



# NEWS

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## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**Office of the Secretary**  
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### Secretary Norton Thanks CARE Group for Refuge Report

WASHINGTON -- Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton today thanked a diverse group of environmental and sportsmen's organizations for a report that outlines the ongoing needs of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

"I applaud the Cooperate Alliance for Refuge Enhancement for their support for the refuge system," Norton said. "While the group's report sets an ambitious goal for future refuge system funding that may be difficult to achieve in the near future because of the many demands on the federal government in the current situation, the Department is committed to working with CARE and other partners to benefit the system and reduce its longstanding maintenance backlog."

"President Bush recently signed into law more than a 6 percent increase in the National Wildlife Refuge System budget for FY 2002 while many other budgets were being tightened," Norton said.

Norton said that partnerships with local groups, such as more than 200 "Friends" citizen groups that support refuges in their communities, are essential to the future health of the system. For example, the "Friends" group at Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Florida raised \$2 million to build a new visitors' center.

"The refuge system is a treasure that belongs to us all, and we all need to work together to ensure it remains healthy" Norton said.

The CARE group includes the American Birding Assn., American Fisheries Society, American Sportfishing Assn., Assateague Coastal Trust, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Defenders of Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Izaak Walton League of America, National Audubon Society, National Rifle Assn. of America, National Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Refuge Assn., Safari Club Intl., The Wilderness Society, The Wildlife Legislative Fund of America, The Wildlife Society, Trout Unlimited, Wildlife Forever, and the Wildlife Management Institute.

"These groups would not agree with each other on many issues, but they are all in agreement about working for the refuge system," Norton said. "The Bush Administration joins them in this goal."