

Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge

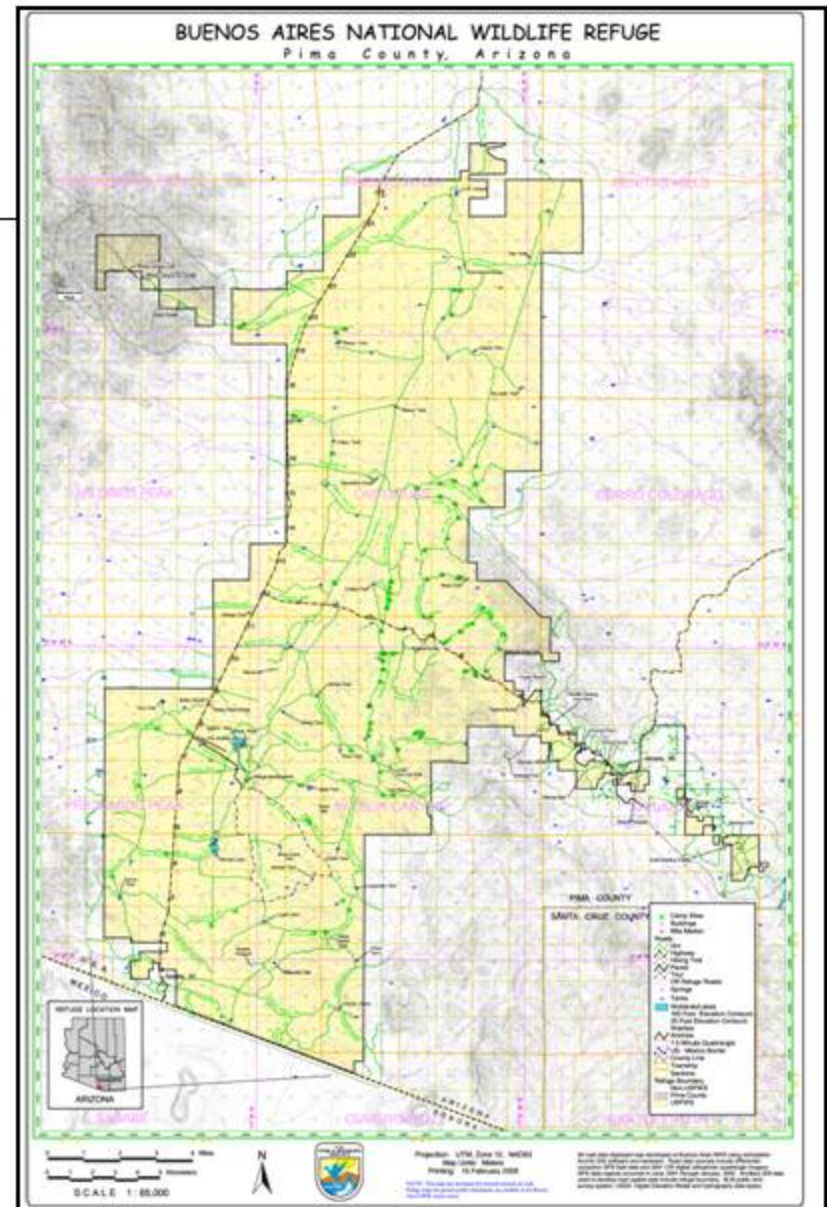
Borderland Challenges



Prepared December 2006

Buenos Aires NWR

- ❑ 118,000 acres in size
- ❑ 5.5 miles of international boundary at southern end
- ❑ busy smuggling corridor



Buenos Aires NWR – Border Impacts

- ❑ Increased crime
- ❑ UDA trespass
- ❑ Trash and trailing caused by UDAs
- ❑ Wildlife disturbance
- ❑ Cattle trespass and fence maintenance
- ❑ Arson fires
- ❑ Drug smuggling
- ❑ Bandit activity and migrant deaths
- ❑ Abandoned and stolen vehicles
- ❑ Burglaries at refuge quarters
- ❑ Diversion of staff time and funding



Buenos Aires NWR - Crime Statistics

- ❑ **2005 Uniform Crime Report**
- ❑ 5 homicides
- ❑ 9 deaths from exposure/dehydration
- ❑ 2 rapes
- ❑ 39 armed robberies
- ❑ 3 burglaries
- ❑ 35 auto thefts
- ❑ 50+ abandoned vehicles towed
- ❑ 30 weapons violations
- ❑ 20 search and rescue incidents
- ❑ 60 medical emergency responses
- ❑ 15,800 UDA apprehensions
- ❑ 47,000 lbs of marijuana seized



An estimated 200,000-300,000 illegal border crossings occurred on the refuge in 2005

Buenos Aires NWR Trash

Estimated 500 tons of trash left behind by illegal border crossers in 2005 on the Buenos Aires.

