

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: The award-winning *Turtle: The Incredible Journey* kicks off the film festival with the remarkable story of a harrowing trek around the globe.

[Attached: LCEC, Water/Ways, Florida Humanities, and Smithsonian logos]

‘Ding’ Darling’s Water/Ways exhibit programming to feature film festival

In conjunction with the visiting Smithsonian Water/Ways free exhibit at “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center Oct. 28 through Dec. 8, 2016, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) will be hosting a free weekly Wednesday Water Film Fest on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., sponsored by LCEC. All showings take place in the Visitor & Education Center Auditorium.

“We have lined up six important films consequential to the water issues brought to light by the Water/Ways exhibit,” said Sarah Lathrop, associate director of DDWS, the nonprofit that is also funding Water/Ways’ engagement. Lathrop oversees the exhibit with supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “The six-week exhibit and film fest will take a global look at water relative to environment, culture, history, and religion.”

The film fest begins on Nov. 2 with *Turtle: The Incredible Journey*, an all-time favorite of staff and visitors. The documentary follows a loggerhead turtle’s incredible journey from a young hatchling emerging from her nest in the Florida sand to a 25-year-old adult returning to the same beach to nest her own young.

Plastic Paradise: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch shows on Nov. 9. This 57-minute documentary divulges the mysterious phenomenon and the insidious, long-term effects of our rabid plastic consumption on wildlife and our planet.

On Nov. 16, *End of the Line: Where Have All the Fish Gone?* delves into the global overfishing crisis, particularly the imminent extinction of the bluefin tuna.

Nov. 23's film answers the question *Can the Gulf Survive?* With exclusive access to BP's clean-up operations, National Geographic investigates what happened to the 4.9 million barrels of oil that poured from the sea floor in one of the worst environmental disasters in history.

Chasing Ice on Nov. 30 tells the story of one man's mission to turn the tide of history by gathering undeniable evidence of our changing planet.

Finally, the award-winning *Sharkwater*, on Dec. 7, wraps up the festival with a true-life adventure involving shark slaughter, pirates, gunboat chases, and corrupt governments.

Following is the schedule of Wednesday Water Film Fest documentaries. All showings are free at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Seating is on a first-come basis.

Nov. 2 - *Turtle: The Incredible Journey*
Nov. 9 - *Plastic Paradise: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch*
Nov. 16 - *End of the Line: Where Have All the Fish Gone?*
Nov. 23 - *Can the Gulf Survive?*
Nov. 30 - *Chasing Ice*
Dec. 7 - *Sharkwater*

Also as a part of Water/Ways programming, DDWS will be hosting a water-related Friday biweekly speakers series. The Southwest Florida Fine Craft Guild is planning an artful water and nature exhibition titled "Engulfed" during the event, and an exhibit of water-related, historic cartoons by Jay N. "Ding" Darling will also be on display.

Special Saturday family programs, giveaways, interactive water features, and other activities are in the planning stages. On Saturday, Nov. 26, a Kids Fishing Derby will take place on the Sanibel causeway in conjunction with the exhibit. Tarpon Bay Explorers, the refuge's recreation concession, will offer a 10 percent discount on 10 of its Saturday Nature & Sea Life cruises during Water/Ways.

"The outstanding, 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, vanishing water resources," said Ranger Westland. "We are honored to be among the select venues hosting the exhibit."

"A special thanks to LCEC for making this film fest one more way we can reach people with our message," said Lathrop.

ABOUT WATER/WAYS

Through a highly competitive bidding process, 'Ding' Darling was chosen as one of only six Florida locations to host the new 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.

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 or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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