



National
Wildlife Refuge
Association

For Immediate Release
May 6, 2010

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NWRA Urges Donations to Aid Gulf Coast Refuge Friends Groups

Washington DC – The National Wildlife Refuge Association, which works with tens of thousands of volunteers across the country in support of the 150-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, today launched a Gulf oil spill relief fund and volunteer registry. With oil expected to severely impact critical wildlife refuge habitat in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, funds and volunteers will be vital in supporting the efforts of local volunteer refuge “Friends” organizations.

“There are 20 national wildlife refuges in the immediate path of the oil spill, and they depend on Friends organization volunteers to provide critical support to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service professionals,” said Evan Hirsche, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. “20% of the work done on our federal refuges is already being done by volunteers; the disaster in the Gulf is going to require an even greater volunteer commitment.”

While BP must be held accountable for clean up costs, groups such as the Friends of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge on the Alabama coast are doing whatever they can to help refuge professionals now to prepare for oil which is expected to reach their refuge by the weekend. Friends groups and volunteers at refuges in the path of the spill will assist refuge staff gather as much baseline data as possible before the oil makes landfall. From water samples to bird, mammal and turtle counts, Friends will help refuge staff accurately detail what could be lost.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has identified an additional five national wildlife refuges that are under most immediate threat by the oil spill: Delta NWR, LA; Breton NWR, LA; Bayou Sauvage NWR, LA; Grand Bay NWR, MS and Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR, MS. These refuges are historically and ecologically significant and the timing of the spill could not happen at a worse time. Birds that are nesting right now include wading birds such as egrets and herons, seabirds, and beach nesters that live in large colonies, such as gulls, terns and skimmers. Contact with a drop of oil as small as a dime can cause fatalities in many birds.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association works with more than 220 Refuge Friends Groups throughout the country, of which 192 are affiliates. These local not-for-profit organizations along with dedicated volunteers nationwide are crucial to protecting our national wildlife refuges and America’s wildlife heritage.

To donate to NWRA’s fund, register to volunteer, or learn about how oil will impact Gulf refuges and wildlife, visit:

<http://www.refugeassociation.org/new-issues/delta.html>

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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