

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Evans Road Fire Area on Pocosin Lakes Refuge Reopened to Refuge Visitors



Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Manager Howard Phillips announced today the reopening of the all sections of the refuge that had remained closed due to the Evans Road Fire. The public is invited to visit the refuge for to participate in wildlife-dependant recreational activities including wildlife observation, wildlife photography, hunting, and fishing. Refuge regulations may be found at the Refuge Visitor Center in Columbia and on the refuge web site- <http://www.fws.gov/pocosinlakes>.

The Evans Road Fire burned over 41,000 acres of public and private land last summer, including over 25,000 acres in the center of Pocosin Lakes Refuge. The burned part of the refuge was closed during the emergency and remained closed after the fire was controlled due to the potential hazard from falling trees. Many trees were

“stilted” during the fire, meaning that the organic soil/peat burned away from the base of the trees leaving them “standing” on their roots and subject to falling over. At this point, most of the stilted trees near refuge roads open to vehicles have been pushed down.

Phillips described the current situation as “relatively safe. While many of the stilted trees away from the roads have blown over, many remain standing. Refuge visitors should use extra caution in the burned area when they are near any standing trees that were burned. In addition, we still occasionally find a tree that’s fallen over blocking the road, but visitors could encounter this almost anywhere on 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 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses almost 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with

their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

- FWS - Photo credit: USFWS (See attached file: DSC00266.JPG) Photo Caption: Stilted trees will likely remain for years to come as a visible reminder of the Evans Road Fire that burned over 41,000 acres on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge last summer. In this photo, taken during the fire, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fire Ecologist Sue Wilder (approximately 5'2" tall) stands in front of a stilted tree to show the depth of the burn.

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