

Public Use Regulations for Private Land Open To Sportsmen (PLOTS) Lands



Photo by Greg Gullickson

From its inception over a decade ago, the goal of the PLOTS program was to provide the public with walk-in access for hunting on private land. The Department, through agreement, is the lessee for hunting access on lands enrolled in the PLOTS program. Activities such as horseback riding, camping, baiting, driving ATVs or snowmobiles, dog training, and many others were not regulated by the PLOTS program agreement.

In recent years, the Department has received numerous comments and concerns from landowners enrolled in the program and hunters who utilize these areas about the increase in non-hunting related activities occurring on PLOTS tracts. We have also received comments from landowners and hunters during our PLOTS survey suggesting the Department publish “clear regulations and rules” for the PLOTS program. Because of the increased interest and usage of PLOTS, increased expectations by hunters, and increased concerns from private landowners, we feel it is time to establish specific public use regulations to govern public use on PLOTS.

By establishing these regulations, the Department can better fulfill its responsibility to the private landowners and help protect the property they’ve enrolled in the program. In addition to protecting the property enrolled in the program, the regulations will provide clarity to the hunting public. Law enforcement officers will be in a better position to enforce activities on PLOTS property.

These regulations became effective October 1, 2010.

ARTICLE 30-04

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

30-04-08-01. Public access and use. All Private Land Open To Sportsmen (PLOTS) property is open only for public walk-in access for the purpose of hunting within legal hunting seasons, or as signed. All other activities require written permission from the property owner. As used in this section PLOTS is private land enrolled by the Depart-

ment for purposes of hunting as established under North Dakota Century Code chapter 20.1-02-27. Walk-in access for purposes of this section is defined as an individual travelling by foot with any legal weapon, equipment, accessories, and provisions for the purposes of hunting. Hunting weapons, equipment, accessories, or provisions may not be left unattended on PLOTS without written permission of the property owner. Any person who violates this section is guilty of a noncriminal offense and shall pay a one hundred dollar fee.

Summary

The public use regulations state that any activity, other than walk-in hunting, will not be allowed on PLOTS without **written permission from the landowner**. If any weapons, equipment, accessories or provisions are used on PLOTS by hunters, they may not be left unattended and must be taken with when they leave the area. These regulations will be enforced year round but will not restrict the landowner from participating in these activities on their own property enrolled in PLOTS. These regulations will not restrict the landowner, tenant, family, hired hand, or other authorized operators from conducting normal farming or ranching activities as authorized in the PLOTS contract on their own property enrolled in PLOTS. The public use regulations are intended to protect property enrolled in PLOTS from potentially damaging activities.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q.** *Can I drive on PLOTS to set out decoys or retrieve my deer?*
- A.** No. PLOTS are for walk-in hunting only. Some PLOTS are marked with a green sign indicating the landowner has agreed to allow vehicle access on cropland for waterfowl hunting only. These special

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areas are identified with green “Attention Waterfowl Hunters” signs and the details have been worked out with the landowner as part of the agreement ahead of time. If a hunter wishes to drive out to retrieve a deer on PLOTS, he must obtain permission from the landowner.



Q. *Can PLOTS be used for other activities? (Camping, horseback riding, dog training, paintball shooting, ATV/snowmobile riding etc.)*

A. No. Any other activity besides walk-in hunting is not allowed unless the hunter obtains written permission from the landowner.

Q. *Can I place bait on PLOTS?*

A. The rule states: If any weapons, equipment, accessories are used by hunters they may not be left unattended and must be taken with when the hunter leaves the area. This includes, but not limited to, guns, blinds, stands, baits, scents, decoys other equipment etc.)

Example: While baiting is allowed on private land in North Dakota, the rule states that any

weapon, equipment or provision used by a hunter on PLOTS may not be left unattended and must be taken with when the hunter leaves. This means a hunter cannot place bait on PLOTS prior to or during the season and leave it there. Any bait would have to be brought to the PLOTS with the hunter the same day and taken out with the hunter the same day when he leaves.

Q. *Can I use PLOTS any time of the year?*

A. Again, PLOTS are for walk-in hunting only during legal hunting seasons. If you are not participating in a hunting related activity, you should contact the landowner for permission.

Q. *Can I set up my tree stand and leave it on a PLOTS tract so I am assured I will have a place to hunt?*

A. A hunter may set up a tree stand or blind on PLOTS but it must be taken with when he leaves and it cannot be left unattended unless permission is obtained from the landowner.

Example: A hunter cannot set up a tree stand on PLOTS before season or leave a stand up the entire season essentially claiming the area for himself. If the hunter obtains permission from the landowner, the hunter can set up the stand and leave it on the PLOTS tract.