

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Florida Keys National
Wildlife Refuge Complex
179 Key Deer Blvd
Big Pine Key, FL 33043

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 19, 2016

Contact: Refuge Manager, 305-872-2239
or email keydeer@fws.gov

Draft Environmental Assessment for Proposed Visitor Center Construction Open for Public Comment

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has published a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and is receiving public comment through June 1, 2016. In the preferred alternative, the Service proposes to construct, operate, and maintain approximately 1840 square feet of building space and 26,400 square feet of parking lot to support a new visitor center for the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

“This new visitor center will better serve our customers with easier access,” said Daniel Clark, who supervises all the refuges in the Keys. “It will also save money that can be redirected to even higher quality support for the thousands of people interested in the outdoors, endangered species, and the many treasured land and seascapes here in the Keys.”

The new visitor center will be placed on one acre of previously developed land on the National Key Deer Refuge located at 30587 Overseas Highway on Big Pine Key. The Service acquired the parcel in 2008, after it was previously used as parking lot and feed store.

The proposed action will serve existing goals outlined in the Refuge’s 2009 Comprehensive Conservation Plan and to construct a visitor center providing on-site offices to support Refuge visitation, education and outreach. This will also support the purposes of the Refuge Complex, including protecting and conserving Key deer and other wildlife resources, providing a haven for great white herons, migratory birds and other wildlife, as a preserve and breeding ground for colonial nesting birds and other wildlife, preserve critical habitat for the American crocodile, and providing for compatible public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment.

The Environmental Assessment is available on the Service’s National Key Deer Refuge Internet website at: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/National_Key_Deer_Refuge/ on the homepage under “Draft EA – New Visitor Center on Overseas Highway.”

Submit comments to: Refuge Manager, Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges Complex, 28950 Watson Boulevard, Big Pine Key, FL 33043, or by e-mail to: keydeer@fws.gov by the June 17, 2016 comment deadline. Please include your name and address along with your comments. All comments become part of the official public record. Requests for such comments will be handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and Service and Departmental policies and procedures.

The Service developed this Assessment to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, following the Council on Environmental Quality counterpart regulations at 40 CFR part 1500.

For more information, please contact the Refuge Manager at 305-872-2239 x209 and follow Refuge updates on our website and Facebook page:

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/National_Key_Deer_Refuge/About_the_Complex.html

<https://www.facebook.com/floridakeysrefuges>

About The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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, www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast, <http://www.youtube.com/usfws>, and <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.

This news release and others can be viewed on either the Service's Southeast Regional home page on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/southeast> or the National home page at:

<http://news.fws.gov/NewsReleases>. You can also sign up to receive them via e-mail at <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/news/subscribe.html>

###