

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Announces Final Decision on the Proposal to Extend Existing Commercial Fishing (Seafood Harvesting) for 10 Years to September 30, 2028

The Service announces that it has decided to extend the phase out of the commercial fishing (seafood harvesting) use at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) to September 30, 2028 as presented in the final Compatibility Determination and Environmental Action Statement. The final documents are available on the Merritt Island NWR website at: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Merritt_Island/. Printed copies of the final documents are also available at the Merritt Island NWR:

- Visitor Center (1987 Scrub Jay Way, Titusville, FL 32796) and
- Headquarters (1963 Refuge HQ Road, Titusville, FL 32796).

In accordance with Service guidelines and National Environmental Policy Act requirements, public involvement is an important factor in the development and review of a proposal. The Service conducted initial public scoping from August 23 to September 6, 2017. Those scoping comments helped inform the development of a draft Compatibility Determination and Environmental Action Statement for the phase-out of commercial fishing on Merritt Island NWR. A 30-day public comment opportunity allowed the public to review and comment on the draft Compatibility Determination and draft Environmental Action Statement, which included a description of the use, the proposed extension of the sunset date from 2018 to 2028, anticipated impacts, proposed stipulations, and permit conditions. The draft Compatibility Determination and draft Environmental Action Statement was made available for a 30-day public review and comment period ending March 30, 2018. The substantive comments received during public review and comment were reviewed in the development of the final Compatibility Determination and Environmental Action Statement. See the Public Involvement Appendix with the final documents for summaries of the substantive comments received and the Service's responses to those comments.

Please direct any questions and requests for additional information to Layne Hamilton, Refuge Manager, at 321-861-2278 or MerrittIsland@fws.gov.

The National Wildlife Refuge System protects wildlife and wildlife habitat on more than 850 million acres of land and water from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Maine to Alaska, including 7 marine national monuments, 566 national wildlife refuges, and 38 wetland management districts. The Refuge System improves human health, provides outdoor recreation, and supports local economies with \$2.7 billion/year in total economic output from visits and 35,000 jobs supported.

Visit our home page at: <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>.

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. 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/usfwssoutheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.