



For Immediate Release

New Policies Support Refuge System Mission
Policies help refuge professionals better manage public uses on refuges

WASHINGTON, DC – June 20, 2006 – The National Wildlife Refuge Association today lauded new policies that reinforce the wildlife conservation mission and purposes of the Refuge System, and also provide refuge managers with the tools to adequately manage public uses on refuges. The policies: Mission and Goals and Refuge Purposes, Appropriate Refuge Uses, and Wildlife-Dependent Recreation, were released today by Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne, at the annual meeting of the Outdoor Writers Association of America.

“With the new Appropriate Refuge Uses policy, refuge managers now have a powerful tool for assessing the impacts and appropriateness of public use activities on refuges,” said Evan Hirsche, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. “Guesswork will be replaced by a clearly defined set of criteria.” Further, the Wildlife-Dependent Recreation policy clarifies management of priority public uses - the “big six” as defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 which include hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, interpretation and environmental education.

As visitation to the Refuge System has swelled to almost 40 million annually, it is critically important that refuge managers have the tools to manage public use in a way that allows refuges to adhere to their wildlife conservation mission and purposes while also providing the public with recreational opportunities that enhance their appreciation of wildlife and the natural world. Because so many refuges are located near major population centers, they provide a valuable opportunity to educate and involve the public in wildlife conservation.

The Mission and Goals and Refuge Purposes policy further emphasizes the important role refuges and the Refuge System play in the conservation of diverse species and habitats within the United States. Importantly, the policy emphasizes the vital role of refuges in assisting and collaborating with states, tribes, conservation groups and other entities in conserving diverse American ecosystems. In addition, the policy provides valuable guidance and clarification for refuge managers on how to balance the Refuge System mission with the establishing purposes of individual refuges. Copies of the new policies can be obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website: www.fws.gov.

About NWRA

Established in 1975, the National Wildlife Refuge Association is the only organization dedicated exclusively to protecting, enhancing and expanding the National Wildlife Refuge System, lands and waters set aside by the American people to protect our country's diverse wildlife heritage. A national membership organization, the NWRA benefits from the support of U.S. Fish and Wildlife professionals, more than 110 refuge “Friends” group affiliates, and thousands of individual members in all states. For more information, visit www.refugenet.org.

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