

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge  
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<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee>

# News Release



**For Immediate Release**

Date: May 15, 2016

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Supervisory Refuge Ranger

## **Okefenokee Opens Public Comment Period Stephen C. Foster State Park**

Folkston, GA...Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is welcoming comments from the public as a new agreement is formed with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the management of Stephen C. Foster State Park, located within the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

The refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and originally developed a lease agreement with DNR in 1966 for the area known as Jones Island (near Fargo, GA) to be administrated as the Stephen C. Foster State Park, to include providing facilities, visitor services, and maintenance of the grounds/facilities. The term of the lease has expired and the agencies are currently working together for the continued operations of the very popular remote park near Fargo, GA. As part of the process, the refuge is tasked with completing a Compatibility Determination, ensuring that the use of the area will not deter or detract from the mission of the refuge or the agency. "We are encouraging the public to submit comments on the Compatibility Determination for Stephen C. Foster State Park. Take a few minutes and let us know what you think about this unique partnership" states Okefenokee Project Leader Michael Lusk.

The purpose of the refuge is as "a breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife" and to "conserve the unique qualities of the Okefenokee Swamp". The refuge has always encouraged visitors to experience the wonders of the Okefenokee Swamp, either on a day-trip or on an overnight Wilderness excursion. "The Stephen C. Foster State Park offers visitors an unmatched experience in a remote location, something we would otherwise not be able to accomplish with refuge resources" says Lusk. Over 100,000 visitors a year access the Okefenokee through the Stephen C. Foster State Park.

The refuge will be accepting comments on the Compatibility Determination for 14 days, beginning May 15, 2016. A copy of the full Compatibility Determination is available on the refuge website at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee/>. Please provide all comments via email or mail to the following:

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge  
Attn: Project Leader, Michael Lusk  
2700 Suwannee Canal Road  
Folkston, GA 31537  
[Okefenokee@fws.gov](mailto:Okefenokee@fws.gov)

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The Main Entrance (Suwannee Canal Recreation Area) to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is 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](http://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](http://www.fws.gov). Connect with our Facebook pages at [www.facebook.com/okefenokeewildliferefuge](http://www.facebook.com/okefenokeewildliferefuge) or [www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast](http://www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast), follow our tweets at [www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast](http://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>.*