

Task 4-1.6: Change in Overall Hunting Opportunities on the Fort Polk and Peason Ridge Wildlife Management Areas

The Fort Polk Main Post (including the Kisatchie National Forest Intensive Use Area, or IUA) and the Peason Ridge Training Area are designated as State Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). Managed deer hunts are held each year to allow the harvest of surplus deer and prevent habitat damage resulting from over-browsing. In addition, hunting seasons are specified by the State for other game species, including squirrel, turkey, quail, woodcock, dove and rabbit. However, because firearms hunting is incompatible with military training for safety reasons, portions of the Fort Polk and Peason Ridge WMAs are closed to hunting during State hunting seasons while troops are using those areas. Fort Polk Range Control attempts to maximize the number of hunting areas open during the fall and spring hunting seasons, especially during the season opening weekends for squirrel and turkey and the popular either-sex deer hunt following Thanksgiving.

Fort Polk uses the “acre-day” unit of measure to quantify the overall opportunities afforded for hunting on the WMAs. The acre-day unit of measure assesses both how much land is available (open) for hunting and for how long it is available. A performance target for maintaining a stable annual percentage of open hunting acre-days (“percent open for hunting”), estimated as the annual rate of change over a five-year period at the 90% confidence level, was adopted. The 2007 fiscal year was the base year for collection of overall “percent open for hunting” data on the WMAs; comparable data for prior years are not readily available. Therefore, the rate of change for these data could not be calculated for FY 2007. In FY 2007, a total of 35 percent of the total annual hunting acre-day capacity was open for hunting on the Fort Polk WMA, and 16 percent of the total annual hunting acre-day capacity was open on the Peason Ridge WMA. Figure 4-1.6 shows the percent of hunting season days open for individual hunting areas within the Fort Polk and Peason Ridge WMAs, respectively.

The “percent open for hunting” values for FY 2007 indicate that overall hunting opportunities are constrained on the Fort Polk WMA (35%) and in particular on the Peason Ridge WMA (16%). The FY 2007 “percent open for hunting” values reflect the high training intensity at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and Fort Polk. Hunting opportunities on the Fort Polk WMA were primarily constrained within live fire ranges and associated safety fans, including the Zion Hills Small Arms Range Complex, the Multi-purpose Range Complex and artillery firing points located northeast of the Redleg Impact Area. Hunting opportunities were constrained throughout the Peason Ridge WMA due to the frequent use of this training area for JRTC live fire exercises. In addition, the northeastern portion of the Peason Ridge WMA was closed to hunting during FY 2007 due to construction of a new live fire range. Fort Polk Range Control will maximize the areas and time periods open for hunting in future years to the fullest extent possible, while avoiding safety conflicts with live fire and maneuver training exercises.

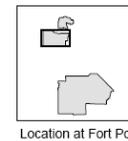
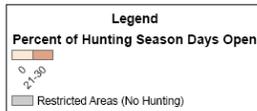
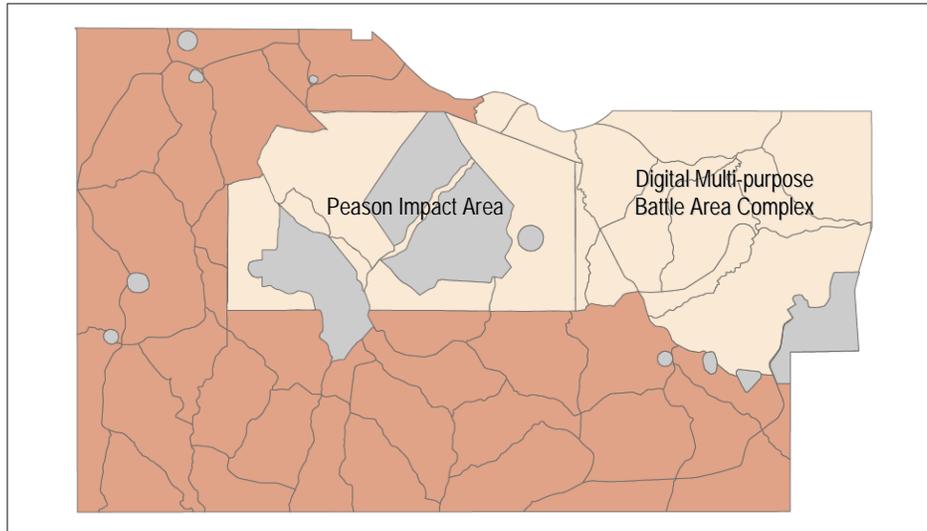
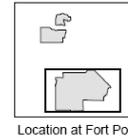
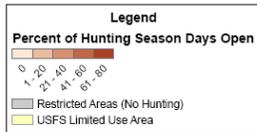
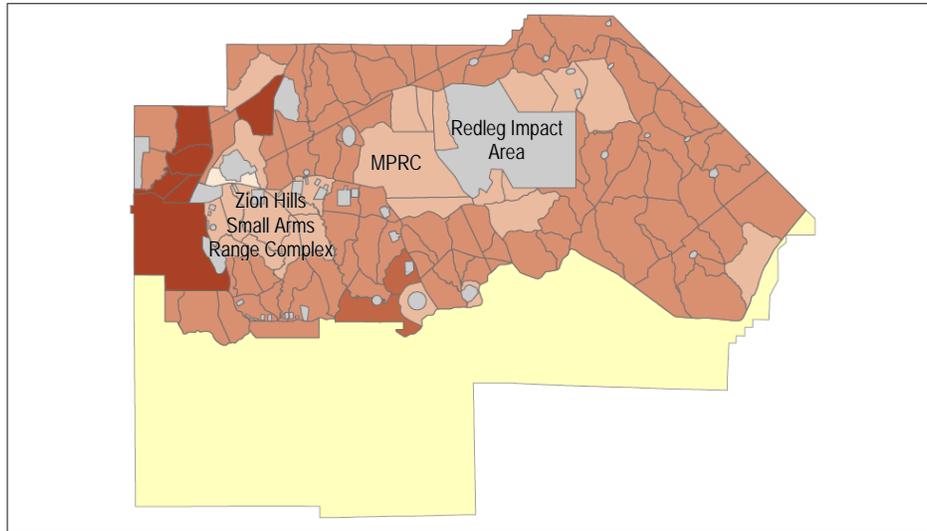


Figure 4-1.6. Percent of hunting season days open by hunting compartment, Fort Polk and Peason Ridge Wildlife Management Areas. (Note: Fort Polk and Peason Ridge are displayed at different scales.)