

Welcome to the J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

The Refuge offers excellent fishing opportunities and quiet, scenic areas for recreational boating and paddling. The care and protection of natural resources is our primary goal. All Florida state laws apply to fishing and boating in the Refuge. There are also specific refuge regulations for fishing and crabbing. If you have questions, please contact the refuge staff at the Visitor & Education Center or call (239) 472-1100. www.fws.gov/dingdarling

Fishing Regulations/Fishing Licenses

- Fishing licenses are available through our concession at the Tarpon Bay Recreation Area, other businesses on Sanibel Island, or directly from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). For ordering information from FWC, visit <https://license.myfwc.com> or call 1 (888) 347-4356.
- All areas of water on the left (south) side of Wildlife Drive are closed to the public.
- Fish harvested in the Refuge must remain in whole condition while in the Refuge for law enforcement inspection.
- Commercial fishing is prohibited. Other commercial activities require a special use permit, including charter boat fishing and tours.
- All visitors must exit Refuge lands and waters by the end of civil twilight (1/2 hour after legal sunset).

Saltwater Fishing

- Saltwater fishing from shore is allowed on both sides of Wildlife Drive.
- To prevent cast nets from becoming entangled we prohibit the use of cast nets from any water control structure/ supportive rock affixed to Wildlife Drive. No use of cast nets from the left (south) side of Wildlife Drive.
- The use of bows or spears is prohibited from Wildlife Drive, or any structure or trail affixed to Wildlife Drive.

