

For Immediate Release May 18

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Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge will “Open Roads” May 23-25, 2009

Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge Manager Mike Hoff announced today that Open Roads Days will be held from 7:00 am until sunset on May 23-25, 2009. The public will be able to drive the roads normally closed to vehicular traffic around the refuge impoundments at the end of Mackay Island Road. The Refuge Headquarters area will also be open during the Open Roads Days. In addition, anglers will have the opportunity to fish the Hegge impoundment before it is drawn down.

“The oxygen depletion problem that occurred in the impoundment last year needs to be addressed.” Hoff said. “Exposing the sediments to air for a more rapid decomposition rate is the fastest way to solve the oxygen problem and improve future conditions,” he added. Other activities during the Open Roads Days may include hiking, bicycling, fishing, and wildlife observation and photography. The refuge speed limit is 15 mph and visitors are asked to park in safe, suitable locations. No parking is allowed along the marked area near the pump house to protect the shoulder of the newly constructed roadway. The Headquarters and Open Roads are located 1 mile and 6.2 miles, respectively, south of the NC state line on Hwy. 615, Knotts Island, NC and are marked by large brown refuge signs. Knotts Island may be reached by traveling south on Princess Anne Road from Virginia Beach or by taking the free ferry from Currituck, NC.

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 that encompasses more than 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. The agency 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.

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