



National Wildlife Refuge Association Friends of Supawna Meadows NWR American Littoral Society

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Federal Budget Shortchanges NJ National Wildlife Refuge, Refuge System *Local Leaders Highlight Threats to Supawna Meadows NWR*

Pennsville, New Jersey – Southern New Jersey and statewide government leaders joined with local citizens, conservationists and volunteers at a press conference today to call on Congress to solve the federal funding crisis facing the Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Due to federal budget cuts, Supawna lost its entire staff in 2007 but the local volunteer refuge support group, the Friends of Supawna Meadows, is trying to keep the refuge afloat.

“Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge is being abandoned as a result of meager federal budgets,” said John Steiner, President of the Friends of Supawna Meadows NWR. “Although our New Jersey Congressional delegation has led calls in Congress for more refuge funding, much more needs to be done.”

The Supawna Meadows NWR, 35 miles south of Philadelphia along the Delaware River estuary, is a critical migratory stopover for waterfowl and shorebirds and protects Mill Creek – a tidal estuary that serves as a critical feeding area for nearly 6,000 pairs of colonial wading birds, the largest such congregation on the Atlantic Flyway north of Florida. The refuge was established in 1974 but has been recognized for its importance to wildlife since 1934 when President Franklin Roosevelt designated it as the Killcohook Migratory Bird Refuge.

“Supawna Meadows has the potential to reach nearly 6 million people within an hour’s drive with quality opportunities to learn about and appreciate wildlife and the natural world,” said Matt Blake, Manager of the American Littoral Society’s Delaware Bay Program. “Yet there is no staff to serve the community, no one to teach our school children about our unique natural resources, and no biologist to ensure the refuge meets the needs of wildlife.”

One of five refuges in New Jersey and 548 nationwide encompassing 100 million acres, Supawna Meadows is not an isolated case – it is instead an example of what has occurred nationwide after years of stagnant budgets which have forced the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to implement a dramatic 20% reduction in workforce, resulting in a loss of 300 staff.

Yet a recent report issued by the FWS shows that refuges generate far more in economic returns to local communities than what Congress allocates each year. “For every one dollar appropriated by Congress to the Refuge System, refuges return four to local communities,” said Evan Hirsche, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. “The National Wildlife Refuge System is a treasure for wildlife and people alike, but we must invest in it if we are to conserve America’s diverse wildlife heritage.”

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