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About

Publications

Support Us

Programs

Refuges

Take Action

Image Library



The Flyer

The monthly newsletter of the National Wildlife Refuge Association

February 8, 2008

Table of Contents:

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- [Campaign Crashers!](#)

NEWS: NWRA IN ACTION

- [Klamath Basin Agreement Would Guarantee Refuge Water](#)
- [Workshops Advance Oregon Coastal Beyond the Boundaries Initiative](#)
- [NWRA Calls into Question Renewed Talks at National Bison Range, MT](#)
- [Navy Aborts Plan for Landing Field at Pocosin Lakes NWR, NC](#)

INSIDE WASHINGTON

- [President's Budget: \\$15 Million Cut for Refuges](#)
- [CARE Advocates \\$514 Million for FY09 Refuge System Budget](#)

FRIENDS GROUP NEWS

- [Friends Conference to Emphasize Future Challenges and Action](#)
- [Friends Group Affiliates Now Eligible for Funder Research Support](#)
- [Friends Focus: Midway Friends Seek to Solve Garbage Crisis](#)

UPCOMING NWRA EVENTS

- [Important dates](#)

DID YOU KNOW...?

- [Test your Refuge System knowledge!](#)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Campaign Crashers!



With Super Tuesday behind us, we now have a trimmed field of presidential hopefuls, all of whom want your vote. So what's a refuge advocate to do with all the love? Whether Republican, Democratic or Independent, it's time to be on the lookout for candidates visiting your community, and to make yourself present and accounted for on behalf of refuges.

While the leading candidates are emphasizing character over issues at this stage of the game, don't be fooled that they wouldn't like to know those issues of concern to voters. Fortunately, since refuges are found in all states, and often proximate to population centers, we have a terrific opportunity to send a clear and consistent message to all candidates as they traverse the nation. The message is simple: National wildlife refuges are vitally important to wildlife AND people and should have a candidate's support if elected.

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Refuges help to ensure that our nation's wildlife heritage remains intact for future generations, but also serve as economic engines in communities, and provide outstanding opportunities for recreation and environmental education. And while presidential candidates on both sides of the aisle are talking about transcending partisanship, refuges really do! Across the country, refuge professionals, Friends and other conservation interests of diverse ideological persuasions are advocating for increased Refuge System budgets. But unless we make ourselves seen and heard at campaign events and through correspondence, candidates will never get the message.

For ideas about how you can engage a candidate, visit our "Campaign Crashers" page at <http://www.refugenet.org/New-issues/CampaignCrashers.html>.

Now's the time to give refuges a voice in the next administration, Democratic or Republican; refuges deserve nothing less.



[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

NEWS: NWRA IN ACTION

Klamath Basin Agreement Would Guarantee Refuge Water

Under a new settlement for the refuges in the Klamath Basin on the California and Oregon border, refuges would be guaranteed a dedicated amount of water desperately needed for wildlife and wetland management. Announced January 15th by a diverse set of stakeholders including farmers, fisherman, environmental groups and state and federal agencies, refuges will become for the first time a purpose of the Klamath Reclamation Project, providing equal status with agriculture.

The two-part agreement, which will be open for public review, includes the controversial removal of four dams on the Klamath River that would allow fish passage to more than 300 miles of spawning habitat that has been closed off for nearly a hundred years. A final determination on dam removal has not been made. In addition, proposed changes in statute will need to be considered and approved by Congress.

While the current law allowing for the leasing of lands for commercial agricultural use will not be affected, the agreement does call for 20% of leasing program revenues going directly to the refuges instead of into the Klamath Reclamation Fund. The recently implemented "Walking Wetlands" program, which rotates wetlands with croplands and increases wildlife acreages, has also helped reduced pesticide and fertilizer use and will be a pivotal piece of the lease lands operations.

NWRA has long advocated for both a firm water supply for Klamath Basin Refuges and for refuges to be a purpose of the Klamath Reclamation Project. In light of the struggle Klamath refuges have faced over the years, NWRA is supportive of this settlement, which we feel will meet refuges primary needs, and will urge Congress to approve the necessary statutory changes.

