



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Refuge Closure for Boardwalk Maintenance

The main visitor area at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, off north Historic Jungle Trail will be closed for two weeks for boardwalk maintenance starting on Monday, July 23.

With the help of a Youth Conservation Corps crew from Sebastian River High School and other volunteers, The Centennial Trail at the Pelican Island Viewing Area on Historic Jungle Trail will undergo a facelift later this month as each engraved plank is removed and replaced with a new one. On the trail, the names of all 540 national wildlife refuges established up until the Centennial on March 14, 2003 are displayed on engraved planks in reverse chronological order, displaying a timeline of the history of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Since the planks were installed in 2003, the majority of refuge names have eroded or worn away and are no longer legible. “The wearing away of the refuge names was so obvious that they were almost disappearing right before our eyes and I knew we were going to have to replace the boards”, said Joanna Webb, Refuge Ranger from Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. To remedy the problem, the refuge will replace the 50% cedar/50% plastic boards, which are eroding away,

with recycled plastic boards that have a 50-year lifespan. In addition, the refuge names will be engraved deeper, and a single plank representing over 3000 Waterfowl Production Areas within the system and seven new refuges that have been established since the Centennial in 2003 will be added. To complement the interpretation along the Centennial Trail, the refuge will also complete the installation of 17 new interpretive panels along the 1/3 mile trail. All of these improvements will set the stage for a dedication event this fall to celebrate the trail's newest designation as a National Recreational Trail.

In order to complete this work, the Pelican Island Viewing Area, which includes both The Centennial Trail and Pete's Impoundment Trail, will be closed from July 23 through August 3. Bird's Impoundment Trail, a 2.5 mile loop trail accessible from the northern most parking lot on Jungle Trail, will remain open and provides visitors with a more primitive nature experience and great wildlife observation and photography opportunities.

On March 14, 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt signed an Executive Order creating Pelican Island as the country's first national wildlife refuge. Roosevelt went on to establish an additional 54 national wildlife refuges during his two terms and set historic conservation values for America. These values have grown into a system, which today, consists of 547 National Wildlife Refuges on almost 100 million acres of America's most important wildlife habitat. The U.S. 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 National Wildlife Refuge System and over 3000 “mini-refuges” called Waterfowl Production Areas. It also operates 69 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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