

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
2700 Suwannee Canal Road
Folkston, GA 31537
Phone: (912) 496-7836
Fax: (912) 496-7991
<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee>

News Release



For Immediate Release
Date: November 19, 2015

Contact: Susan Heisey, 912-496-7366, ex 233
Supervisory Refuge Ranger

Okefenokee Announces Project to Reopen Floyds Island Trail

Folkston, GA....Staff from Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge are partnering with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to begin the arduous process of reopening the east side of the Floyds Island Trail, which would make the island accessible again from the Main Entrance (Suwannee Canal Recreation Area) after nearly five years of closure due to drought, wildfire, and down trees. The trail project is scheduled to begin on November 30, 2015 and will involve blasting work done by USFS Certified Blasters as well as work with hand tools and chainsaws, as needed. This portion of the project is anticipated to last for up to two weeks, and depending on the progress of work, there may need to be additional trail maintenance conducted before this area can reopen to visitors.

The Honey Prairie Fire burned over 300,000 acres in 2011, shutting down the refuge entirely at times, and making many water trails within the refuge inaccessible due to down trees. Refuge employees and volunteers have worked since that time to reestablish the water trails in the swamp for visitors to enjoy day use and overnight experiences. This project on the eastern portion of the Floyds Island Trail is the final and most challenging project due to the jack-strawed dead trees that block the canoe trail. "The refuge is excited to take on this project and we look forward to the day when visitors will be able to once again paddle into Floyds Island from the eastern portion of the refuge" says Refuge Manager Michael Lusk. "We ask for the public's continued patience as we work on our water trails in the Wilderness".

Trail work conducted in National Wilderness Areas is not without its challenges. An assessment is always done in advance of any work to ensure that all tools and techniques are the minimum tools required to perform the work. Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge prides itself on the pristine nature of the Okefenokee Swamp and the ability for visitors to have a unique Wilderness experience here for solitude recreation.

The refuge expects that refuge visitors and our neighboring communities may hear controlled detonations as they occur during the first two weeks in December. If you have questions about this project, please contact the refuge Administrative Office at 912-496-7366 or email susan_heisey@fws.gov.

-fws-

The Suwannee Canal Recreation Area (East Entrance) to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is the main entrance managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is located 11 miles southwest of Folkston, GA off Hwy 121/23. Entrance fees are \$5 per vehicle/\$1 per bicycle for a daily pass (good for 7 days). Annual passes are also available. 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