

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. First, a formal RWR research request should be made via the online form provided. Second, you should have the proper IACUC permits from your respective college/university/agency to conduct humane research with live animals. Third, a Louisiana Scientific Collecting Permit may be needed depending on your project (<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/permit/scientific-collecting-permit>).

Directions and Travel to RWR:

From Lafayette (~1.5-2.0 hours driving time)

- 1) From Lafayette, drive west on I-10 for 14 miles to Rayne (exit 87). From the off ramp, turn left (south) on Hwy 35.
- 2) Travel 1.75 miles (south) on Hwy 35 and then turn right (west) on US 90 for 200 feet.
- 3) At the first stop light, turn left (south) to stay on Hwy 35.
- 4) Travel 7.1 miles south on Hwy 35. At the stop light, turn right (west) on Hwy 92 for 0.5 miles.
- 5) Turn left (south) to stay on Hwy 35 for 8.1 miles. You will turn make several turns through Kaplan (a right, left, and another right), but you will stay on Hwy 35.
- 6) After leaving Kaplan, you will continue south on Hwy 35 for 11.2 miles and then Hwy 35 will turn to Hwy 82.
 - Note Kaplan has the last gas station until you get to Pecan Island, ~18.5 miles away.
- 7) Continue driving south on Hwy 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 Hwy 82 into the community of Pecan Island.
 - 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 Hwy 82 until you get to RWR Headquarters (building on south side of road behind large sign in front).
- 10) RWR Headquarters is located on the south side of the road, and it is the 6th building coming from the east (parking lot is west of building).

From Lake Charles (~1.0 hours driving time)

- 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 Hwy 397.
- 2) Drive south on Hwy 397 for 5.6 miles. At the stop light intersection, turn left (east) on Hwy 14.
- 3) Drive 2.75 miles and veer right (south) to stay on Hwy 14.
- 4) Drive 2.1 miles south on Hwy 14 and then Hwy 14 will become Hwy 27.
- 5) Continue south on Hwy 27 for 24.7 miles (passing through one stop light in the town of Creole).
- 6) Turn left (east) on Hwy 82 and travel for 18.25 miles.
- 7) RWR Headquarters is located on the south side of the road, and it is the 2nd building coming from the west (parking lot is west of building).

Airports

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

Airports (cont.)

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

There are several small food stores/gas stations around RWR including Booth's Grocery (0.7 miles east of RWR HQ at 5647 Grand Chenier Hwy, Grand Chenier, LA; 337-538-2378) and Kelly's Mart (8.4 miles west of RWR HQ at 3261 Grand Chenier Hwy, Grand Chenier, LA; 337-538-2604). These mainly provide "staples" and thus, may not be adequate for some dietary preferences. The closest grocery stores (i.e., Walmart, Kroger, Marketbasket, 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.

The nearest restaurant, T-Boy's Cajun Grill (4409 W. Creole Hwy, Cameron, LA; 337-542-4002), is approximately 20 miles away in Creole. They serve Cajun food (Po-Boys, shrimp, gumbo, etouffee) and also American-style food (Hamburgers, Chicken tenders, French Fries).

Gas Stations near RWR

The nearest gas stations are Kelly's Mart (8.4 miles west of RWR HQ at 3261 Grand Chenier Hwy, Grand Chenier, LA; 337-538-2604) and Pecan Island Food Store (25 miles east of RWR HQ at 27024 Hwy 82, Kaplan, LA; 337-737-2396).

Dormitory

RWR has dormitories available for visiting researchers to stay. Contact the office (337-491-2593) for information pertaining to availability and dormitory rules. The cost is \$10 per person per night; fee is waived if you are collaborating on research with a RWR biologist.

The General Quarters Dormitory has been recently renovated. There are 16 single beds (4 rooms with 4 beds each) and one double bed in a private room, with total capacity for 17-18 people. Separate male and female community bathrooms are available and have been newly renovated. All linens and towels are provided and a full kitchen is available with cooking utensils, pots/pans, a microwave, refrigerator, and freezer. There is a conference room, TV/large meeting room, dining room, laundry room (bring your own detergent and dryer sheets), and WiFi internet connection. No pets are permitted in the dormitory.

The West End Dorms sustained minor damage from Hurricanes Laura and Delta, and have recently been repaired and approved for continued use. The dorm facility can accommodate most groups with 17 beds, a full kitchen, dining space, and living quarters.

Laboratory

Construction on the new laboratory at Rockefeller was completed and accepted in 2020. Unfortunately, Hurricanes Laura and Delta caused major damage to the office facility at Rockefeller, this resulted in staff retrofitting the new lab as a temporary office space while construction on a new office is underway. Although limited, the facility still offers some space for laboratory-associated work, however most research is primarily field-oriented. Bring all lab supplies/reagents and dissecting tools needed for your project. At the moment, 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°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 on collaborating 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 including unmanaged brackish/salt marsh (at the end of Price Lake Road; GPS 29.67742 N, -92.85004 W), managed brackish marsh (Unit 2; GPS 29.71425 N, -92.81375 W), and a managed intermediate marsh (on 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 field work. 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 (ATT 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 field work 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), response time will be delayed.