



News Release

Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge
3860 Tollgate Blvd, Suite 300 Naples, FL 34114

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Phone: 239/353-8442 x 228

September, 14 2009

CONTACT: Joyce Mazourek, Refuge Manager

Ten Thousand Islands Refuge To Open New Recreational Facilities

Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge will have a new visitor access point for recreational activities starting September 19, 2009. A new trail head and boardwalk will provide easy access to the 1.1 mile Marsh Trail and surrounding wetlands. Visitors can hike, observe and photograph wildlife, hunt waterfowl, fish, and kayak/canoe from the trailhead. The parking lot will provide a safer access point for visitors and increased opportunities for the public to use the Refuge.

The new Marsh Trail parking lot is located on U.S. 41 (Tamiami Trail), about 2.8 miles east of Collier-Seminole State Park and County Road 92. If traveling from the east, the facility is 2.8 miles west of the Port of the Islands community.

Reconnect With Your Wild Side! Come Celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week!

The Marsh Trail Grand Opening will be held on October 10 from 7 am to 1pm! The Refuge will host a ceremony and free activities for the community. Activities will include a guided bird walk starting at 7:15am, guided kayak tours leaving at 8 and 11am, and a guided hiking tour along Marsh Trail at 11am. A fly fishing demo will be provided by the Backcountry Fly Fishers, and a food vendor will be available for food and non-alcoholic drinks.

Exhibitors include Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Big Cypress National Preserve, Picayune Strand State Forest, Collier-Seminole State Park, Port of the Islands Marina, Friends of Fakahatchee Strand, Everglades National Park, Collier County Parks and Recreation Department, Backcountry Fly Fishers, River of Grass Greenway, Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Eco-Quest Nature Tours, Friends of Florida Panther Refuge, and the Ten Thousand Islands and Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuges.

As we move into fall, there are many different things to see from the trail including sunning alligators, herons and migrant songbirds. In November, construction for an observation tower will begin. This will enhance the visitor's opportunities for birding and wildlife viewing!

Please contact the office: Phone 239-353-8442 x 222 or Email: refugeevents@gmail.com for more information about the events and exciting volunteer opportunities!

Facts about National Wildlife Refuges:

According to the Refuge System mission statement, **wild lands and the perpetuation of diverse and abundant wildlife are essential to the quality of the American life** - and Refuge Week is a perfect time to visit those wild lands.

Collier County is home to two National Wildlife Refuges, the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Florida Panther NWR, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

National Wildlife Refuge Week is celebrated across the nation with various events from Oct 12 – 18, 2009.

Ten Thousand Islands NWR is 35, 000 acres of pristine wetlands and waterways, just 20 miles southeast of Naples. Situated on US 41, the Refuge is home to a diverse range of species and a rich history. Manatees, sea turtles, and dolphin, water and shore birds can be observed within the Refuge. The waters are extensively used as hatcheries for snook, sharks, snapper, and is a renowned saltwater fishing area attracting over 200,000 visitors annually. The tidal waters are co-managed with Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. The Refuge is part of one of the largest expanses of mangrove estuaries in North America.

Florida Panther NWR is located in the northwestern corner of junction SR 29 and I-75. Consisting of 26,600 acres, the area is home to the endangered Florida panther. The rich diversity of plant life on the Refuge is mirrored by its equally diverse wildlife. Florida panther, black bear, wild turkey and white-tailed deer forage in the wetland and upland habitats of the Refuge, which is dedicated to the protection of the Florida panther and the plant and animal species that coexist with the panther. There are two public trails that are open during the daylight hours. Bird-watching, hiking and photography are popular activities for visitors to the Refuge.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The Service manages the 150-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 550 national wildlife refuges, offering a variety of outdoor activities, including fishing, hunting, environmental education, wildlife observation and photography. Many wildlife refuges also offer nature hikes, bird watching tours, wildlife drives and trails, and other adventures.

Each year, about 40 million Americans discover the wonders of nature by visiting a wildlife refuge. There is at least one wildlife refuge in every state and one within an hour's drive of most major cities.

**For more information about National Wildlife Refuge Week events,
visit [http:// www.fws.gov/refuges](http://www.fws.gov/refuges).**

#