

Wildlife Refuges Severely Impacted by Hurricane Ike: Some Facilities Completely Lost, Remain Closed to Public

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is reporting that due to impacts caused by Hurricane Ike, four National Wildlife Refuges (Refuge) on the Texas Gulf Coast remain closed to the public. The Texas Chenier Plains Complex, which includes Anahuac, Texas Point, Moody, and McFaddin Refuges, sustained a direct hit from the hurricane and almost total destruction of all facilities.

Until further notice, all public activities on these four refuges are being suspended. This includes public visitation, and all previously scheduled events and hunts.

Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge received severe damage to all buildings within the refuge boundary. A significant storm surge swept through the buildings carrying with it equipment as it moved through. All that remains from these buildings are the cinder block walls and roof structure.

McFaddin and Texas Point Refuge's received catastrophic damage due to Hurricane Ike. Some buildings were reduced to rubble. The refuge office has only 3 walls remaining.

“While there has been significant damage to our facilities, our primary concern at this point is public safety,” said Shaun Sanchez, Manager of the Anahuac Refuge. “Risk to public safety is the main reason we remain closed. Our roads are impassible and boat canals and bayous contain storm debris that pose risks. Once roads are repaired and storm debris from navigable waterways has been removed we will begin to open units of the refuge.”

In addition to the extensive damage to facilities, the sensitive wildlife habitat these refuges manage and protect was damaged significantly. Debris from the storm litters the refuges and an oil spill on McFaddin Refuge is in cleanup stages.

Of greatest concern is the amount of saltwater intrusion into freshwater marshes, important habitat for birds along their winter migration. Traditionally, between October and March, visitors to these refuges are likely to see as many as 27 species of ducks, including green-winged teal, gadwall, shoveler and northern pintail. Huge flocks of snow geese, some times in excess of 80,000, feed in rice fields and moist soil units within Anahuac refuge. Due the impacts from Hurricane Ike, impacts to migratory and resident wildlife will not be completely known for some time.

Trinity River Refuge in Liberty County, and the Brazoria Refuge in Brazoria County were also damaged by the storm. However, they sustained less damages and have reopened to the public.

For updated information on the status of the Refuges and Hurricane recovery efforts as well as photos of the impacts visit www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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