

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge  
P. O. Box 68, St. Marks, FL 32355  
Phone: 850-925-6121  
Fax: 850-925-6930

# News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: David Moody

## **Volunteers Needed to clean up St. Marks Refuge Sat. Sept. 19**

As summer draws to a close, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is pleased to announce the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Coastal Cleanup and Awareness Day. From modest beginnings, the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Cleanup has grown into a major annual event, coordinated by refuge staff and volunteers. Last year, over 500 volunteers lent a hand to clean up litter and marine debris from the shores, lakes, and rivers in the Big Bend of Florida, from the Aucilla River to Ochlockonee Bay.

Support marine protection and education and join us at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday September 19, 2009 for our 24th annual Coastal Cleanup & Awareness Day. It is part of the International Coastal Cleanup held globally to examine sources of marine trash to identify solutions. Cleanup registration will run from 9 am – 11 am at the Refuge Visitor Center, 1255 Lighthouse Rd. Cleanup volunteers who return to the Visitor Center with trash will receive a ticket for a complimentary t-shirt and lunch as long as supplies last.

This year, all visitors will be invited to learn more about water resources, pollution, and how you can make a difference. “ Every Drop Counts” is the theme for this years’ cleanup. Fun educational exhibits will be provided by Florida Wild Mammal, TAPP, USGS, Wakulla Co. 4-H Jr. Master Gardeners, Gulf Specimen Marine Lab and Saturday at the Sea will be open from 10 am – 1 pm.

T-shirts and a hot dog lunch will be provided by the St. Marks Refuge Association. Lunch will be served from 11 am – 12:30 pm. Please call the refuge at 850/925-6121 for more information and to register groups of more than 10 people.

Over 500 volunteers collected 6,440 pounds of garbage last year. “ We have not had any major storms this year to move floating debris, but we seem to find hundreds of pounds each year anyway” . Much of what we find is an accumulation of careless human activity.

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is a partner of the *Get Outdoors Florida!* coalition. The coalition engages communities, families and individuals in outdoor experiences to achieve healthier lifestyles and sustain Florida's natural resources. Families who volunteer together at events such as Coastal Cleanup build a stronger connection to the natural environment. Children who participate in good stewardship activities are likely to continue practicing into adulthood.