



# NEWS

## U.S. Department of the Interior

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### **Interior Department Opens Public Comment Period on Proposed Park and Refuge Firearm Regulations**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne today announced the beginning of a 60-day public comment period on updates to regulations regarding the carrying of firearms in national parks and wildlife refuges. The proposed update to existing regulations would allow an individual to carry a concealed weapon in national parks and wildlife refuges, if and only if, the individual is permitted to carry a concealed weapon and is authorized to do so on similar state lands in the state in which the national park or refuge is located. The proposed update is available in the Federal Register and on [www.doi.gov](http://www.doi.gov).

Existing regulations regarding the carrying of firearms remain otherwise unchanged, particularly limitations on poaching and target practice and prohibitions on carrying firearms in federal buildings.

“The safety and protection of park and refuge visitors remains a top priority for the Department of the Interior,” said Secretary Kempthorne. “The proposed regulations will incorporate current state laws authorizing the possession of concealed firearms, while continuing to maintain important provisions to ensure visitor safety and resource protection.”

On February 22, 2008, Secretary Kempthorne responded to letters from 51 Senators, both Democrats and Republicans, urging him to update existing regulations which prohibit the carrying of firearms in national parks and wildlife refuges. In his response, the Secretary directed Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Lyle Laverty “to develop and propose for public comment by April 30 Federal regulations that will update firearms policies on these lands to reflect existing Federal laws (such as those prohibiting weapons in Federal buildings) and the laws by which the host states govern transporting and carrying of firearms on their analogous public lands.”

The regulations, as currently in effect, were adopted in 1981 for national wildlife refuges and 1983 for national parks. Since that time many states have enacted new firearms policies. Currently, 48 states have passed legislation allowing for the lawful possession of concealed weapons.

“The original regulations, last substantially updated in the early 1980’s, were enacted over 25 years ago and much has changed in how states administer their firearm laws in that time,” said Assistant Secretary Lyle Laverty. “We strongly endorse the principle that states have the prerogative to develop appropriate policies and standards in this area, and believe that our management of parks and refuges should defer to those state laws.”

Once the public comment period has closed, all comments received will be evaluated and incorporated into the decision making process on a final rule. The number and substance of the comments received will determine the timeline for the final decision.

-- [www.doi.gov](http://www.doi.gov) --