



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge to Temporarily Close Charon's Garden Wilderness Area and the Narrows Area

Oklahoma - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced the temporary closure of two areas within Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge because Service managers cannot at this time protect the health and safety of its employees or visitors to these parts of the refuge.

The two areas are the Charon's Garden Wilderness Area and the Narrows area which includes Forty Foot Hole. With limited medical resources and limited personnel available, restricting access to these areas will help mitigate the risk to the public and to our first responders. The health and safety of our visitors, first responders, and employees is our number one priority and these closures are necessary under current Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance.

Though the Wilderness and the Narrows area are closed, the rest of the refuge remains open.

The Service is working with federal, state, and local authorities to closely monitor the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). A reopening date has not been determined at this time and Service officials will update that status over time and provide updates on our website and social media channels.

We urge our visitors to do their part when visiting Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge and to follow CDC guidance and Governor Stitt's Safer at Home Executive Order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases by limiting group size to 10 persons, maintaining a safe distance between yourself and other groups; washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth; covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and most importantly, staying home if you feel sick.

Updates about Service's response to coronavirus will posted at <https://www.fws.gov/home/public-health-update.html>.

Please check our website for updates and changes of operations or postponement of events and programs https://www.fws.gov/refuge/wichita_mountains/.

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. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.