

U.S. Department of the Interior

U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/refuge/Merritt_Island/

News Release



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Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge a Announces the Availability of the Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Visitor Center with Public Comments Due January 17, 2020

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has developed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed new visitor center at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The FWS is pleased to announce that the EA is now available for public review and comment, with comments due January 17, 2020.

The proposed visitor center within the Merritt Island NWR would serve as a key welcome center for the National Wildlife Refuge as well as the Indian River Scenic Byway, Florida's Coast-to-Coast Trail and the River-to-Sea Loop Trail. The Proposed Action (depicted in the figure) would include:

- Providing a welcome center where visitors to the island will be able to obtain maps, permits and information about the Refuge and nearby recreational opportunities.
- Providing a 1700 square foot exhibit area featuring educational exhibits about local flora and fauna as well as history
- Providing a 50 seat auditorium which will be available for educational, programs, lectures, films and meetings
- Providing a 1000 square foot classroom which will be available to local schools, and partners for a variety of conservation classes such as hunter and/or boater safety
- Providing a trailhead and information outlet for the Space Coast bike trail



Proposed east facing elevation



Proposed west facing elevation

The proposed visitor center would provide opportunities for the enjoyment of appropriate and compatible outdoor recreation; promote awareness and appreciation of natural resources; and protect, conserve, and manage wildlife, habitat, and cultural resources for the benefit of present and future generations, while also meeting NASA operational and security requirements.

In accordance with FWS guidelines and National Environmental Policy Act requirements, public involvement is an important factor in the development and review of the proposal. A public meeting open house was conducted on March 23rd, 2017 at the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge to obtain feedback from the public on the proposal and potential benefits and impacts. Those scoping comments helped inform the development of this EA for the proposed visitor center. A 30-day public comment period will allow the public the opportunity to review and comment on the EA, which includes a description of the Proposed Action and anticipated impacts. In order to assure the inclusion of your comments in the development of the final decision, public comments must be received by January 17th, 2020.

Links to the EA are also available on the Merritt Island NWR website
https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Merritt_Island/

Comments may be submitted:

- by emailing Merritt Island NWR, Visitor Center Proposal at MerrittIsland@fws.gov;
- by mailing Merritt Island NWR, Visitor Center Proposal at PO Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781-2683;
- by faxing Merritt Island NWR, visitor Center Proposal at 321-861-1276; or
- by delivering by hand to Merritt Island NWR Headquarters, 1963 Refuge HQ Road, Titusville, FL 32796 (5 miles east of Titusville on SR 402).

The FWS will review all comments submitted with final decisions anticipated later in 2020. Please direct any questions and requests for additional information to Kim King-Wrenn (Merritt Island NWR) through the contact information provided above.

The National Wildlife Refuge System protects wildlife and wildlife habitat on more than 100 million acres of land and 750 million acres of water from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Maine to Alaska, including 7 marine national monuments, 567 national wildlife refuges, and 38 wetland management districts. The Refuge System improves human health, provides outdoor recreation, and supports local economies with over 50 million annual visitors. 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/>.

More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 417 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Visit us at www.nps.gov, Facebook www.facebook.com/nationalparkservice, Twitter www.twitter.com/natlparkservice, and YouTube www.youtube.com/nationalparkservice.

