

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Florida Keys National
Wildlife Refuge Complex
28950 Watson Blvd.
Big Pine Key, FL 33043

Info Bulletin



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact: Kevin Kalasz at 772-205-7140; kevin_kalasz@fws.gov

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Wetland Restoration on Big Pine Key

The National Key Deer Refuge is currently working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to restore over 100 acres of freshwater wetlands and 40 acres of mangrove forest in the Central Slough of Big Pine Key that runs from west of Key Deer Blvd to north of Watson Blvd. Years of being cut off from natural water flows and a number of storm surges has caused the area to become hyper-saline and the wetland habitat to significantly degrade. FWC has been awarded a National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant to reconnect the central marsh to the wetlands to the north and west. These connections will be made using water control structures so the Refuge can restore the freshwater and better manage the habitat over the long-term. Four abandoned roads will also be removed and two drives will be relocated to facilitate sheetflow across the slough. This work will allow for saltwater releases from the interior of the slough following extreme weather events, increase the resiliency of the system, and provide greater availability of good freshwater to our most endangered species while reducing the flood risk to local residences.

This work will commence on or about the week of April 10. For more information, please contact Kevin Kalasz at 772-205-7140 (kevin_kalasz@fws.gov) or FWC's project manager Steve Gornak at 772-569-1932 (steven.gornak@myfwc.com) and follow Refuge updates on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/floridakeysrefuges>

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/>.

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