

Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for Arizona



In the arid Southwest, providing water for desert wildlife is a challenge. Cabeza Prieta Refuge, at 860,000 acres the largest national wildlife refuge in the "Lower 48," is renowned for its recovery of the Sonoran pronghorn -- the only population in the U.S. But water and forage sites are keys. The refuge not only seeks to improve habitat conditions for the survival of the endangered pronghorn, but also wants to monitor the endangered desert bighorn sheep population for five years in a study that ultimately will guide wildlife management and perhaps the development of a manmade water source. And then there's the issue of climate change: The refuge seeks to monitor more than two million acres of federal land that surround the refuge in what may be an ideal laboratory to identify how to mitigate the impacts of climate change



The biological and monitoring programs at **Cibola National Wildlife Refuge**, home to many endangered species such as the southwestern willow flycatcher (pictured), will continue to suffer due to budget shortfalls.



Cabeza Prieta Refuge, Arizona

The National Wildlife Refuge System struggles to meet its wildlife conservation mission

In Arizona alone, 82 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf.

Arizona is home to spectacular natural resources on 9 national wildlife refuges. These refuges are national treasures, providing essential habitat for a diverse array of wildlife, including the endangered Sonoran pronghorn and Masked bobwhite quail.

In 2008, over 370 thousand visitors enjoyed hiking, birding, wildlife photography, environmental education, and hunting and fishing on Arizona refuges.

Yet, national wildlife refuges in Arizona may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation. Arizona wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that total more than \$44.1 million.

Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 71 additional positions. Those include 23 wildlife biologists, 13 guides and educators, and 26 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, Arizona refuges will fall further behind in meeting the demand.

What's the solution? CARE recommends \$514 million for the Refuge System's FY 2010 Operations and Maintenance budget and an increase to at least \$765 million by FY 2013

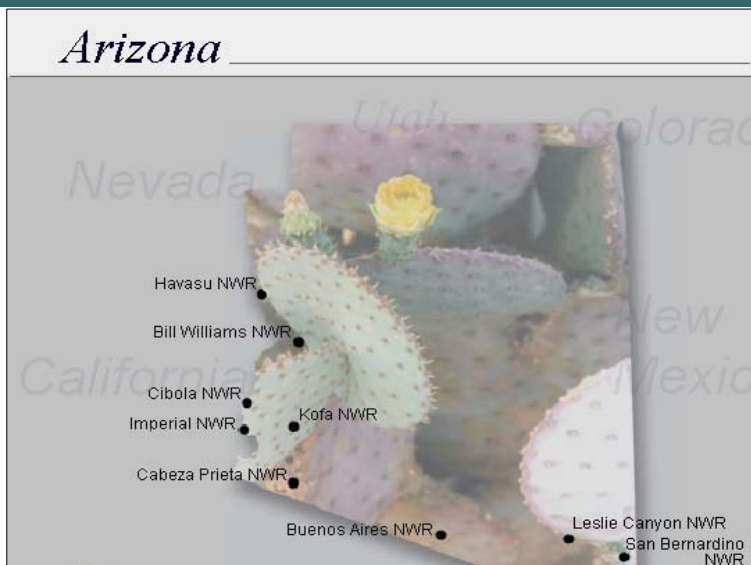
About C.A.R.E.

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
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National Audubon Society
National Rifle Association of America
National Wildlife Federation
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[www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/
CareHome.html](http://www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/CareHome.html)



Saddled with declining purchasing power and a \$3.5 billion backlog of deferred operations and maintenance projects, the National Wildlife Refuge System is in a financial vise.

The Refuge System needs an annual increase of \$15 million in its operations budget just to keep pace with inflation and demand. The Refuge System welcomed more than 41.2 million visitors in 2008, up from 33 million in 1998.

National Wildlife Refuges are undeniable economic engines. According to the *Banking on Nature* report from the FWS:

- Spending by visitors to refuges generated more than \$1.7 billion of sales nationwide, created 27,000 jobs in local communities and added \$543 million in employment income. These economic data do not include Alaska or Pacific island refuges, which together generate millions of annual visitors.
- At *Kofa National Wildlife Refuge* in Arizona, for every dollar spent on the refuge's budget, almost \$15 are generated in recreational spending to the local economy. Visitor spending totaled more than \$9.7 million, generating 158 jobs, almost \$3.6 million in employment income and nearly \$1.1 in tax revenue.

Yet, according to Management Systems International, a respected business consultant, the Refuge System has seen its real purchasing power decline by 11 percent between fiscal years 2003 and 2008.

The Government Accountability Office found that with continuing funding constraints and an expanding list of challenges, it may be difficult to maintain the Refuge System as envisioned in law – “where the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge System are maintained; priority visitor services are provided; and the strategic growth of the system is continued.”

There is a solution to safeguard the world's finest network of public lands dedicated to wildlife conservation: \$514 million in FY 2010 for the National Wildlife Refuge System and an increase to at least \$765 million by FY 2013 – steps that will restore operational quality and begin to chip away at the deferred operations and maintenance backlog.