

News Release

Department of the Interior / U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex
1428 Highway 27
Bell City, LA 70665
337-598-2216

For Immediate Release:
June 27, 2016

Contact:
Diane Borden-Billiot, Visitor Services Manager
337-598-2216 office, 7:00 am-4:00 pm

Lightning started Wildfire burns Marsh adjacent to Highway 27 in Sabine National Wildlife Refuge

Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC) Fire Management staff responded to a lightning started wildfire on Sabine National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) yesterday afternoon. The Cottonmouth wildfire was burning within Sabine Refuge's Management Unit 2, located south of the Wetland Walkway, west of The Creole Nature Trail (Highway 27), north of Holly Beach. Fire staff conducted a burnout operation, burning off approximately 1,361 acres along the eastern edge of the Unit to minimize smoke impacts to Highway 27 last night.

Additional resources, including a helicopter and three fire engine crews, were brought in from the Texas Chenier Plains NWRC, National Park Service, and US Forest Service to assist Southwest Louisiana NWRC staff and resources with burning out the remainder of the unit containing the wildfire. Burning out the unit will best protect existing oil and gas facilities as well as shorten the time that smoke may impact roadways and communities. Fire staff anticipates that a total of 7,000 acres within the Unit will be burned by nightfall and that the wildfire will be contained by some time tomorrow.

Sabine National Wildlife Refuge consists of expansive coastal wetlands sandwiched between the Intracoastal Waterway to the north, the Gulf of Mexico to the south, Sabine Lake to the West and Calcasieu Lake to the East. It is a common occurrence to have wildfires started by seasonal thunderstorms throughout southwest Louisiana's coastal marshes during this time of year. Additional information regarding this and future wildfires will be reported as available.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System that encompasses more than 560 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. The agency also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.