

Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges
179 Key Deer Blvd.
Big Pine Key, FL 33043
305-872-2239
FAX 305-872-2154

Special Use Permit Requirements for the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges

Persons who wish to conduct research, commercial operations, or other special activities on lands within the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges must first apply for a Special Use Permit. The lands and wildlife administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System include some of our country's most valuable natural assets. The Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges, which include Crocodile Lake NWR, Great White Heron NWR, Key West NWR, and the National Key Deer Refuge, host a diversity of fish, wildlife and plants that require special care and consideration to ensure their conservation.

It is the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System "to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans." The mandate of the Refuge System is that "wildlife comes first" in management decisions and actions. The 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act furthers this by specifying six priority public uses for highest consideration as Refuge-authorized activities, including environmental education, environmental interpretation, hunting, fishing, nature photography, and wildlife observation.

Permission for activities other than the six priority public uses may be issued by the Refuge Manager with a Special Use Permit as specified under 50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 25. It is the responsibility of the Refuge Manager to evaluate proposed uses within a Refuge to determine whether it is an appropriate use, a use that is compatible with the mission of the Refuge and Refuge System, and a use that contributes to the goals and objectives of the Refuge. Anyone conducting prohibited activities without a valid Special Use Permit may be subject to penalties as allowed under 50 CFR Part 28.

All requests to conduct activities on any of the four National Wildlife Refuges in the Florida Keys should be directed in writing to Anne Morkill, Project Leader, at the mailing address above or by e-mail to anne_morkill@fws.gov. Please allow 60 days for review and approval of proposals. Proposals should include detailed information on:

- * who is requesting the permit
- * when and where the activity will be conducted
- * equipment to be used
- * duration of activity (total length of time needed)
- * species to be studied and why (hypothesis to be tested when applicable)
- * any other information that may be helpful in evaluating the proposal
- * what the proposed activity is
- * number of people involved
- * purpose of the activity

Proposals should be detailed enough to provide a thorough understanding of what is being proposed. For proposed research, copies of one or two especially relevant articles from the scientific literature would be helpful; however, detailed bibliographies are not necessary. For other proposed activities, samples of previous relevant work or programs may also aid in the permit evaluation.

If the permit request is approved, the permittee(s) will be issued a Special Use Permit which should be carried on their person while conducting the activities on the Refuges. Some activities may require administrative fees.