

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
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News Release



For Immediate Release

Date: January 28, 2015

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Supervisory Refuge Ranger

Okefenokee Forestry Tech Receives Regional Award

Folkston, GA... Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge personnel continue to receive recognition for the hard work and dedication of our employees. Reggie Forcine, Lead Forestry Technician for the refuge's fire crew, was awarded the Regional Prescribed Fire Leadership Award for the Southeast Region by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Forcine was presented this honor among his peers at an annual meeting of agency fire staff in December.

Nominated by USFWS Fire District 2 Fire Management Officer, Rob Wood had much to say about Reggie's work at Okefenokee in support of this recognition. "As District lines were redrawn in recent years, Reggie has stepped up to help keep the prescribed fire program going strong at Okefenokee" says Wood. "The best illustration of his effort is that the refuge was able to treat 14,800 acres this year with prescribed burning, which is the second highest single year on record. All of this despite a limited budget and reduced fire staff" Wood concludes.

Forcine also works collaboratively with refuge partners to "get the job done". One such success story was a large scale cooperative burn done on the south end of the swamp where state and federal lands meet on the Florida/Georgia boundary. This area has a history of large wildfires and has been a priority for fuels treatments for several years. This year, the U.S. Forest Service, State of Florida, and USFWS crews all came together to burn several thousand acres and share resources. The project was very successful and plans are already in motion to continue this type of effort in the future.

Refuge Manager, Michael Lusk, recognizes the importance of the fire program at Okefenokee; "Reggie is a credit to the refuge, the region, and the agency. We are fortunate to have such hardworking and dedicated individuals who strive for excellence every day. There are many peaks and valleys in our budget and staffing, and Reggie has never once let that stop the progress and the accomplishments of the refuge's prescribed fire program" says Lusk.

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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>.