

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
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News Release



For Immediate Release

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Tragic Boating Incident at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

Folkston, GA..... It is with deepest regrets that the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is reporting a boating incident that resulted in the fatality of a refuge visitor which occurred on Saturday evening, October 18. A couple visiting the area and the refuge, suffered a tragic accident due to unforeseen circumstances after falling into the water of the Suwannee Canal accessed from the Suwannee Canal Recreation Area. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Law Enforcement Division, is leading the investigation and as of now, has not released the identity of the visitors, the autopsy report, or the official cause of death.

“It is with great sadness that we must report this occurrence on the refuge. We are hopeful that the family may find solace in their time of grief” states Deputy Refuge Manager, Mindy Gautreaux. “With an impeccable record for staff and visitor safety, the refuge is deeply affected by the loss of a refuge visitor.”

All areas impacted by this incident have reopened to the visiting public after the on-site investigative team concluded late Sunday morning. The Richard S. Bolt Visitor Center and Okefenokee Adventures operations have not been impacted by this incident and are operating under a normal schedule.

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The Suwannee Canal Recreation Area (East Entrance) to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is the primary entrance managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is located 11 miles southwest of Folkston, GA off Hwy 121/23. The refuge is open daily and offers a variety of opportunities for the visiting public. Call 912-496-7836 or visit the refuge website at www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee for hours of operation, upcoming events, and entrance fee information.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and 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 pages at www.facebook.com/okefenokeewildliferefuge or 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>.