



News Release

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Suspicious Fire Destroys Recovery Act Project Reward Offered for Information Leading to Arrest

Okmulgee, OK - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, local fire department and other law enforcement agencies, is currently investigating a suspicious fire that destroyed the initial construction work on a new office building at the Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuge in Okmulgee, OK. The building, which was about 35 percent complete, began construction in June and was scheduled to be open to the public early next year.

Contractor LDKC, Inc. of Jenks, Okla., and the Friends of Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuge are offering a \$2,000 reward for any information leading to the conviction of anyone connected with the fire.

The \$976,000 Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Administration Building and Visitor's Center project, funded through the Recovery Act, will give refuge staff an on-facility headquarters, eliminating the need for offices housed 10 miles away in downtown Okmulgee, Okla. When complete, the building will provide accessible and convenient services to refuge visitors.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Southwest Region director, Dr. Benjamin Tuggle is concerned by the fire and its effects on local workers. Tuggle said, "This has had a huge impact on everyone associated with the project. Local contractors who had subcontracted to complete portions of the project are now out of work until such a time that demolition and construction and begin on the building again. Local construction suppliers are also being impacted by the destruction of this building, by being unable to sell product. It simply affected a lot of people in an adverse way."

If you have any information regarding this incident, you are urged to contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Oklahoma Law Enforcement Office at (405)206-1780.

Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1993 to protect the bottomland hardwood forestlands of eastern Oklahoma and the wildlife living in the Deep Fork NWR area. The Refuge is located in the Deep Fork River Basin, upstream from Eufaula Reservoir.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.