

## **Agency Completes Assessment of Tower Construction on Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has completed an assessment of a proposal by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to construct 4 permanent surveillance towers and 1 communication tower on Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The Refuge Manager has determined that the proposal is compatible with the purposes of the Refuge and will be issuing DHS a special use permit. The construction of the towers is part of DHS's Secure Border Initiative and the Refuge expects that successful operation of the towers will decrease the environmental impacts of illegal border activities on sensitive Refuge lands.

This final assessment was reached after soliciting and considering comments from the public on the proposed activity and is based on certain stipulations being implemented by DHS.

Generally, the construction of infrastructure of any type in natural areas is not considered beneficial for wildlife or their habitats. However, the significant amount of illegal border activity on the Refuge has resulted in an extensive amount of environmental damage to the area. Littering, creation of trails and illegal roads, fence cutting, abandoned vehicles, arson, livestock trespass, and human waste have been, and continue to be major impediments to effective wildlife conservation on the Refuge.

Based on the information provided by DHS, the Refuge expects that successful operation of the towers will contribute to an overall decrease in the environmental impacts caused by illegal immigration as well as allowing DHS to continue to secure the border with less impact on the environment. These reductions will enhance efforts towards wildlife conservation and the experience members of the public have when visiting the Refuge.

A copy of the final Compatibility Determination, including the agreed upon stipulations, is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/> or by contacting the Refuge Headquarters at: 520/ 823-4252.

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](http://www.fws.gov).

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/>