

Jocassee Gorges WMA (Jim Timmerman Natural Resources Area)

South Carolina Wildlife Management Area | 43,500 acres | Pickens, Oconee County | Zone 1

SCDNR official website and SCDNR map brochure confirm 43,500 acres total tract. SCDNR deer harvest report lists 33,000 acres (likely huntable/SCDNR-owned portion; total includes Duke Energy conservation easement lands). Task description cited 38,000 — likely an older or partial figure. Official SCDNR brochure states 'nearly 35,000 acres purchased by the State' in 1998; total with Duke easement lands is ~43,500 acres. PeakVisor also confirms 43,500 acres.

Managing Agency

SCDNR (owns majority); Duke Energy conservation easement lands also included in WMA program

Phone: (864) 654-1671

Address: Visitor Center: Keowee-Toxaway State Park, intersection of SC 11 and SC 133, Pickens County

Game Species

black bear; whitetail deer; wild turkey; feral hog; squirrel; ruffed grouse; woodcock; raccoon; mourning dove; rabbit; bobcat; small game

Seasons (2025-2026)

Species / Season	Dates
deer_archery	Open Oct. 1 (GZ1 archery concurrent with primitive weapons; archery allowed through season)
deer_primitive_weapons	Oct. 1–10
deer_gun	Oct. 11–16 (still gun); Oct. 17–30 (archery only); Oct. 31–Jan. 1 (still gun)
deer_either_sex_days	Last three Saturdays in November (Game Zone 1 WMA)
deer_youth_hunt_day	January 3
turkey	April 1–May 5 (statewide WMA season)
dove	General WMA dove season; Jocassee Gorges Cane Creek Field listed as public dove field (V)
bear	Oct. 11–16: still hunt (no dogs), 1 bear limit; Oct. 17–30: party dog bear hunts (5 bears per party)
hog	Jan. 2–10 and Mar. 20–27 (hog hunts with dogs; refer to reg. 2.16); still hunting for hogs allowed
small_game	Sept. 1–Mar. 1 (Game Zone 1 WMA seasons apply; no hunting before Sept. 1 or after Mar. 1)

Bag Limits

deer daily: 2 per day; **deer seasonal:** 5 total (no more than 2 antlered); **antlerless tags:** Only 3 individual antlerless deer tags valid for all WMAs combined in Game Zone 1 (starting Oct. 1); **bear:** 1 bear per hunter (still hunt); 5 bears per party (dog hunt); **turkey:** 3 gobblers per season, no more than 2 per day; **dove:** 15 mourning doves per day

Access Points

Primary paved access: SC 178 and Cleo Chapman Road (County Road 143) are the ONLY paved roads accessing the property. Visitor Center at Keowee-Toxaway State Park (SC 11 & SC 133) serves as main entry. Approximately 138 miles of dirt/gravel roads provide internal access — most open March 20–May 10 and September 15–January 15; closed in late winter and summer. Chestnut Mountain Road (via NC Hwy 281) open year-round. 3.7-mile section of Horsepasture Road open year-round from US 178. Additional access from Devils Fork State Park, Table Rock State Park, Jones Gap State Park, Oconee State Park, Caesars Head State Park boundaries. Named access points include: Hemlock Hollow, Laurel Valley Entrance, Shooting Tree Entrance, Sassafras Mountain parking lot (via F. Van Clayton Hwy), Bad Creek Hydro Project entrance, Whitewater Falls parking area.

Special Regulations

WMA permit required (hunting license + WMA permit). No Sunday hunting on WMA lands. Game Zone 1 regulations apply. Bear hunting: no sow with cubs, no bears 100 lbs or less. Dog bear hunts (party dog bear season Oct. 17–30): only handguns permitted during dog hunts; no still/stalk hunting during dog hunts. Camping: designated sites along main roads on first-come basis; primitive camping permitted anywhere when roads/gates closed (late winter/summer) but written permit must be obtained in advance; no permit needed for primitive camping along Foothills Trail, Eastatoee Creek Heritage Preserve Spur, or Palmetto Trail at any time. No camping on shore of Lake Jocassee except Double Springs Primitive Campground (Devils Fork State Park). International orange required during gun seasons.

