

Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for West Virginia



Canaan National Wildlife Refuge



USFWS- Larry Master

Because the West Virginia Northern flying squirrel may be removed from Endangered Species Act protection, populations in **Canaan National Wildlife Refuge** need further funding for monitoring and population maintenance.

Refuges in West Virginia face \$6.4 million budget shortfall

West Virginia is home to spectacular natural resources including 2 National Wildlife Refuges. These refuges provide essential habitat for many federally threatened or endangered species including the Indiana bat, West Virginia flying squirrel, and Cheat Mountain salamander. Each year, more than 71,000 visitors enjoy hiking, birding, environmental education, and hunting and fishing on West Virginia refuges.

Years of meager budgets coupled with ballooning fixed costs such as fuel, electricity, and salary adjustments have prevented the Fish and Wildlife Service from filling vital positions and completing thousands of essential projects; **43 mission-critical projects are on the shelf in West Virginia today.**

Staff losses at West Virginia's wildlife refuges aren't of expendable federal bureaucrats; these losses are of wildlife biologists, refuge managers, interpretive rangers that teach and guide visitors, and essential maintenance personnel. Without these people, West Virginia refuges will continue to cut educational programs, allow equipment and visitor infrastructure to fall into disrepair, and significantly reduce biological management and monitoring of endangered species at certain refuges. West Virginia's refuges will also be unable to adequately address important issues including riverbank erosion, reduction of neighboring industrial impacts, and many other initiatives called for in refuge plans.

But there is a reasonable solution to fix these seemingly complex challenges: increase funding to \$514 million in FY 09.



USFWS- Andy King

Funding shortfalls hamstring efforts to mitigate the impact of industrial waste discharges on **Ohio Valley Islands National Wildlife Refuge**, and halts restoration of degraded habitat for the federally endangered Indiana bat.

About C.A.R.E.

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement is a diverse coalition of 22 conservation, recreation, sporting, and scientific organizations with more than 14 million members and supporters across the United States. CARE has been working since 1995 to help the National Wildlife Refuge System fight a serious funding crisis.

*American Birding Association
American Fisheries Society
American Sportfishing Association
Assateague Coastal Trust
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
Ducks Unlimited
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Izaak Walton League of America
National Audubon Society
National Rifle Association of America
National Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Safari Club International
The Corps Network
The Nature Conservancy
The Wilderness Society
The Wildlife Society
Trout Unlimited
U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute*

1901 Pennsylvania Avenue NW,
Suite 407
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: 202.333.9075
Fax: 202.333.9077

[www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/
CareHome.html](http://www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/CareHome.html)



CARE recommends \$514 million FY 2009 Operations and Maintenance budget for the National Wildlife Refuge System

The Refuge System now struggles with a crippling backlog of \$3.5 billion and needs an annual increase of \$15 million just to keep pace with inflation. \$514 million will finally lift the Refuge System above FY 04 inflation-adjusted levels, and be an important step toward reaching a level that not only prevents the Refuge System from spiraling into deeper debt, but also permits the FWS to commence long-overdue restoration or management on over 9 million acres, begin repairs on more than 11,400 deteriorating facilities, and start recovering visitor services now languishing or completely eliminated due to scarce funding and staff.

The Refuge System currently has a Maintenance backlog approaching \$2.5 billion, creating a veritable logjam of deferred maintenance projects that has handcuffed refuge staff in their pursuit to protect wildlife and serve the public. Coupled with an Operations backlog of more than \$1 billion, this funding shortfall has forced scores of missed project opportunities. West Virginia refuges alone have 43 unfunded, yet essential projects totaling over \$5.7 million. The Maintenance backlog for West Virginia refuges exceeds \$725,000 which severely impedes refuge staff from protecting wildlife habitat and providing for recreational opportunities.

National Wildlife Refuges are undeniable economic engines.

According to a recent economic analysis by the FWS, *Banking on Nature*

- In 2006, nearly 40 million people visited national wildlife refuges. Their spending generated over \$1.7 billion of sales in regional economies and created 27,000 jobs and \$543 million in employment income. These economic data do not include Alaska or Pacific island refuges, which together hosted over 2 million visitors in 2006.

- At *Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge* in West Virginia, more than \$100,000 in local tax revenues are generated through recreational spending by refuge visitors.