Volunteers picked up 30-40 tons of trash that year. These figures are based on studies that show between 5-8 lbs of trash are deposited by an illegal border crosser during a typical journey.



Buenos Aires NWR

Illegal Trails and Roads

Impact Analysis Results (2003)

1,315 linear miles of trails created by illegal immigrants throughout the Refuge.

49.8 miles of trails per square mile of Refuge land.

Average trail width is 21" with a total of 279 acres completely denuded of vegetation from trailing.

22.3 crossings per mile of international border.



Buenos Aires NWR

Erosion From Illegal Trails



Buenos Aires NWR

Approx. 100 Abandoned Vehicles / Yr



Buenos Aires NWR Rescue Beacons

- ❑ Installed & maintained by DHS
- ❑ 6 are on the refuge to help reduce migrant deaths in remote areas



Buenos Aires - unofficial ports of entry

Stolen vehicles and smugglers move across the border with impunity through gates in the international boundary. Vehicle barriers will curb these illegal crossings.



Vehicle Barriers on Border at the Buenos Aires NWR

- ❑ Fabricated in Refuge's maintenance yard by Border Patrol and National Guard. (1-2 year project)



Buenos Aires NWR

Arson (distress and escaped fires)

Several fires each year are started by illegal border crossers. These are either rescue fires as they get into trouble, or warming or cooking fires that have been left unattended or otherwise escape.



SOPs to prevent UDAs from being harmed during prescribed burns

Flyers are distributed in Sasabe 1 week prior to burns.

Border Patrol flies the burn unit prior to ignition to detect any UDAs present.

As an added precaution, Refuge LEOs sweep the area on ATVs prior to ignition.

Additional law enforcement resources are on standby to deal with apprehensions quickly so that burns are not delayed.



Buenos Aires NWR has been forced to deal with auto theft

In 2006, the refuge had 4 vehicles stolen. A refuge volunteer also had a vehicle stolen.

We now issue “clubs” to volunteers and staff to lock the steering wheels on govt. and private vehicles when parked on the refuge.

We will be installing vehicle disablers in the near future.



A steel barrier has been installed at the HQ parking lot to deter theft of vehicles.

To deal with burglaries, Buenos Aires NWR is fortifying the facilities

In 2006, refuge quarters were burglarized 6 times.



Security doors, bars on the windows, alarm systems, and fences are being installed.

Cattle Trespass and Fence Maintenance – Border Related

The refuge assigns one LEO the responsibility for cattle trespass, which includes contacting ranchers, arranging for fence repair, citing offenders, etc.

We also assign a two-person volunteer crew to maintain fence all winter. The YCC crew does it in the summer.

We try to hold the line at the Garcia fence (1 mile north of international boundary).



SOPs in place to address staff security during field work

Staff do not approach or aid UDAs, they summon LE.

LE escort required for areas south of Garcia road.

LE monitoring required for Arivaca Creek.

LE monitoring required for all work after dusk and before dawn.

LE monitoring required for all youth groups and SCA activities.



Public Safety/Notifications/Awareness

- ❑ Border safety awareness flyers are passed out at the Visitor Center and dispensed at all trailheads.
- ❑ Refuge website has information on border issues, so that visitors are not surprised when they get to the refuge.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
The Border, Are You Aware?
*Buenos Aires
National Wildlife Refuge*

