlife Refuge is prohibited.** This regulation is in effect for public safety and to reduce the spread of white-nose syndrome, a deadly fungus affecting bats. Abandoned mines are extremely dangerous due to the possibility of collapse.

If you enter old buildings and/or historical structures on Kofa NWR, you do so at your own risk. Exposure to airborne disease-causing pathogens is possible.

Kofa NWR was used by Gen. Patton for desert military training during WWII. Unexploded ordnance may be encountered. **DO NOT PICK UP anything that appears to be military hardware.** Note the location of the object and report it to refuge headquarters or the Phoenix Interagency Law Enforcement Dispatch at 1/800-637-9152.

Rock climbing is prohibited on the refuge.

Occasional storms on the refuge will cause flash flooding in low-lying areas and washes; please use CAUTION when in these areas.

Please report any hunting violations you observe to the Phoenix Interagency Law Enforcement Dispatch at 1/800-637-9152 or to Arizona Game and Fish Department Operation Game Thief Hotline at 1/800-352-0700.

**For More Information**

Please contact refuge headquarters for additional information about other programs and activities, to report all injuries or accidents, or any unusual incidents or observations.

For inquiries about the program, contact:

Refuge Manager  
 Kofa National Wildlife Refuge  
 9300 East 28th Street  
 Yuma, AZ 85365  
 928/783-7861 Office  
 928/783-8611 Fax  
[www.fws.gov/refuge/kofa/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kofa/)