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# News Release



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## VIEQUES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE HOLDS AN OPEN HOUSE!

Since it was established as a National Wildlife Refuge on May 1, 2001, the 3,100 acres on the western end of the island of Vieques and its surrounding waters (beaches) have been open daily for public use by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, providing the visitors with an unique opportunity to explore this island ecological treasure by participating in wildlife activities such as fishing, hiking, birding and photography. These lands contains several ecologically distinct habitats including beaches, coastal lagoons, mangrove wetlands, and upland forested areas. The refuge and its surroundings water are home to at least three plants and eight animals on the Federal endangered species list. In addition to its ecological value, the refuge contains important resources of archeological and historic significance.

The Vieques National Wildlife Refuge would like to take this opportunity to invite the community and general public to the Refuges first Open House to be held at the new office facilities located at the Department of Education building on road 200, km 0.04. This will take place on **Saturday October 12, 2002 beginning at 9:00am**. During the activity the public and their families will have the opportunity to visit the new office facilities, meet the local refuge staff, enjoy environmental booths, know more about the refuge species and their habitats, take a guided tour through refuge lands, participate on environmental talks, and learn how they can join efforts with the Service to help in the protection of this valuable natural heritage. Please come and join us!

The Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 94-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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