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Subject: FWS media release statement
Date: Wednesday, April 26, 2023 1:30:49 PM

Hi Reagan: FYI, see below our official media release.

Statement:

The Service is in communication with SpaceX and other partner agencies and organizations to provide on-the-ground guidance to minimize further impacts and reduce long-term damages to natural resources. We are also coordinating with the FAA on their site assessment, post-launch event recommendations, and Endangered Species Act compliance.

Background:

On April 20, 2023, at 8:33 a.m. CT, SpaceX conducted the first flight test of the Starship rocket from Starbase, located adjacent to Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Following the launch and mid-air explosion, Cameron County closed Boca Chica Beach and State Highway 4 for 48 hours due to launch pad safety concerns, which prevented U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff from accessing refuge-owned and managed land. Once the closure ended, Service staff began their assessment of the launch impacts at 10 a.m. April 22, 2023.

Impacts from the launch include numerous large concrete chunks, stainless steel sheets, metal and other objects hurled thousands of feet away along with a plume cloud of pulverized concrete that deposited material up to 6.5 miles northwest of the pad site. Although no debris was documented on refuge fee-owned lands, staff documented approximately 385 acres of debris on SpaceX's facility and at Boca Chica State Park, which is leased by the Service and managed as a component of the Lower Rio Grande National Wildlife Refuge. Additionally, a 3.5-acre fire started south of the pad site on Boca Chica State Park land. At this time, no dead birds or wildlife have been found on refuge-owned or managed lands.

For more information on the FAA's mishap investigation, reach out to Steve Kulm at steven.w.kulm@faa.gov.
