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# News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 22, 2009      Media Contact: Marc Epstein, 803/478-2217

## **Santee National Wildlife Refuge Cuddo Wildlife Drive will be Temporarily Closed**

Summerton, S. C.....Santee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is finalizing plans to rehabilitate the Refuge's wildlife drive and would like to inform the public that the seven and a half mile long wildlife drive, on the Cuddo Unit of the Refuge, will soon be temporarily closed through the fall/winter of 2009, probably as early as June or July. Santee NWR is pleased to have recently received funding to refurbish the road surface, clear debris, improve drainage, and replace water control structures. According to Refuge Manager Marc Epstein, the goal is to "keep the 'woody' character of the drive and provide the user a more enjoyable experience." This project is a joint effort of the Federal Highway Administration and the Refuge. The plan includes using a crushed rock material to resurface the road, clearing of the vegetation, and providing better parking and wildlife viewing opportunities. Additionally, the parking areas will be resurfaced with crushed rock and redefined with split-rail fencing. Staff is very excited to be able to tackle this project but regrets that the wildlife drive will have to remain closed to the public until completion. The project will have impacts on both the non-consumptive and consumptive users of the Cuddo Unit. Santee NWR anticipates the project will be complete by early 2010, but cannot commit to a specific re-opening date. Unforeseen circumstances may delay such a large and complex project. Epstein said "one thing is for certain, once the area re-opens to the public it will be a much more enjoyable experience for all users."

For future updates on this project and other projects on the Refuge, please visit the Refuge's webpage at: <http://www.fws.gov/santee/>

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 National Wildlife Refuge System, managed by the Service, is the world's premier system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve America's fish, wildlife and plants. Since President Theodore Roosevelt designated Florida's Pelican Island as the first wildlife refuge in 1903, the System has grown to more than 150 million acres, 550 national wildlife refuges and other units of the Refuge System, plus 37 wetland management districts. The agency 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.