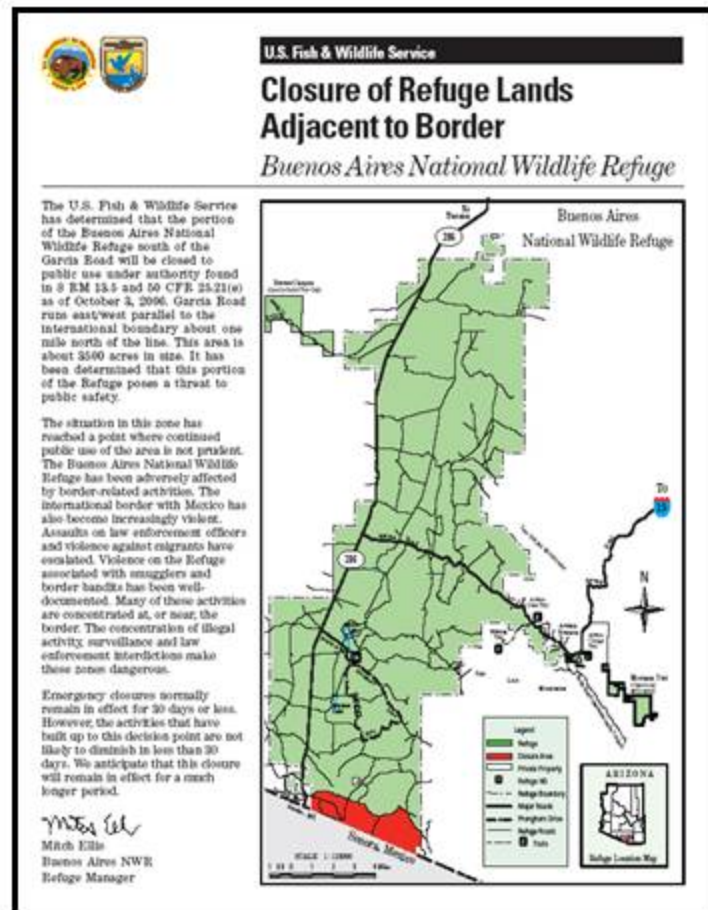


Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge is an attractive place – and not just for scenery. Every year thousands of people are attracted to this remote location to legally enter the United States. We want you to enjoy your visit to the Refuge, but it is important for you to be aware of your surroundings.

Not all Visitors are Legal	They may come from Mexico, Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and the rest of the world. They come for a variety of reasons – to find work, to bypass immigration laws, to smuggle illegal drugs.			
At Sea in the Desert	Most illegal immigrants are unprepared for the rigors of crossing the Sonoran Desert. They may carry a few possessions, a little food, and some water. They are unaware they are crossing a national wildlife refuge, a place dedicated to conservation for wildlife. They may be victims of their own route, and merely follow the footsteps of others. As a result, the refuge is littered with hundreds of miles of unofficial routes.			
Refuge Damage	These illegal routes are lined with empty water jugs and other trash. Illegal immigrants frequently sleep to camp, collect trash and start fires. These fires sometimes escape and cause damage to wildlife habitat. Trash left at these sites is not only unsightly, it is unsanitary and attracts a variety of scavengers. Nearby water sources are often soiled by pollution that wildlife can no longer use them. Some overnight rest stops are so heavily used that the damage is extensive. During the rainy season, trails and vehicle routes become avenues for floodwaters, further increasing the resource damage.			
Potential Danger	As a result of illegal immigrants crossing our borders, other unlawful acts do occur within the refuge. Some of the illegal immigrants are armed, dangerous, and determined to complete the trip at any cost. Most often these are smugglers and drug runners. They may drive a stolen vehicle or they may hire human "mules" to carry their contraband in homemade backpacks.			
Be Aware, Be Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Remember that cell phone service is usually not available within refuge boundaries.Know where you are at all times. Follow good safety procedures and use common sense.Do not pick up hitchhikers.Keep vehicles out of sight and lock your vehicle at all times.Avoid traveling on well-used but unofficial trails and avoid hiking in areas of major border activity.People in distress may ask for food and water. Use good judgment in providing water; provide nothing else, and contact refuge staff or U.S. Border Patrol as soon as possible.Report any suspicious activity to refuge staff immediately. Do not approach suspicious persons. Contact a law enforcement officer for help.			
Contact Information	<table><tbody><tr><td>Refuge Law Enforcement 1-529-423-4251 (7 am-4 pm)</td><td>Border Patrol 1-877-432-7435 (24 hrs)</td><td>Pima County Sheriff 1-529-741-4000 (24 hrs)</td></tr></tbody></table>	Refuge Law Enforcement 1-529-423-4251 (7 am-4 pm)	Border Patrol 1-877-432-7435 (24 hrs)	Pima County Sheriff 1-529-741-4000 (24 hrs)
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Public Safety / Area Closure

- 3500 acres at the south end of the Refuge has been closed due to illegal activity and a high level of law enforcement interdiction currently occurring there.
- The area presents an unacceptable level of risk for the public and staff at this time.



Indirect Impacts to Refuge

- ❑ Wildlife Disturbance (difficult to quantify)
- ❑ Diversion of staff from resource work
 - An estimated 6-8 FTEs spent on border issues
 - Nearly all the LEO's time spent on border issues
 - 30-40% of the manager's time
 - 30-40% of the maintenance employees' time
 - 4000 volunteer hours diverted annually
- ❑ Media interaction
 - Print, TV, radio, periodicals
 - 1-2 interviews per week
 - Estimated 2-4 hours per week
- ❑ Public perception/ reduced visitation?
- ❑ Staff recruitment and retention?
- ❑ Others?

