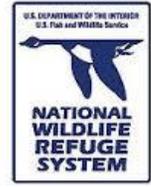


Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Florida Keys National
Wildlife Refuge Complex
179 Key Deer Blvd
Big Pine Key, FL 33043

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Building an Ark for the Key Deer

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is building temporary enclosures on the National Key Deer Refuge to isolate small groups of Key deer, if required. Key deer have been ravaged by a screwworm outbreak in recent weeks. The temporary enclosures are part of an integrated approach to prevent extinction of Key deer.

The Service is preparing a several acres of land at its National Key Deer Refuge (Refuge) for fencing to protect healthy Key deer. The area is in the northern part of Big Pine Key, and will be used if the population shrinks below a size suitable for survival.

In the coming days, staff will install fence posts and then hang the heavy-duty, black plastic deer fence, which will stand 6 feet tall.

Constructing a temporary fenced enclosure in the Pine Rockland habitat on the refuge is no easy task. A crew of Refuge employees cut a small path through the vegetation after ensuring no important protected species would be impacted wide enough for the fence and posts. The path was carefully chosen to maximize the use of already-cleared areas, have no effect on other important species in the refuge and to keep the fence away from roads and homes.

The enclosure will include four large gates, one on each side. These gates will remain open indefinitely, allowing the Key deer to pass through their natural habitat as normally as possible. If biologists decide supporting deer within the enclosure is necessary, they will lure a group of deer into the temporary enclosure and then close the gates.

A smaller enclosure is also planned on refuge land on Cudjoe Key, allowing the possibility of preserving two separate portions of the Key deer population if it becomes necessary. Staff have not yet begun installing this fence.

The Service is working with the citizens of the Florida Keys, as well as other federal, state and local agencies, to respond to the screwworm outbreak. The Service has deployed dozens of biologists, veterinarians and other employees to the lower Keys and has trained over 120 local citizens to help administer anti-parasitic medication to Key deer. The Service is constantly exploring appropriate scientific avenues to protect endangered Key deer and other animals from this parasite.

For more information, please contact Kevin Lowry, Chief Public Information Officer, National Key Deer Refuge, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 305-872-2239 ext 226, USFWSscrewworminfo@gmail.com and follow Refuge updates on our website and Facebook page: www.fws.gov/refuge/National_Key_Deer_Refuge/
www.facebook.com/floridakeysrefuges

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The National Wildlife Refuge System protects wildlife and wildlife habitat on more than 150 million acres of land and water from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Maine to Alaska. Refuges also improve human health, provide outdoor recreation, and support local economies. Visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>.

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 <http://www.fws.gov/>.