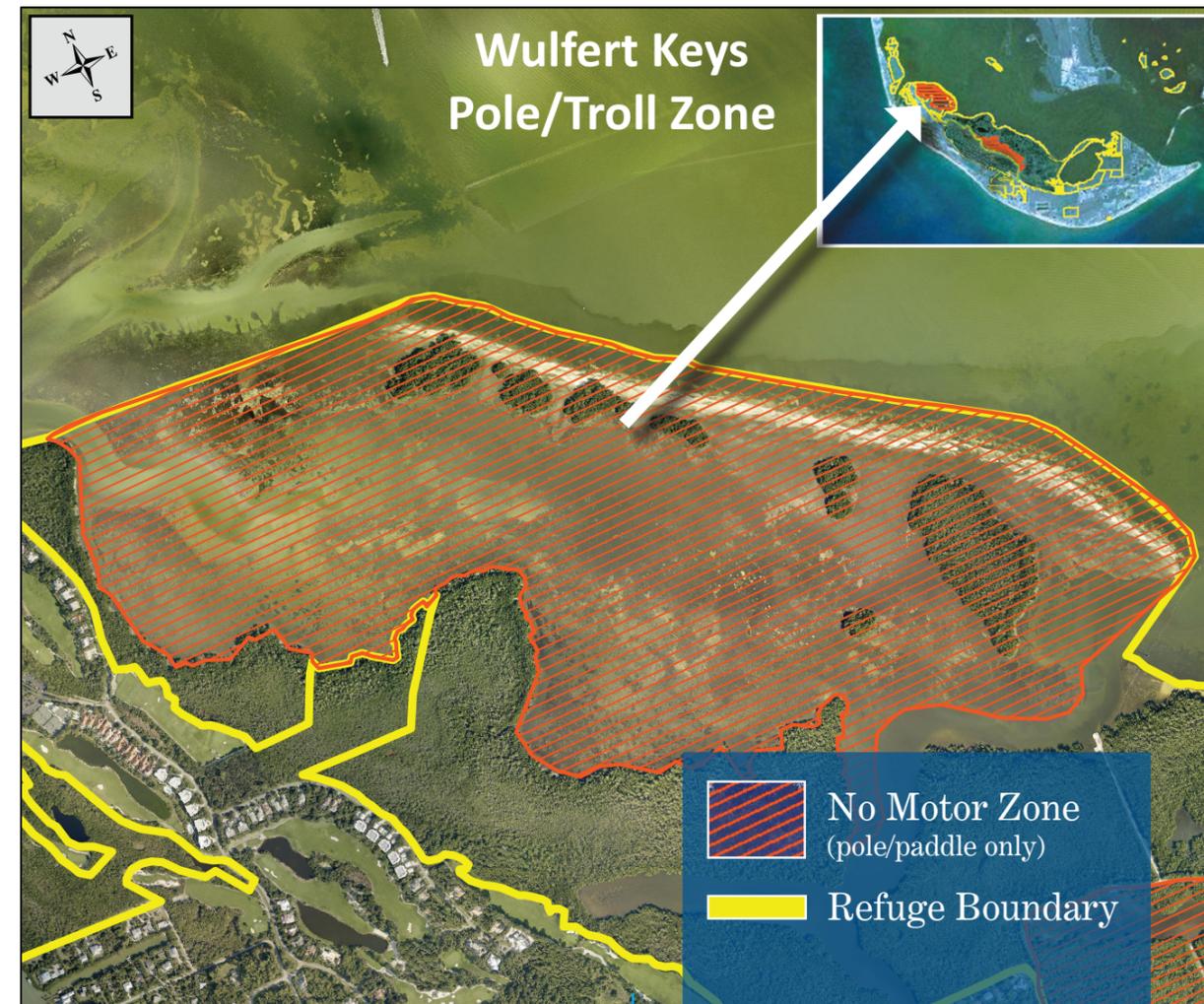
Freshwater Fishing

- Freshwater fishing on the Refuge is allowed at Smith Pond and Seaplane Canal at the Bailey Tract (fishing at Smith Pond is only permissible from the bank). All other waters of the Bailey Tract are closed to fishing.
- Kayaks/canoes are prohibited in the Bailey Tract, except Seaplane Canal and Sanibel River Slough (refer to the Bailey Tract Brochure)

Catch and Release

- When releasing fish, certain procedures listed below will assist their recovery after being caught.
- To minimize damage to the fish, use plain steel hooks or plain steel with bronze finish instead of stainless steel, and preferably barbless.

- Fish have a protective coat of "mucus" that should not be removed. Do not handle or hold fish with cloth, metal tongs, leather, etc. Wet your hands to avoid removing mucus.
- Release fish as soon as possible with a minimum of handling to avoid removing the fishes' protective mucus layer.
- If the hook is engaged in the body of the fish, cut the line as close to the fish as possible. Cutting the line is better than ripping it out.
- Gently land a fish to be released by netting and carefully removing the hook. Avoid dragging it on the ground or allowing it to flop around on the bottom of the boat.
- Gently return the fish into the water, do not throw it back. If the fish is weak and sluggish, it can be "resuscitated" by holding it gently in the water (head pointed towards current) and moving it slowly in a forward motion, until it can swim away. This will provide oxygenated water to the gills. *(continued)*



J.N. "Ding" Darling
National Wildlife Refuge
1 Wildlife Drive
Sanibel, Florida 33957
www.fws.gov/dingdarling
239-472-1100

