

News Release

Blackwater

National Wildlife Refuge

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Announces Public Review and Comment Period for Proposed Limited Public Access to Garrett Island

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is proposing to provide limited public access to a 0.25 acre portion of the Garrett Island Division of Blackwater NWR. Access to this portion of Garrett Island (Island) will be for the purposes of environmental education, interpretation, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and fishing access. Access to this small area of the Island is proposed as the first phase. If funding and staff time becomes available, the development of a hiking trail on the Island is also being proposed. In the initial phase, only access to the small 0.25 acre area will be allowed. For more specific information please read the referenced document below. The Service is seeking public review and comments on the proposed opening beginning May 1, 2009. The comment period will end May 30, 2009.

Federal law requires that the Service first determine that these uses are compatible with refuge purposes. A compatible use is any use of a National Wildlife Refuge that, based on sound professional judgment, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes for establishing the refuge. The Service develops a compatibility determination to facilitate evaluation of proposed refuge uses, including anticipated impacts and stipulations necessary to ensure compatibility. A draft compatibility determination for the proposed uses is currently available for public review.

Copies of the draft Compatibility Determination are available online at <http://www.fws.gov/blackwater> and <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/easternneck>. Public comments can be directed to Suzanne Baird, Refuge Manager, Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex, 2145 Key Wallace Drive, Cambridge, MD 21613; 410-228-2692. Email comments can be provided to the following address: Suzanne_Baird@fws.gov.

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge consists of over 25,000 acres on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The Garrett Island Division of Blackwater NWR includes Garrett Island, a 198-acre island situated at the head of the Chesapeake Bay at the mouth of the Susquehanna River in Cecil County, Maryland.

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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