

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

News Release



For Immediate Release

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Okefenokee Reopens Main Entrance *Wildfire activity diminished in the Okefenokee*

Folkston, GA – Decreased fire activity will allow officials to partially reopen the Main Entrance to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (Suwannee Canal Recreation Area) near Folkston on Friday, June 2. While the West Mims wildfire is still an active fire with 65% containment, fire officials and refuge staff have confidence that the public can access a portion of the visitor facilities at this time. Beginning Friday, the Main Entrance will be open during normal operational hours of 30 minutes before sunrise to 7:30 p.m. Due to extremely low water levels in the swamp and firefighting equipment still in place, there will be very limited visitor opportunities at this time.

The following will be available to visitors beginning on Friday, June 2, 2017

- Okefenokee Adventures Concession – will be offering guided canoe, kayak, and boat tours, food service, sales operation
- Richard S. Bolt Visitor Center (Tuesday – Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.)
- Swamp Island Drive
- Hiking Trails – Longleaf Pine Trail/Phernetton Trail, Upland Discovery Trail, Canal Diggers Trail, and CanePole Trail

Visitors will only be able to access refuge waterways via a guided boat trip (canoe, kayak, or motorboat) with Okefenokee Adventures; no personal boat launching or rental boats will be available at this time.

The Chesser Island Homestead and Chesser Island Boardwalk will remain closed due to structure protection equipment still in place.

All visitors should use extreme caution while visiting the refuge and adhere to all posted signs and information provided by refuge and concession staff as well as firefighters working in the area. Visitors should be aware that there is still an active fire in portions of the swamp and firefighters will still be working in and around the refuge entrance for the foreseeable future. A burn ban is still in effect for the entire refuge and includes charcoal grills.

To find out the most up to date information on the West Mims Fire, visit the incident webpage at <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/5153/> or call 904-452-4627.

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The Main Entrance (Suwannee Canal Recreation Area) 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. 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