

‘Ding’ Darling ‘kicks the bottle’ habit at National Public Lands Day

J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge is celebrating National Public Lands Day 2012 on Sep. 29 by “kicking the bottle.” The plastic water bottle, that is.

On that day, the Refuge Nature Store will discontinue all sales of bottled water and will give away free reusable, collapsible water bottles carrying the refuge’s green “Kick the Bottle” logo to the first 200 arrivals for Public Lands Day events starting at 9 a.m. “We already have clean, filtered water, and we would rather make it easier for people to refill their bottles than to sell disposable bottled water, which is both wasteful and hazardous to wildlife,” said Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik.

“It takes the United States only 27 hours to use enough water bottles to encircle the earth’s equator if laid end-to-end,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “We believe selling bottled water on the refuge sends a wrong message, so we are ‘kicking the bottle.’ We plan to continue promoting the initiative in the coming year beyond refuge boundaries.”



The refuge has installed two filtered water refill stations at the “Ding” Darling Education Center complex, improvements funded by the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). At Tarpon Bay Recreation Area, another refill station is helping Tarpon Bay Explorers, the refuge’s recreation concession, to also kick the bottle.

“We are using the kick the bottle initiative as the centerpiece of our National Public Lands Day celebration,” said refuge educator Ranger Becky Wolff. “Besides free admission all day to Wildlife Drive, visitors can sit in on a film and other programs about recycling. For the kids, there will be craft-making from recycled materials.”

Starting at 7 a.m., Wildlife Drive will open free-of-charge. All other events of the day are also free. The schedule of events follows:

7 a.m. – 7p.m. Wildlife Drive is OPEN and FREE to all traffic

9 a.m. Free Education Center opens; first 200 visitors receive a FREE "Kick the Bottle" reusable water bottle

10-10:30 a.m. Let's Talk Trash: Marine Debris Timeline, Education Center Classroom

11 a.m.-noon *Addicted to Plastic* Documentary Film, Education Center Auditorium B

1-3 p.m. Rethink! Recycled Crafts, Education Center Classroom

2-2:30 p.m. Plastic Epidemic Program, Education Center Auditorium B

National Public Lands Day, a fee-free day across the U.S., is the nation’s largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance the public lands Americans enjoy.

As a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, DDWS works to support J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge’s mission of conservation, wildlife and habitat protection, research, and public education through charitable donations and Refuge Nature Shop proceeds.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Vertesch at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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