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov/dingdarling>

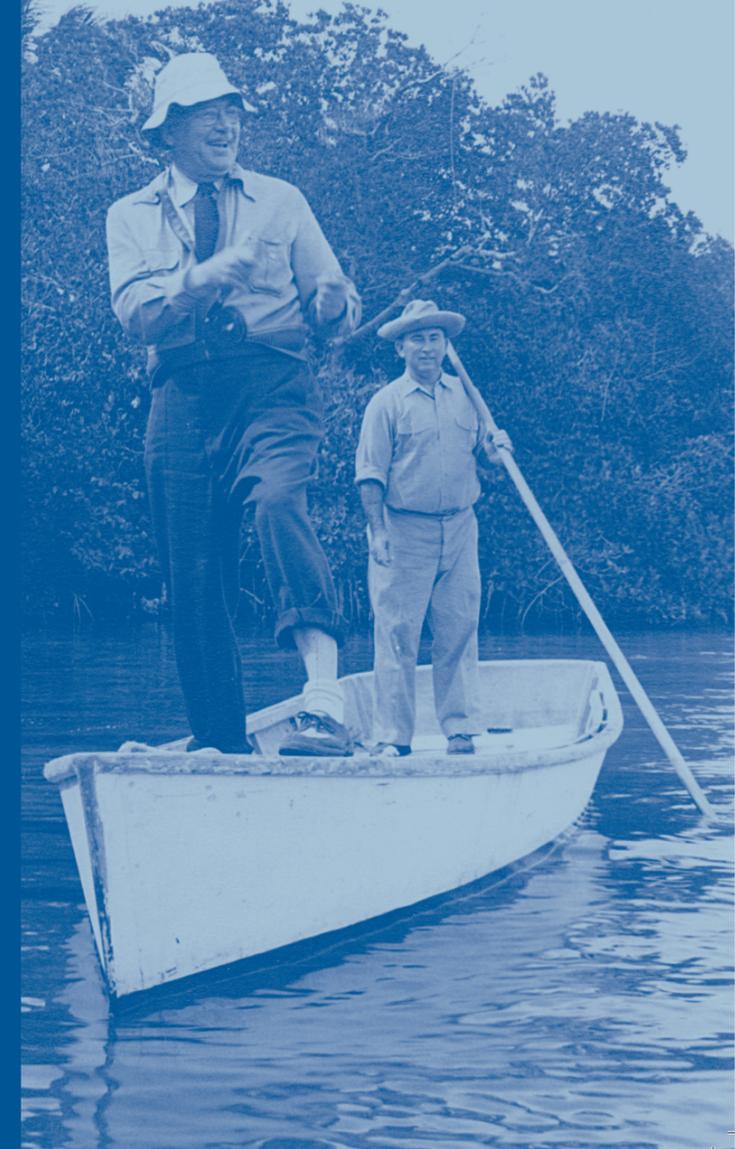
June 2017

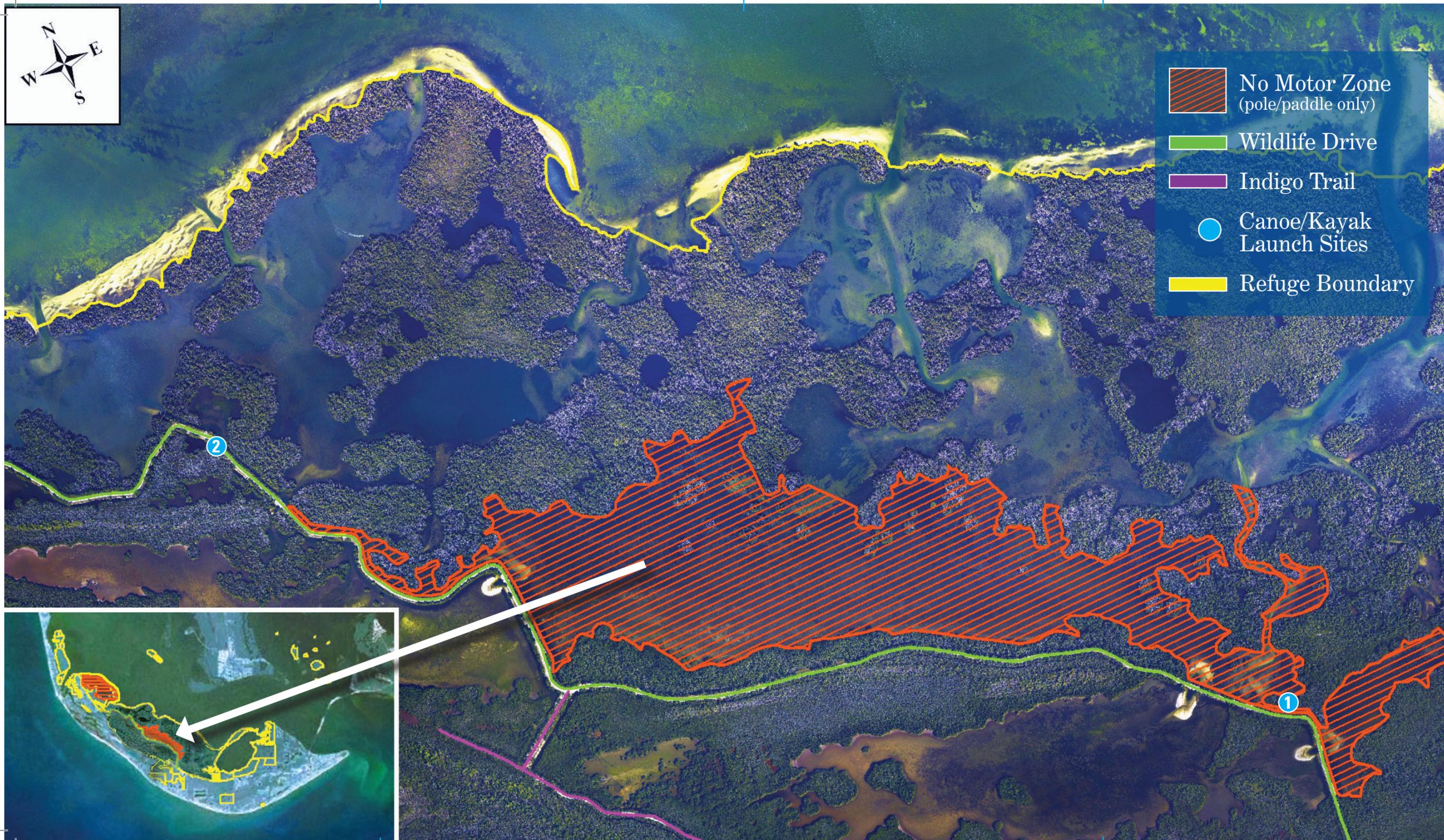
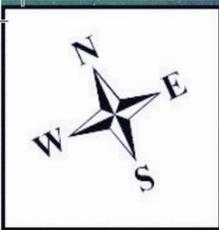


