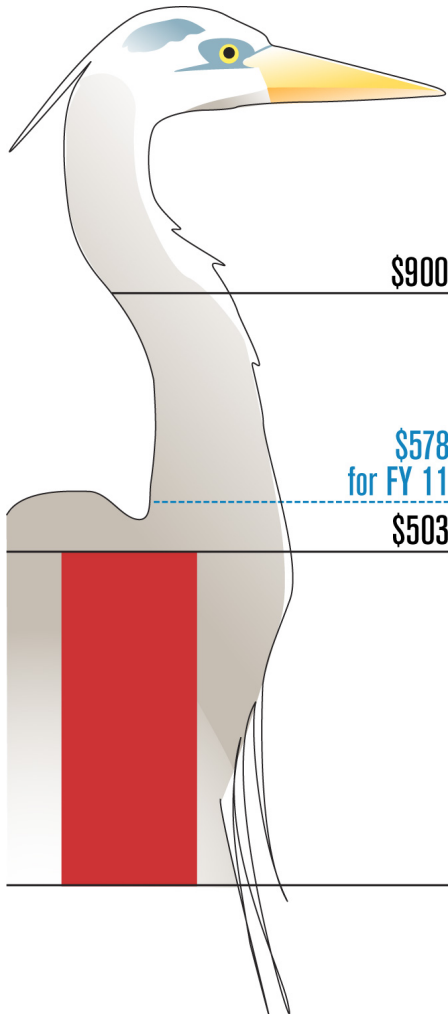




National Wildlife Refuge System

\$578 Million in FY 2011



A comprehensive analysis by CARE determined that the Refuge System needs at least \$900 million in annual operations and maintenance funding to properly administer its 150 million acres, nature programs, habitat restoration projects, and more. The increase in FY 2010 to \$503 million was an important, and much appreciated, step in the right direction. To continue toward the reasonable and achievable long-term goal of \$900 million (a level which does not begin to address the \$3.7 billion backlog), **the Refuge System needs \$578 million in FY 2011.**

A Century of Wildlife Conservation on the Brink

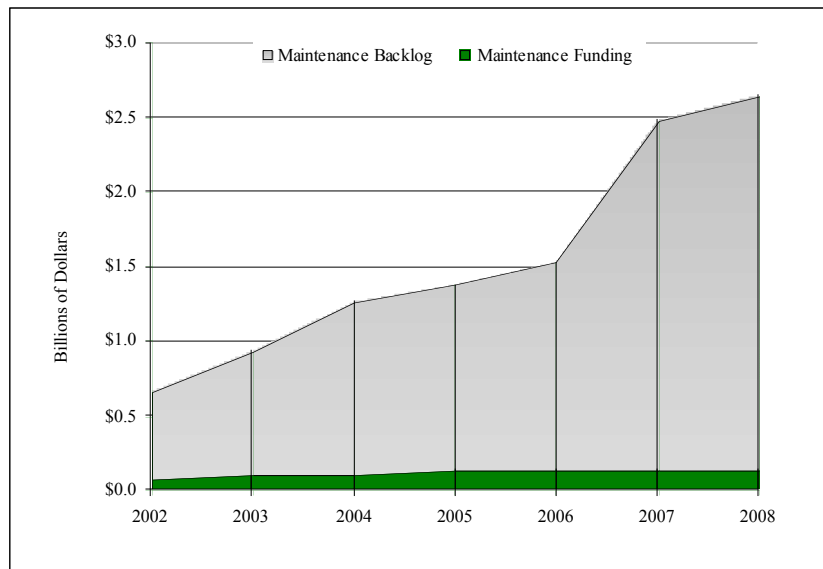
Since 1903, our National Wildlife Refuge System has preserved America's wildlife, hunting and fishing traditions, and ever-shrinking natural areas. Each year, more than 40 million people hunt, fish, watch wildlife, and learn from educational programs on wildlife refuges in every U.S. state and territory. In addition, refuges are critically important on local and regional scales, as visitors generate more than \$1.7 billion in annual sales to local economies, which employ over 27,000 U.S. workers. And in keeping with its conservation mandate, the Refuge System provides a last bastion for more than 250 endangered or threatened plant and animal species. But, unfortunately, refuges aren't as healthy as they may appear.

Although the much needed increase in FY 2010 helped, previous years of stagnant or declining budgets caused a rapid swelling of the Operations and Maintenance backlog to more than \$3.7 billion. Refuge visitors often show up to find roads and visitor centers closed, viewing platforms and trails in disrepair, and habitat restoration and school education programs eliminated. More than 10,000 refuge facilities are in need of repair, 2.3 million acres are overrun with invasive plant species, and crime is on the rise as only 213 law enforcement officers are now asked to do the job of 845.

An Era of Downsizing

Funding shortfalls following the Refuge System's centennial in 2003 forced a cut of more than 10% of the System's professional workforce and continue to burden dedicated, but overworked, staff tasked with the daunting challenge of managing and restoring complex habitats, offering safe haven for plants and wildlife, providing an eager public with adequate educational and recreational opportunities, providing law enforcement on increasingly urban refuges, and scores of other responsibilities. *Is this America's commitment to wildlife conservation that Theodore Roosevelt envisioned more than 100 years ago?*

The Obama Administration's FY 2011 request not only proposes a budget cut of \$3.3 million below the amount provided by Congress in FY 2010, but also fails to provide the minimum \$15 million the Refuge System needs annually just to keep pace with rising costs. As a result, the Administration's proposal equates to an effective budget cut of at least \$18.3 million. At a time when the maintenance backlog is soaring (*see figure at right*) and thousands of buildings, roads, observation towers, duck blinds, and heavy equipment are falling into disrepair, our 550 wildlife refuges cannot afford to wait any longer for the attention and funding priority they deserve.



If we do not soon address the challenges facing our Refuge System, the national network of wildlife conservation lands envisioned by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 will never materialize. CARE remains ready to work with Congress to ensure the Refuge System is provided \$578 million for FY 2011 and is protected for the benefit of plants and wildlife, 41 million annual visitors, and future generations of Americans.

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) is a diverse coalition of 22 conservation, recreation, sporting, and scientific organizations that represent more than 15 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
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
Ducks Unlimited
Izaak Walton League of America
Marine Conservation Biology Institute
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

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www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/CareHome.html