



Media Advisory

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For Immediate Release

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BORDER REFUGE NOT CLOSED

Several media outlets have been inaccurately reporting that a massive stretch of the US border at Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was recently closed. Buenos Aires NWR in southern Arizona has not been closed to the public. Nearly 5-years ago, a very small portion of the Refuge closed to public access due to public safety concerns. However, the remainder (97%) of the refuge's 118,000 acres is open to the public for recreational activities such as hiking, camping, bird-watching, and seasonal hunting.

Recent news items further falsely stated that the closure extends from the border 80-miles to the north. This distance is far from accurate. On October 6, 2006 roughly 3500 acres, or 3% of the Refuge, was closed to public access due to human safety concerns. At that time there was a marked increase in violence along the border due to human and drug trafficking. The closed area extends north from the international border roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. A notice of the closure, including a map has been on the Refuge website since 2006.

At this time there are no plans to reopen this southernmost $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile wide portion of the Refuge. However, since 2006 the Refuge has experienced a significant decline in violent activity in the area thanks to ongoing cooperation between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and US Customs and Border Protection. The Refuge will reopen the area at such time that it is determined to be safe for visitors.

Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge's placement along the international border with Mexico within the Altar Valley of southern Arizona provides a unique opportunity to protect remnants of a fragile desert ecosystem and to provide refuge for some of the region's most imperiled species of plants and wildlife. Since its establishment, refuge staff have diligently worked to protect species such as the masked bobwhite quail and the Sonoran pronghorn, as well as to offer meaningful public recreation opportunities.

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.