



# Information Bulletin

**Culebra National Wildlife Refuge**  
**PO Box 190**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Culebrita Island Habitat Restoration Project Removal of Invasive Species from Culebrita Island**

The Culebra National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), informs that the island of Culebrita in Culebra, Puerto Rico, will be closed to the public during the month of August for the removal of invasive species. The Service released a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Decision for public review and comment for 14 days. Comments were reviewed and addressed.

**When?:** The island of Culebrita, as well as its maritime perimeter of half of a nautical mile, will be closed to the public from August 6 to September 1, 2023 to implement an operation to remove invasive goats that are impacting the island's natural resources. Any changes to reopening the island will be notified in advance. The coordinates for the proposed perimeter are: North of Culebrita: 18°19'56.20"N, 65°13'40.57"W; South of Culebrita: 18°18'9.36"N, 65°13'37.20"W; East of Culebrita: 18°19'12.02"N, 65°12'48.72"W; West of Culebrita: 18°19'10.26"N, 65°14'48.60"W.

**Why?:** Culebrita is part of the Culebra National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and of the Caribbean Islands NWR Complex. Invasive species, such as goats, threaten Culebrita's wildlife habitats by significantly damaging vegetation and exposing soil to erosion, especially during rain events. This in turn may impact the corals and sea grasses around the island. It has been documented that invasive species are the primary driver of island plant and animal extinctions. Some of these species are implicated in 30% of all global extinctions.

Culebrita is habitat for seabirds, endangered and threatened species, as well as vulnerable species and species of special conservation interest for the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) and the Service. The Service has identified funds to carry out an invasive species eradication project to mitigate the negative impacts of invasive species on the resource due to human introduction. This is one of the initial projects to continue with other habitat restoration efforts, once the island is free of invasive species.

**Who?:** The Service is working under an interagency agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) in the implementation of this operation. Refuge staff is working collaboratively with DNER in the planning process, including the participation of DNER Officers with Refuge Officers to provide security and protection to any visitor that may approach Culebrita during the project.

**How?:** USDA-APHIS personnel, with the support of the Service, will be implementing invasive species control management using techniques approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association. Management strategies include biologically sound, effective, and responsible solutions to address problems and ensure that there are no negative impacts on wildlife populations. All techniques used meet strict guidelines for safety, selectivity, and effectiveness. These methods may involve changing management practices, modifying habitat, dispersing animals, or removing exotic species of concern. A combination of these approaches is generally used. USDA-APHIS has qualified expert staff to carry out this type operations in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

For further information, please follow the Culebra NWR social media page: <https://www.facebook.com/culebra.nwr> and <https://www.facebook.com/CaboRojoNWR/> or <https://www.fws.gov/office/culebra-national-wildlife-refuge>.

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.