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NWRA/Southwest Airlines Celebrate Earth Day with Refuge Volunteer Days

Washington, DC - In celebration of Earth Day, the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) and Southwest Airlines have teamed up to provide volunteer opportunities for Southwest employees on wildlife refuges in Florida and Georgia. Both states are home to some of the most biologically rich refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, and rely heavily on volunteers to achieve their vital wildlife conservation objectives.

“I can think of no better way to observe Earth Day than to volunteer on one of our 554 national wildlife refuges,” said Evan Hirsche, President of the NWRA. “We’re excited to partner with Southwest Airlines to provide a little “Luv” for our national wildlife refuges!”

America’s national wildlife refuges are invaluable to wildlife and offer outstanding opportunities for people to experience and appreciate our natural world -- there’s a national wildlife refuge within just an hour’s drive of nearly all major metropolitan areas. Refuges in Florida and Georgia protect a wide variety of wildlife including manatees, alligators, Florida panthers, whooping cranes, and almost countless migratory bird species. Yet all face challenges from invasive species, pollution and human encroachment, and depend on active and engaged local communities.

“What is important to the community is important to us, which is why we are thrilled to have partnered with the National Wildlife Refuge Association to preserve these natural spaces,” said Linda Rutherford, Vice President of Communication and Strategic Outreach. “Being a good steward of the environment is the right thing to do, and each day our Employees Share the Spirit to make our world a better place.”

Volunteer days will occur during Earth Day and over the coming weeks at refuges proximate to Southwest destination cities, including Crystal River, Merritt Island, Okefenokee, Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee, J.N. “Ding” Darling and Florida Panther national wildlife refuges. Refuge Friends groups will assist refuge staff at each of these locations, and projects will range from removing fishing line from mangroves, to pulling invasive species and picking up trash.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America’s wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries that secure its ecological integrity.

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