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**Hunters Encouraged to Apply for Waterfowl Hunting Permits Needed For  
Opening Day and First Weekend of Duck Season At Oak Orchard and  
Tonawanda Wildlife Management Areas**

Special permits will be issued for the opening day and opening weekend of duck season to hunt waterfowl at two popular state-managed locations, the New York State Department of Conservation (DEC) announced today. The permit requirement applies to waterfowl hunting at the Oak Orchard and Tonawanda Wildlife Management Areas in Genesee and Niagara counties. The intent of the special permits is to promote hunter safety and increase the quality of hunting on days when the areas receive the greatest use.

A special permit is required to hunt waterfowl at Oak Orchard or Tonawanda Wildlife Management Areas on the duck season's opening day, first Saturday or first Sunday. These days are the only times the special permits are needed. The permit system has been used successfully at both wildlife management areas in recent years. No special permits are required to hunt other game species at Oak Orchard or Tonawanda Wildlife Management Areas.

Western New York's tentative duck season opening day is Tuesday October 23, and the first weekend dates for duck hunting are Oct. 27-28. These dates will not be finalized until the federal regulations are adopted in late summer. If goose season is open during the opening day and/or opening weekend of duck season, goose hunters will be required to obtain the special permit. Hunters are advised to confirm the final dates before hunting any waterfowl.

The current drought may affect permit numbers this year. In the past, for each of the permit days, DEC has typically issued 100 permits for Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area and 50 permits for Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area. However, due to the severe drought on the areas this year, if water levels do not improve the Department will likely issue fewer permits to hunt on the permit days. The number of permits issued will be determined based on a review of water areas available for waterfowl hunting just prior to the lottery draw.

Opening day and opening weekend waterfowl hunting permits for the two Wildlife Management Areas will be distributed by a random lottery. Hunters must choose from six options: Oak Orchard Opening day, Oak Orchard first Saturday; Oak Orchard first Sunday; Tonawanda Opening day, Tonawanda first Saturday; and Tonawanda first Sunday.

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**To apply for the lottery, hunters must send in a postcard with their name, address and their first three choices, in order of preference, clearly indicated.** Applicants must also have completed a Waterfowl Identification Course, **and their course certificate number must be indicated on the postcard. Applications will be accepted through Sept. 15, and must be mailed to the New York State Bureau of Wildlife, 1101 Casey Road, Box B, Basom, New York 14013.** Each permittee will be allowed to bring one companion over the age of 18 and an additional companion 18 years old or younger.

Duplicate permits will not be issued to hunters who have already been issued a permit to hunt on the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. Any cards submitted by hunters who have been selected to hunt on Iroquois on opening day or the first Saturday will be excluded from the lottery for those days at both Oak Orchard and Tonawanda.

Issued permits are nontransferable and are not valid for companion(s) unless the permittee is present and hunting within 50 yards. The permittee is responsible for completing and returning the questionnaire portion of the permit to the New York State Bureau of Wildlife by November 1. If the completed questionnaire is not received by November 15, the permittee will be ineligible for next year's (2008) lottery.

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