Field Tips

Jocassee Gorges is one of South Carolina's few true wilderness hunting experiences and the premier black bear habitat in the state. Deer density is relatively low but big-buck opportunity is high due to limited pressure. Best areas: saddles on oak ridges — deer and bear concentrate on mast (white oak acorns especially). Terrain spans 1,000–3,500+ ft elevation. South-facing slopes warm first on cold mornings, concentrating deer activity. Rut in Game Zone 1 mountain terrain typically peaks in late October–early November. Squirrel and grouse hunting outstanding in forested coves. The only place in SC where deer, turkey, and bear can all be hunted legally in the same area during appropriate seasons. Prepare for extreme terrain; topographic maps essential. Roads close seasonally — check road opening status before trip (Sept. 15 – Jan. 15 main window). Archery deer hunting is open when bear gun season runs (Oct. 11–30), enabling multi-species bow hunts for both deer and bear simultaneously.

Landmarks & Terrain

Sassafras Mountain (3,553 ft — highest point in SC), Lake Jocassee, Whitewater Falls (411 ft — highest east of Rockies), Laurel Fork Falls, Twin Falls, Devils Fork State Park, Keowee-Toxaway State Park, Table Rock State Park, Caesars Head State Park, Foothills Trail (77 miles), Eastatoee Creek Heritage Preserve, Laurel Fork Heritage Preserve, Bad Creek Hydroelectric Project (Duke Energy)

Camping & Lodging

On-property: Designated campsites along main roads (first-come; free). Primitive camping allowed anywhere with written permit when roads closed. No camping on Lake Jocassee shore (except Devils Fork Double Springs campground). State park camping within/adjacent: Devils Fork SP (cabins + developed sites), Keowee-Toxaway SP (cabins), Table Rock SP (full facilities), Oconee SP (cabins), Jones Gap SP, Caesars Head SP. Foothills Trail primitive camping (no permit required year-round on trail corridor).

Nearest Cities

Salem, SC (near Keowee-Toxaway SP, ~15 mi); Walhalla (Oconee County seat, ~25 mi); Pickens (county seat, ~20 mi); Greenville (~50 mi); Spartanburg (~70 mi); Clemson (~30 mi)

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Sources & References

- SCDNR Jocassee Gorges Partnership in Conservation – official page, confirms 43,500 acres — <https://www.dnr.sc.gov/managed/wild/jocassee/>
- SCDNR Jocassee Gorges – Hunting & Activities page; species, season overview — <https://www.dnr.sc.gov/managed/wild/jocassee/thingstodo.htm>
- SCDNR Jim Timmerman Natural Resources Area at Jocassee Gorges – official map and brochure (PDF) — https://www.dnr.sc.gov/ml_images/docs/jocasseemap.pdf
- eRegulations SC Game Zone 1 WMAs – Mountain Hunt Unit/GZ1 season dates (Jocassee falls within GZ1) — <https://www.eregulations.com/southcarolina/hunting/game-zone-1-wm-as-only>
- Carolina Sportsman – Best SC Upstate WMAs; Jocassee Gorges 43,500 acres, access details, hunting tips — <https://www.carolinaspportsman.com/hunting/the-best-of-scs-upstate-wmas/>

- Carolina Sportsman – Top SC Public Land Deer Hunts; Jocassee Gorges hunting details — <https://www.carolinasportsman.com/hunting/deer-hunting/learn-about-south-carolinas-top-public-land-deer-hunts/>
- SCDNR 2023-24 Hunting & Fishing Rules & Regulations – Game Zone 1 WMA seasons, bear regulations — https://www.dnr.sc.gov/regs/assets/2023-24_SCRulesandRegs.pdf

Compiled by HERE City Network. Always verify current regulations with SCDNR before hunting — seasons, bag limits, and area-specific rules can change year-to-year. SCDNR: 1-803-734-3886 • dnr.sc.gov