



FEDERATION OF FLY FISHERS™
Conserving – Restoring – Educating Through Fly Fishing

United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Volunteers Needed for Invasive Vegetation Removal Workdays in August

Livingston, MT July 28, 2005 – Volunteers are needed to assist the Federation of Fly Fishers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the ongoing **Mangrove Recovery Initiative** in the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge Complex. On August 26 and 27, volunteers will be pitching in to remove exotic plants from the Refuge’s wading bird rookeries. The workdays are part of the **Mangrove Recovery Initiative**, a cooperative effort to preserve and restore mangrove habitats that have been impacted by human development and hurricanes.

Mangroves are extremely important for fish and wildlife. The Federation of Fly Fishers is particularly interested in the fisheries values of mangroves. The vital commercial and recreational fisheries of Florida are dependent on healthy mangroves to provide structural habitat, leaf litter as the base of the food chain, water quality, and nursery areas for young fish. Snook, redfish, tarpon, seatrout and sheepshead are just a few of the popular fish species that depend on mangroves. Additionally, an incredible number of wildlife species depend on mangroves. Mangrove communities are an integral part of Florida’s natural heritage. Unfortunately, the trees and the animals that depend on them need our active participation to ensure a healthy future.

When four separate hurricanes hammered coastal Florida during the storm season of 2004, they left wide swaths of storm damage in their wake. Hurricane Charley hit the Sanibel-Captiva barrier islands of southwest Florida particularly hard. When the hurricane made landfall on August 13, 2004, the eye of the hurricane passed directly over Captiva and North Captiva Islands. Driven by the hurricane, winds and water had major impacts to those islands and their neighboring island, Sanibel, home to the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

The mangrove forests of the National Wildlife Refuge were severely impacted by Hurricane Charley. The strong winds stripped the leaves from the branches, snapped limbs and trunks, and even uprooted many of the trees. Surveys completed after the hurricane by the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation found that larger trees were more severely impacted by the storm.

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Debris from fallen and damaged mangroves was strewn across roadways and littered the feeder canals that supply water circulation through the groves.

While mangroves can naturally recover from the impacts of hurricanes, the conditions in some sites require intervention to maintain healthy mangrove habitats. The future of these sites is vulnerable to invasions of exotic species and conversion to open water.

To help mangroves recover from Hurricane Charley and human impacts, the **Mangrove Recovery Initiative** engages the local community in volunteer efforts to clear ditches, remove exotic species, plant native species, and monitor forest conditions. We are seeking volunteers to participate in this ongoing project. The next workdays will be August 26 and 27, when we'll be removing exotic vegetation from a nearby island. To participate, please contact us by August 20 to reserve your spot. Even if you can't participate that day, you can contact us to be added to the volunteers' mailing list. For more information, visit www.fedflyfishers.org/conMangrove.php or email conserve@fedflyfishers.org. For local information and to sign up to volunteer, call the Refuge at 239-472-1100.

The Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF), founded in 1965, is an international membership organization dedicated to conserving, restoring and educating through fly fishing. With more than 300 clubs around the country and affiliates in 14 countries, the FFF supports fisheries conservation and educational programs for all fish and all waters where fly fishers have an interest.

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