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Feral Hog Control Update

Reported by Kimberly Hayes

Feral hogs have been an ongoing issue on Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Two years of consistent trapping, hunting and other control measures by refuge staff and volunteers has greatly reduced the number of hogs on the island. This year there have been 47 hogs dispatched on Blackbeard Island NWR. This number is down from 118 in 2014 and 90 in the last six months of 2013.

The Complex applied for and received funding totaling \$15,500 from the Southeast Regional Office's Invasive with Volunteers Grant Program to support the feral hog control programs on Blackbeard Island and Wassaw NWRs. Funds were used to purchase a "Boar Buster" trap for Wassaw, which allows staff to view a live video feed of the trap from anywhere with cellular service and then trigger the trap when desired using a cellular phone app. The remainder of the funds was used to purchase five traps, corn and ammunition for Blackbeard Island NWR. In 2013 the Friends received a \$1500 grant from the Savannah Presbytery M. K. Pentecost Ecology Fund to purchase traps and supplies for control efforts on Blackbeard.

There are currently nine sites with bait and/or traps with cameras spread strategically throughout Blackbeard Island. These sites are being monitored daily by the sea turtle crew and refuge staff. Currently, there are three feral hogs utilizing these sites. The Boar Buster trap has been installed on Wassaw NWR and staff is working on making it fully operational.