



National
Wildlife Refuge
Association

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For Release March 14, 2008

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NWRA Calls on Congress to Continue Refuge System Funding Increases

Washington, D.C. – On the eve of the 105th anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) yesterday thanked Congress for its support of FY08 Refuge System funding increases and urged members to renew that commitment for FY09 by supporting an \$80 million increase in stewardship funding. “Our national wildlife refuges represent the best hope for the future of America’s wildlife heritage,” said Evan Hirsche, President of the NWRA. “Unless we fund refuges at a level that will allow them to fully meet their wildlife conservation mission and public outreach objectives, our nation’s wildlife faces a grave future.”

Recent years of stagnant budgets have caused the Refuge System stewardship funding backlog to rapidly escalate to more than \$3.5 billion. Visitors often show up to find roads and visitor centers closed, parking lots and boat launches in disrepair, and habitat restoration projects put “on-hold” or eliminated. In FY08, Congress approved \$434 million for the Refuge System, which helped reverse the tide, but that was just a beginning. The NWRA is joined by refuge Friends groups and diverse national partners that make up the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE), chaired by the NWRA, in supporting \$514 million in Refuge System funding for FY09.

Providing adequate stewardship funding of the Refuge System is of vital importance. Even so, most refuges are too small in size to achieve their conservation mission and objectives alone. The alarming rush to convert rural land to subdivisions and strip malls has caught wildlife managers off guard and requires quick action. Accordingly, the NWRA also encouraged Congress to approve \$55.1 million for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, including \$2 million to be allocated specifically to conduct strategic habitat conservation around national wildlife refuges that engages refuge Friends and other national, regional and local interests to identify and implement land and water conservation opportunities beyond refuge boundaries.

“While refuges serve as anchors of conservation, global warming and human encroachment around refuges requires we implement cooperative strategies to conserve the landscapes surrounding refuges,” continued Hirsche.

To view NWRA’s testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, and its full set of recommendations, please visit: www.refugenet.org/new-pdf-files/FY09Testimony.pdf

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to protect, enhance and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System, lands and waters set aside by the American people to conserve our diverse wildlife heritage.

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