

News Release



J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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‘Ding’ Darling accepting comments on proposed changes to recreation fee program

The J. N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) is accepting public comments on proposed changes to the Refuge’s recreation fee structure. Since 1987, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has had the authority to collect recreation fees. Since 1997, the Service has been able to retain fees collected at the station, first under the authority of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). The FLREA was established to provide funding for recreation program improvements. Typical projects paid for by recreation fee funds include road and visitor facility maintenance, brochure and interpretive material production, and law enforcement. When the recreation fee program was established at the Refuge in 1987, the entrance fees collected were \$3.00/vehicle. In 1993 the fees were increased to \$4.00/vehicle, and in 1998, they were increased to \$5.00/vehicle.

To better manage the use of Refuge facilities and to be able to continue to improve facilities for our visiting public, the Refuge is proposing the following changes to its recreation fee structure.

- Raise the Refuge-Specific Annual Pass from \$12 to \$25;
- Raise the Vehicle fee from \$5.00 to \$10.00 (1-day Pass October 1 – April 30; 3-day Pass May 1 – September 30);
- Eliminate the \$1 entrance fee for hikers and bicyclists.

A recreation fee analysis has been completed by refuge staff, and these proposed fees are based on what other nearby recreational facilities and National Wildlife Refuges charge. The Refuge is proposing to implement these fee changes on October 1, 2020.

The Refuge is interested in hearing from the public regarding the proposed fee structure, and is requesting public comments from April 1 - May 31, 2019. Please submit any comments to J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge via email (dingdarling@fws.gov), phone (239-472-1100), or by mail to 1 Wildlife Drive, Sanibel, Florida 33957. In addition, the Refuge is hosting two public meetings on **Tuesday, April 9, 2019 at 1:00 pm and 6:00 pm** inside the “Ding” Darling Visitor and Education Center located at 1 Wildlife Drive, Sanibel, Florida 33957. All comments will be reviewed and considered before a final decision is made on implementation of the proposed fee structure.

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