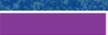
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Fishing and Boating Regulations





-  No Motor Zone (pole/paddle only)
-  Wildlife Drive
-  Indigo Trail
-  Canoe/Kayak Launch Sites
-  Refuge Boundary

Crabbing Regulations

- A saltwater fishing license is required for all crabbing.
- Blue crabs may be harvested with hand-held dip nets only.
- Use of bait or traps is prohibited.
- There is a limit of 20 crabs per person per day; no more than 10 may be female. Harvest of egg-bearing crabs is prohibited.
- The taking of horseshoe crabs, stone crabs, and spider crabs is prohibited.

Boating Regulations (Refer to Map on Back)

- All Refuge waters, including Tarpon Bay, are zoned slow speed/minimum wake. Caution: watch for all wildlife, including manatees.
- All waters on the left (south) side of Wildlife Drive are closed to all entry.
- Two launch areas for boats, canoes and kayaks are located on Wildlife Drive. Refer to map for locations.
- Motorized boats over 14 feet in length are not permitted to launch off of Wildlife Drive. This rule does not apply to non-motorized canoes and kayaks.
- Launch site #1 is in the No Motor Zone. Motorized boats, electric and gas, must pole or paddle through the No Motor Zone with motors out of water.
- Launch site #2 is not in the No Motor Zone. Boats may operate motors from this site.
- We prohibit airboats, hovercraft and personal watercraft (Go Devils, Jet Skis, jet boats and Wave Runners)
- Mooring overnight in the Refuge is prohibited.
- Boats entering the Wulfert Flats Pole/Troll Zone must use only pole, paddle, or trolling motor with outboard motor out of the water.
- Kitesurfing, kiteboarding, windsurfing, sailboarding, and similar activities are prohibited.
- The possession of seines or trot lines is prohibited.
- All Refuge lands/islands are closed to public entry except as designated. Obey all posted signs.
- All regulations listed in the Code of Federal Regulations are enforced. www.ecfr.gov go to: Title 50
- Fishermen, their vehicles, boats, equipment and other belongings are subject to inspection by law enforcement officers.
- Wildlife crimes can be reported anonymously 24 hours/day by calling 844-FWS-TIPS (397-8477).