Controlled Hunt Zone (CHZ):

A complete listing of CHZ rules is found in the Waterfowl Supplement, which is published annually. The following rules apply to all waterfowl hunters in the CHZ, and small game hunters from the opening of the regular waterfowl season to the Tuesday nearest October 22:

- Hunters must use designated stations on a first come, first served basis.
- Hunters are limited to one trip to the blinds before noon, and one trip after noon per day.
- Hunters are limited to 12 shells per trip in possession.
- Hunters must have guns unloaded and cased except within 10 feet of the hunting stations.
- Selected blinds will be posted closed during the early September Goose season because of their proximity to water.
- No person may park in or otherwise occupy any designated CHZ parking lot or hunting station from 10 pm to 5 am.
- Several blinds have been modified to allow hunting by persons with disabilities. Qualifying hunters should contact the headquarters for details.

Other Wildlife Management Areas in the Thief Lake Work Area:

While Thief Lake is the largest WMA in the work area, a total of 13 WMAs totaling 115,000 acres are managed from this office. These include the Wapiti (32,000 acres) and Grygla (3300 acres) WMAs to the east and south, which are home to the Grygla elk herd; Palmville WMA (15,000 acres) to the north of the lake which includes a large rich fen; and Nereson WMA (9500 acres) to the north of Palmville which includes two 500 acre impoundments, along with several smaller areas.
About Thief Lake WMA

Size: 55,000 acres 
Year Created: 1931

Location:
Thief Lake Wildlife Management Area (TLWMA) is a public WMA located in northeastern Marshall County, Minnesota, approximately midway between the cities of Thief River Falls and Roseau. Nearby towns include Middle River (southwest of the WMA), Strathcona (northwest of the WMA), Wannaska (northeast of the WMA) and Gatzke (south of the WMA). The headquarters for the area is located approximately thirteen miles northeast of Middle River, just off of Marshall County Highway 49 (420th Avenue). From Middle River, follow Marshall County 6 east of town ten miles, then take M arshall County 49 north three miles. The TLWMA Headquarters is on the east side of the road just south of the bridge over the Thief River.

Wildlife Management:
Minnesota’s Wildlife Management Areas are administered by the Department of Natural Resources to perpetuate and reestablish, if necessary, quality wildlife habitat for the maximum production of a variety of wildlife species. Recreational public use of the areas is managed in a manner that is consistent with the purpose of Wildlife Management Area. Habitats on the areas are managed using a variety of methods including water level management, prescribed burning, mechanical treatment such as brush sharring and mowing, farming and timber harvest. Wetlands, brushlands, forests and fields are managed and maintained to provide a diversity of habitats to meet the requirements of a variety of resident and migratory wildlife species.

General Description:
The land making up the WMA is flat and was once part of glacial Lake Agassiz. Vegetation types common to the area include marshes and sedge meadows, as well as aspen forests, brushlands, oak savannah and coniferous forests, in addition to limited areas of cropland. The Moose River flows west from the Moose River Impoundment and enters Thief Lake at the east end. Thief Lake then is the source of the Thief River, which flows out of the west side of the lake, and then goes south through A gassiz National Wildlife Refuge to Thief River Falls, where it joins the Red Lake River. Thief Lake itself is 1500 acres in size at normal pool. A sanctuary area of slightly more than 500 acres covers the west and north-central portions of the lake, along with associated uplands. A Controlled Hunting Zone (CHZ) with 85 blinds and shooting positions (primarily for goose hunting) abuts the upland portions of the sanctuary. Wildlife habitat on the WMA is managed for resident and migratory wildlife. The area provides recreational sport hunting of many game species, bird watching (on the Pine to Prairie Birding Trail), trapping, snowmobiling and other compatible outdoor recreational opportunities.

Recreational Facilities:
Public hunting has been the dominant outdoor recreational use of the WMA’s and sport hunters have been the principal source of funding for acquisition, development, operation and management of the areas. Other outdoor activities commonly pursued on the area include birding (bird lists available at Headquarters), trapping, snowmobiling, hiking and, usually in conjunction with the other outdoor activities, camping. Most campgrounds on the area are primitive, and primarily provided for hunter use in the fall. One campground, north of the headquarters has a handicapped accessible restroom. Other handicapped accessible facilities include two hunting blinds/wildlife observation blinds (#58 and #59) in the Controlled Hunting Zone. Over water hunting of waterfowl is permitted on Thief Lake in the areas east and south of the sanctuary boundaries during the appropriate seasons. Pass shooting of waterfowl is permitted in the Controlled Hunting Zone (CHZ) on the north and west side of the sanctuary (see Annual Hunting and Trapping Regulations Handbook for CHZ and other hunting regulations). In addition to waterfowl hunting, black bear and white-tailed deer hunting are popular uses of the area as is upland game hunting (ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse). Voluntary hunter bag checks and other surveys are conducted on the area to determine hunter use, hunter success, wildlife harvest, and to examine wildlife health. Big Game and furbearers may be registered at the Thief Lake WMA Headquarters.

Nearby State Parks (Hayes Lake to the northeast and Old M III to the west) and the city of Middle River provide developed camping sites with amenities.

Wildlife Management Area Rules:

- Hunting in accordance with all regulations (see annual Hunting & Trapping Regulations Handbook) is permitted. Unprotected wild animals may not be taken within WMA’s from March 1 to August 31.
- Furbearer trapping in accordance with all regulations is permitted (annual trapping permit required on TLWMA).
- Camping is allowed at designated “Camping permitted” sites (look for the Camping Permit signs). Camps must be occupied and cannot be left unattended overnight.
- Picking fruit and mushrooms is permitted
- Portable tree stands for hunting, wildlife observation and photography may be used but must be removed daily at the close of shooting hours.
- Motorized vehicles, licensed for public highway use, may be operated (20 mph speed limit) on gravel roads and designated motorized trails except when posted closed.
- Motorized watercraft are permitted on Thief Lake WMA. Only motors of ten horsepower or less are allowed.
- Commercial and private business use of a WMA is prohibited.
- A person may not permit or allow livestock, horses, or other domestic animals within a WMA’s Management Area except, dogs accompanied by or under the control of the owner, except from April 16 through July 14 when dogs must be on a leash.
- A person may not consume alcoholic beverages within a WMA, except when lawfully occupying an overnight use area.
- A person may not operate all-terrain vehicles on or off-highway vehicles, hang glider, aircar, hover craft, or any personal watercraft within the boundaries of a WMA except ATV’s are permitted during firearms deer季节 to retrieve deer after shooting hours (see specific regulation for details).
- A vehicle may not be parked in a WMA in front of a gate or in a manner that obstructs travel.
- Bats, decoys, or other property may not be left unattended overnight, except lawfully placed traps.
- Disorderly conduct, as defined by Minnesota Statutes, is prohibited within a WMA.
- Target, trap, skeet, or indiscriminate shooting is prohibited within a WMA except as authorized by the commissioner.