United States Department of the Interior

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IN REPLY REFER TO:
12-5009

May 23, 2012

NEW RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUBJECT: Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Receives High Marks from Visitors

An overwhelming percentage of visitors to Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in 2010 were favorably impressed with its recreational opportunities, education and services, according to a peer-reviewed government survey released last week. Some 90 percent of respondents gave consistent high marks to all facets of their refuge experience.

The survey, commissioned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was designed, conducted, and analyzed by researchers with the U.S. Geological Survey. This survey evaluated responses from more than 200 adult visitors at the refuge between July and September 2010. The Kenai Refuge was one of 53 national wildlife refuges surveyed nationwide.

Of survey participants at Kenai NWR:

- 93 percent reported satisfaction with recreational activities and opportunities;
- 90 percent reported satisfaction with information and education about the refuge;
- 92 percent reported satisfaction with services provided by refuge employees or volunteers; and
- 91 percent reported satisfaction with the refuge's job of conserving fish, wildlife and their habitats.

Refuge Manager Andy Loranger said, "The Kenai Refuge is Alaska's most visited national wildlife refuge – not surprising given our amazing diversity of fish and wildlife, spectacular rivers, lakes, mountains and glaciers, and the wonderful recreational opportunities available here. Providing high quality, safe and educational experiences for our local, national and international visitors is a focus for us, and something we are always striving to improve."

The National Wildlife Refuge System, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is the nation's premier system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve wildlife and wildlife habitat. Refuges protect thousands of species. More than 400 Refuges are open to the public. Popular recreation sites are noted for their hunting, fishing, paddling, hiking, environmental education programs and wildlife observation. More than 45 million people visited national wildlife refuges in 2011. In the words of Service Director Dan Ashe, "When you visit a refuge and see for yourself the amazing web of life this natural landscape protects, it's hard not to come away impressed. You begin to understand what a treasure we Americans have at our doorstep. For most people, that appreciation deepens when they learn what staff are doing to conserve their wildlife heritage. We're thrilled that visitors also recognize and appreciate the efforts of Refuge System staff to make their visits rich and enjoyable."

Among the most popular refuge activities visitors engaged in nationwide were wildlife observation, bird watching, photography, hiking and auto-tour-route driving. Most visitors also reported viewing refuge exhibits, asking information of staff or volunteers and visiting a refuge gift shop or bookstore. Some survey participants also volunteered enthusiastic comments, such as this one: "Refuges make me aware that I am a part of the American experience and not just an observer. Nowhere else do I feel such a deep sense of connection with the land, the plants, and the wildlife. Visiting a refuge is truly a spiritual experience."

USGS social scientist Natalie Sexton was the lead researcher on the report. The survey is available at http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/643/. For additional information, please contact the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge office during regular business hours at (907) 262-7021.

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. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at http://www.youtube.com/usfws and download photos from our Flickr page at http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq.

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