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For FY11 Refuges Lights are on But No One's Home – President's Budget Grows Refuge System But Threatens Jobs/Volunteer Support

*\$20 million increase for Refuge System Land Acquisition offset
by \$18.3 million cut to operations and maintenance*

Washington, D.C. - The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) expressed disappointment over President Obama's proposed \$499.5 million operations and maintenance budget for the National Wildlife Refuge System for next year, Fiscal Year 2011. Because refuges need at least \$15 million annually to cover fixed costs, the proposed \$3.3 million reduction represents an \$18.3 million cut.

"In addition to conserving America's wildlife and wild lands and waters, refuges are economic engines, returning \$4 for every \$1 in federal investment" said Evan Hirsche, President of the NWRA. "If enacted, this budget will mean a loss of jobs and economic opportunity in communities across the country. The Refuge System's exceptional track record in spending stimulus dollars is evidence that dollars are well spent supporting this natural treasure."

The NWRA however praised the Treasured Landscapes Initiative which boosts investments in landscape level, ecosystem restoration and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which would receive \$106 million for refuge land acquisition – a \$20 million increase. The Treasured Landscapes initiative affirms the importance of NWRA Beyond the Boundaries focal areas and the need for landscape level conservation.

"NWRA's Beyond the Boundaries program works to ensure wildlife corridors and protected areas, while creating sustainable communities," said Hirsche. "The ecosystem approach embraced by the President moves our nation's conservation programs in a direction that will better address the adaptation needs of wildlife in response to climate change."

The President's Refuge System budget contains further contradictions, with an additional \$8 million going to climate change programs and \$2 million for youth programs, while cutting the construction account by \$13.7 million and reducing Visitor Services by almost \$4 million. These decreases will further undermine job creation through reduced construction contracts, while hindering quality recreation and educational opportunities for families.

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement, a diverse coalition of conservation and sporting organizations chaired by NWRA, is asking Congress to fund the Refuge System at \$578 million in Fiscal Year 2011, putting the NWRS on the path towards the recommended \$900

million annually that is needed to best meet the conservation goals of the System. NWRA, its conservation partners and more than 250 local “Refuge Friends” groups will work with Congress to ensure the Refuge System receives \$578 million in Fiscal Year 2011.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America’s wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries that secure its ecological integrity.

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