



News Release

Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
3100 Desert Road
Suffolk, VA 23434
757.986.3705
www.fws.gov/refuge/Great_Dismal_Swamp

CONTACT:
Deloras Freeman,
Visitor Services Manager
757-986-3705

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Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge Increased Access to Lake Drummond

Suffolk, VA. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is pleased to announce new regulations for vehicle and boating access to Lake Drummond. Beginning April 1, 2016, the electronic gate located on Railroad Ditch at 3120 Desert Road, Suffolk, VA will be open daily for the following seasonally adjusted schedule:

**April 1 to September 30; 7am to 7pm, and
October 1 to March 31; 7:30am to 5pm**

Now named "*Lake Drummond Wildlife Drive*," a self-serve permit is required for each vehicle and can be found at the entrance kiosk or from the refuge office. The gate will continue to close one hour before the official closing to allow visitors to leave the area on time.

Other important changes brought by the new regulations will allow boating access year-round from the Interior Ditch launch through the Railroad Ditch gate. A special boating permit will no longer be needed. Boaters are to use the Wildlife Drive self-serve permit and abide by the special terms of the permit.

To manage the expected increase in use, a fee for vehicle access will begin later in 2016. The new fee will be \$5.00 per vehicle and will apply to both boaters and personal vehicles. An annual refuge pass will be available from the refuge office at a cost of \$25.00 per year. Owners of a Federal Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp ("duck stamp") an America the Beautiful Annual, Senior, or Access pass can present their pass when applying for the annual refuge pass and the fee will be waived. The fee program will be announced well in advance to notify visitors.

"We are looking forward to Spring as it brings these changes in visitor use policies," says Chris Lowie, refuge manager. The adding of a Sunday opening of the Wildlife Drive, along with the extended hours and boating opportunities, should make Lake Drummond more available to our community. "We expect to see an increase in visitation simply because travelers stopping by the refuge will no longer find a closed gate on Sunday afternoons," Lowie adds. Our trails will continue to be open every day for hiking and biking, sunrise to sunset.

The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge completed the required public notification and public comment process required of National Wildlife Refuges to make these changes in refuge management, allowing for these adjustments in the visitor use program. For more information, please contact the Refuge office at 757-986-3705 during regular business hours.

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.