

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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[Images available upon request]

### **‘Ding’ Darling’s Water/Ways exhibit programming to feature interactive WaterVentures traveling lab**

In conjunction with the visiting Smithsonian Water/Ways exhibit at “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center Oct. 28 through Dec. 8, 2016, WaterVentures Florida's Learning Lab will make a one-day stop on Saturday, Dec. 3. The 53-foot traveling science center features enriching and engaging activities that offer a hands-on look at Florida's diverse watersheds, water conservation, and recycling.

WaterVentures will provide experiential learning to inspire critical thinking and empower kids and adults to make a difference in the world around them. The WaterVentures vehicle visits schools, fairs, festivals, and events throughout Florida.

“The experience ties in nicely with our Water/Ways exhibit,” said Sarah Lathrop, associate director of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), the nonprofit that is funding the exhibit’s visit. Lathrop oversees the exhibit with supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “The six-week exhibit will take a global look at water relative to the environment, culture, history, and religion, but will also examine the issues and context facing our liquid assets here at home through collaborative programming we are creating internally.”

DDWS will be showing a water-related film series, sponsored by LCEC, on Wednesdays during the duration of the exhibit. On Fridays, a related lecture series will include nationally acclaimed speakers including environmental authors Ellen Prager and Cynthia Barnett and nature photographer Mac Stone. A panel of local water conservation experts will discuss the issues facing the refuge and Southwest Florida today.

Other special Saturday family programs, giveaways, an interactive water table, and other activities are in the planning stages. On Nov. 26, a Kids Fishing Derby will take place on the Sanibel Causeway in conjunction with the exhibit.

The Southwest Florida Fine Craft Guild is planning an artful water and nature exhibition titled “Engulfed” during the event. Tarpon Bay Explorers, the refuge’s recreation concession, will be soon announcing special tours and programming.

“The excellent, state-of the-art Smithsonian Water/Ways exhibit lies at the heart of an exciting, engaging six weeks of programming for kids and adults that we hope will ultimately send the message that we all need to work together to preserve our valuable water resources,” said Ranger Westland. "We are honored to be among the select venues hosting the exhibit."

#### ABOUT WATER/WAYS

Through a highly competitive bidding process, ‘Ding’ Darling was chosen as one of only six Florida locations to host Water/Ways. The exhibit, part of the Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street (MoMS) program, examines water as an environmental necessity and important cultural element. Water covers more than 71 percent of Earth’s surface, having an impact on climate, health, economics, politics, agriculture, transportation, and industry. Water/Ways explores the endless motion of water on Earth’s surface, below ground, and in the atmosphere, and it illustrates its effect on landscape, settlement, migration, and even spirituality. For information about the exhibit, visit [www.sites.si.edu](http://www.sites.si.edu).

#### ABOUT DDWS

As a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, DDWS works to support J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge’s mission of conservation, wildlife and habitat protection, research, and public education through charitable donations and Refuge Nature Shop proceeds.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit [www.dingdarlingsociety.org](http://www.dingdarlingsociety.org) or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

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