



# NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:  
Tracy Robillard, Public Affairs Specialist, 912.652.5450  
[Tracy.K.Robillard@usace.army.mil](mailto:Tracy.K.Robillard@usace.army.mil)  
Joyce McDonald, Corporate Communications Officer, 912.652.5777  
[Joyce.A.McDonald@usace.army.mil](mailto:Joyce.A.McDonald@usace.army.mil)

## Corps issues emergency permit to protect Okefenokee facilities from wildfires

**SAVANNAH, GEORGIA** – In close coordination with the [Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge](#) and various federal and state partners, the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District](#) recently issued an emergency regulatory permit to help contain the wildfires that have been burning there since April and protect public facilities at [Stephen C. Foster State Park](#), one of several parks located within the Okefenokee swamp, in Fargo, Ga.

“As soon as we received the permit request, our regulatory team put forth a tremendous effort to slash response time and approve the permit within 24 hours,” said Col. Jeff Hall, Corps Savannah district commander. “While many of us in Savannah can still smell the smoke from these fires 100 miles away, we are reminded that this disaster affects us all—near and far. Our thoughts are with those who have been displaced by the fire, and we will continue to support emergency efforts when we are called upon.”

Signed June 23, the permit will allow crews to excavate a small channel that extends from Billy’s Lake into a dry boat basin inside the park. Excavating the channel will allow water to flow from the lake into the basin, where the water will feed a sprinkler system.

The sprinkler system prevents the fire from consuming park facilities such as cabins, picnic shelters and a boardwalk. Known as the Honey Prairie Fire, the flames currently surround the state park and have already burned approximately 300,000 acres of the refuge and surrounding lands since it ignited April 29.

The permitting effort was coordinated with the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#), [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) and the [Georgia Department of Natural Resources](#).

Before seeking the excavation permit, the refuge manually transported water to the boat basin to supply the sprinklers. However, the likelihood of further fire damage to roads may prevent such operations in coming days or weeks.

Authorities at the refuge investigated several other construction methods that may not have required a Department of the Army permit but determined these methods would likely result in more damage than excavating the channel.

The permit requires the refuge to contact the Corps within 90 days of fire containment to coordinate a site visit and discuss the need for any potential restoration activities.

Savannah district’s regulatory program oversees all permitting applications for any developer or private citizen who plans construction or excavation on or near a stream, wetland, or navigable waters within the state of Georgia. For more information on the Regulatory program, visit [www.sas.usace.army.mil/regulatory](http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/regulatory)

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