

**St. Marks and St. Vincent National  
Wildlife Refuges**  
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# News Release



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**September 16, 2014 Contact: Terry Peacock, Refuge Manager – (850) 925-6121**

## **ST MARKS AND ST VINCENT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES PROPOSES FEE CHANGES**

The St. Marks and St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuges are proposing fee changes for big game hunting, refuge specific annual pass, building rental, and access. If approved, these changes would occur on June 1, 2015. St. Marks National Wildlife refuge currently has a \$5 application fee and a \$15.00 permit fee for big game gun and archery quota hunts. The refuge proposes to increase this permit fee to \$25.00. The St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge Sambar deer hunt currently requires a \$5 application fee and \$25.00 permit fee. The refuge proposes an increase of the permit fee to \$35.00. In addition to these hunts, the Refuges host a number of non-lottery hunts for which hunters currently do not have to pay application fees. All of these hunts, especially those conducted on St. Vincent Island, have costs associated with them (facilities and vehicle/boat maintenance, fuel, printing costs for regulations brochures, extra staff for check stations and law enforcement, etc.) that are not directly funded through the Complex's annual budget.

In addition, St. Marks NWR collects an entrance fee for access along Lighthouse Rd(Co. Rd. 59). Eighty percent (80%) of the revenue collected from the proposed fee increase for quota hunts, entrance, and building rental fees would be added to the Refuges budget each year, providing direct financial support for maintaining and improving the visitor services, environmental education, hunting, boat access programs and facilities. This additional funding has become even more essential as refuges deal with critical budget shortages. A fee analysis was done by Refuge staff

to keep fees consistent with those charged for hunt permits by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission WMA's and Tyndall Air Force Base. Entrance fees at Florida State Parks, use of local community rooms, and access to museums were also compared .

The St. Marks Annual Pass is currently \$15.00 and we propose increasing this pass to \$25.00. St. Marks NWR also manages an education/meeting facility near the Visitor Center. We propose a \$50/day facility fee to cover utility and cleaning costs. We are also proposing a \$2/person Lighthouse access fee to help cover operation and maintenance costs of the historic St. Marks Lighthouse. Special Recreation Permits for Commercial Videography will be added to this fee package, subject to the new U.S. Dept. of the Interior Fee Schedule.

We are interested in hearing from you regarding the proposed new fees and fee increases, and will collect public comments beginning September 16, 2014 through October 17, 2014. Please submit any comments to the Project Leader, North Florida Refuge Complex headquarters office, via email ([saintmarks@fws.gov](mailto:saintmarks@fws.gov)), phone (850) 925-6121, or by mail to Refuge Manager, P.O. Box 68, St. Marks, FL 32355. All comments will be reviewed and considered before a final decision is made on the implementation of the fees.

St. Marks NWR, located 25 miles south of Tallahassee, Florida, encompasses roughly 40 miles of coastline and 70,000 acres. The St. Vincent NWR is 12,300 acres and 9 miles long and is located off Indian Pass near Port St. Joe, Florida. Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, they are part of a national network of lands that includes over 560 refuges located throughout the United States. For more information, please contact the Complex headquarters at 850/925-6121 or visit [www.fws.gov/saintmarks](http://www.fws.gov/saintmarks).

***National Wildlife Refuges...Where Wildlife Comes Naturally!***