

Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for Wisconsin



Fox River National Wildlife Refuge is seeking to reach beyond its borders to work with a host of partners, including The Nature Conservancy and private landowners, to create an Invasive Free Zone in Marquette County.



The **invasive-free buffer** should help maintain native biodiversity. By mapping invasive species such as reed canary grass, garlic mustard and spotted knapweed and strategically locating the Invasive Free Zone, valuable habitat can be protected at the lowest possible cost. Climate change is expected to accelerate



Endangered Whooping cranes, Necedah Refuge

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

In Wisconsin alone, 59 mission-critical projects remain unfunded

Wisconsin is home to spectacular natural resources including 7 national wildlife refuges. These refuges are national treasures, providing habitat to the critically endangered Whooping crane, Sandhill crane, Peregrine falcon, Canada yew, River otter, and millions of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds.

In **2008**, more than **1.4 million visitors** enjoy hiking, bird watching, environmental education, hunting and fishing on Wisconsin's wildlife refuges.

Yet, national wildlife refuges in Wisconsin may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation. Wisconsin wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that tot more than \$58.6 million.

Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 48 additional positions. Those include 15 wildlife biologists, 10 guides and educators, and 16 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, Wisconsin refuges will fall further behind in meeting the demand.

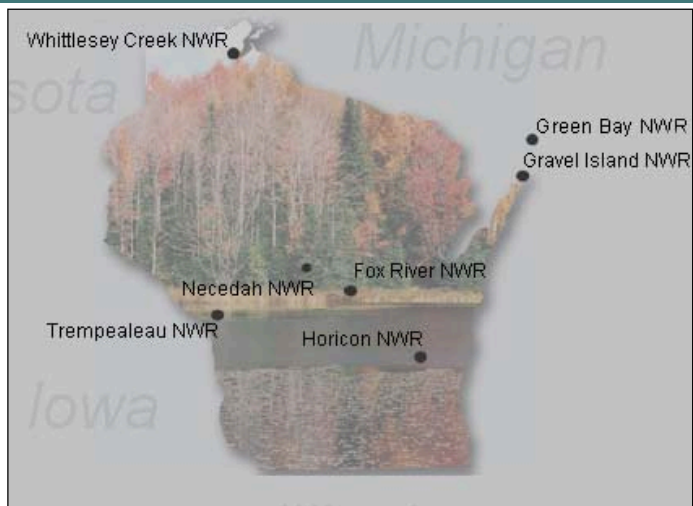
What's the solution? CARE recommends \$514 million for the Refuge System's FY 2010 Operations and Maintenance budget and an increase to at least \$765 million by FY 2013.

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 5 million members 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
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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 **Necedah National Wildlife Refuge** in central Wisconsin, for every \$1 spent on the refuge's budget, nearly \$2.50 are generated in recreational expenditures to the local economy. At **Leopold Wetland Management District** in southeastern Wisconsin, visitor spending totaled over \$583,000, generating 7 jobs, \$259,000 in employment income and \$94,000 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 land dedicated to wildlife conservation: \$514 million in FY 2010 for the Nation: