



Wells Hunting Access Area

SLIGHTLY MORE THAN 5,000 acres in four eastern Kentucky counties are now open to public hunting following the finalization of an agreement earlier this year between the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and Greg Wells of Mountain Properties Inc.

The new Wells Hunting Access Area includes 17 tracts ranging from 49 acres to 1,278 acres. More than 3,200 acres are located in Perry County. The Leslie County tracts total 1,422 acres, while the remaining properties in Breathitt and Knott counties total nearly 200 acres each.

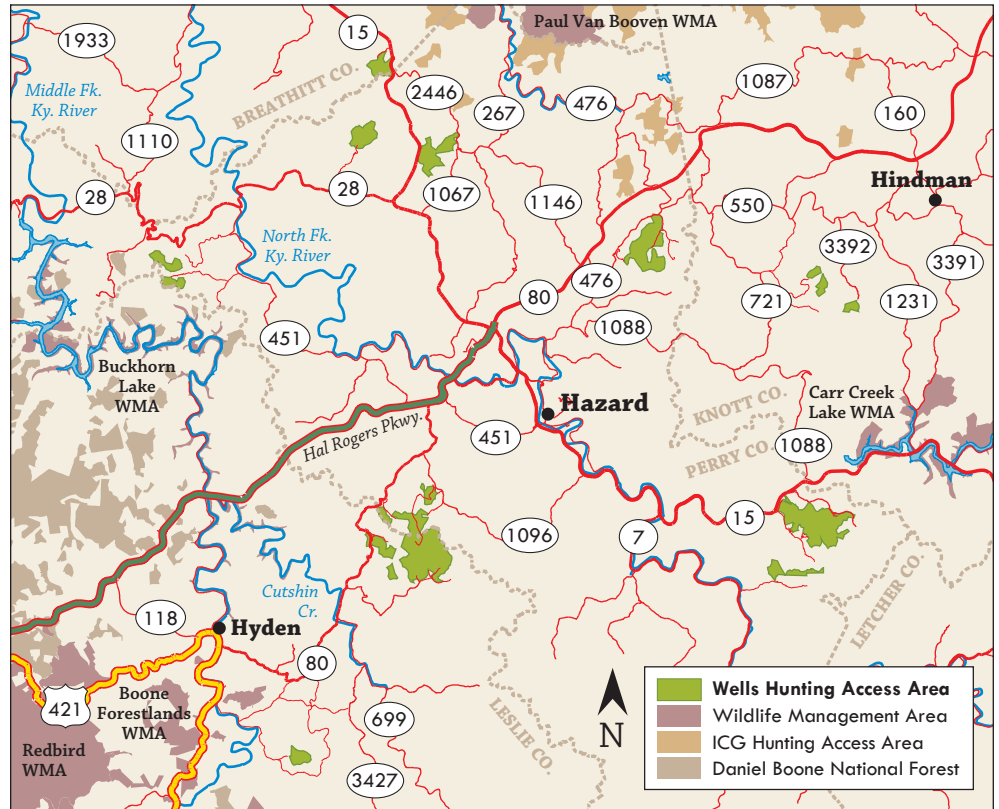
“There have been several elk taken off the properties over the years, including some good ones,” Wells said. “The deer are doing very well, too. We’ve been seeing a lot of them throughout the property. We’re seeing a lot of turkeys, too.”

About 60 percent of the area is reclaimed coal mine with pockets of oak-hickory forest and edge habitat favored by deer and turkey. Elevations of the properties range from 840 to 1,880 feet above sea level. Visitors can also expect to see squirrel, rabbits and some quail scattered around these properties.

The area is open under statewide regulations for hunting. “We’re happy that we were able to do this for folks,” Wells said. “There are a lot of hunting opportunities for people out there.”

Kentucky allots one elk permit for each 5,000 acres of property opened for public use. As part of the agreement, Wells will receive one elk hunting permit. Kentucky has six other areas which have been opened for hunting thanks to the landowner cooperator elk permit program. These areas total 129,000 acres, with Corrigan Wildlife Management Area being the largest at 54,800 acres.

Hazard-based Wildlife Biologist Dan Crank visited each of the Wells tracts to assess their access before the department finalized the agreement.



ADRIENNE YANCY ILLUSTRATION

Crank singled out the 1,278-acre Big Crank 1 tract west of Hazard as having good hunting potential. “It’s an old strip mine job – probably 10-15 years old – and it has some regeneration and shrubby cover growing in there,” he said. “It has the kind of open ground and edge habitat that rabbit, elk and deer favor.”

Another site with plenty of room to roam is the 1,027-acre George’s Branch 1 tract located in southern Perry County.

While the big tracts will receive the most attention, Crank said hunters should not overlook the smaller parcels scattered around the region. “The smaller tracts might actually be better for turkey and deer hunters because they’re more secluded and more difficult to find,” he explained. “They should present a good opportunity for people.”

Voncel Thacker, who represents the

region on the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission, praised the agreement. “Greg enjoys the outdoors and wants other people to enjoy the outdoors as well,” Thacker said. “And anytime that we can open up land for the public to access for hunting, that’s a good thing.” ■

HOW TO GET THERE

Because the properties are scattered, hunters should go online to fw.ky.gov for online maps to the various areas.