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)



Lower Klamath NWR will benefit from a more consistent water supply if a settlement among diverse stakeholders is approved.

© G. Dan Hutcheson

Workshops Advance Oregon Coastal Beyond the Boundaries Initiative

Following on a highly successful October workshop aimed at building a diverse conservation coalition to support landscape conservation strategies in connection with the Oregon Coastal Refuges, NWRA held two full-day "Beyond the Boundaries" work sessions the last week of January. Representatives of 23 environmental and conservation groups and refuge staff gathered at Charleston on the south coast and Newport on the central/north coast for extensive discussions on how to expand community support for conserving Oregon's unique terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

Oregon's coast and rich marine waters support a strong commercial fishing community and are a main attraction for millions of visitors to the state. However, the coast's growing population and the economic use of coastal resources threaten the integrity of the very coastal ecosystems on which the economy depends. In Oregon, especially in the sensitive coastal areas, residential and industrial development, resource

extraction and harmful public uses are at the doorstep of our most prized wildlife lands and waters. Oregon Coastal habitats, including 6 national wildlife refuges that span 320 miles and provide safe havens for a remarkable diversity of Oregon wildlife, face a host of threats including public disturbance, habitat fragmentation and water quality degradation as a result of development and logging.

A grant from the Bullitt Foundation in Seattle is helping fund NWRA's efforts to engage Coastal Oregon's refuge Friends groups, Audubon chapters, and other conservation interests involved with state protected areas in developing local initiatives aimed at piecing together a mosaic of protected coastal lands and waters, while addressing threats from harmful human activities. Education-oriented Friends groups and

other nonprofits serve an increasingly vital role in helping refuge staff meet the overwhelming need to inform the public about these diverse but sensitive nesting habitats and the dangers posed by human disturbance. Groups such as Shoreline Education for Awareness (SEA) on the south coast and Friends of Haystack Rock on the north coast engage tens of thousands of visitors each year in environmental education.

Through the Oregon Coast "Beyond the Boundaries" initiative, NWRA is working to devise a bold vision that will increase the size and scope of coastal conservation efforts while creating strategies for marshalling public support and resources to implement the vision. These recent coastal workshops are an important step in the process, with participants eager to launch cooperative and widespread public awareness campaigns to rally local communities around these unique natural resources.

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

NWRA Calls into Question Renewed Talks at National Bison Range, MT



On the heels of a failed and controversial first "Annual Funding Agreement" with local tribes, the Fish and Wildlife Service has launched new negotiations at the National Bison Range, MT. The refuge was established 100 years ago to recover American bison.
© Tom Prall

NWRA called into question renewed talks for an Annual Funding Agreement (AFA) at the National Bison Range in Montana between the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in a January 14th letter to Lyle Laverty, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks for the Department of the Interior. In the letter and at a follow-up meeting between NWRA President, Evan Hirsche, and Assistant Secretary Laverty, NWRA pressed for completion of a national AFA policy for FWS prior to conducting further negotiations.

The NWRA has repeatedly called for a national AFA policy for the FWS that would guide how such agreements are managed, and ensure that such agreements advance the mission and purposes of the refuge and Refuge System. The lack of such a policy contributed to the breakdown of a previous AFA at the Bison Range between the CSKT and the FWS in December 2006. Without guidance from a national FWS AFA policy, it is unclear how the same issues that plagued the first AFA will not condemn a future one.

Initial negotiations have already begun for a new AFA at the Bison Range with an anticipated completion date March 28, 2008. The NWRA has adopted good governance principles that we believe should be reflected in an AFA policy and any management agreement in connection with the National Bison Range. These were provided to the CSKT, FWS and Assistant Secretary Laverty

prior to the negotiations. View [NWRA's letter to Assistant Secretary Laverty](#), [NWRA's AFA principles](#), and more by visiting <http://www.refugenet.org/New-issues/bisonprinciples.html>.

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

Navy Aborts Plan for Landing Field at Pocosin Lakes NWR, NC

NWRA hailed the Navy's January 23rd decision to abort their plan to build an outlying landing field, or OLF, 3.5 miles from the Pocosin Lakes NWR in rural northern North Carolina. For over five years, NWRA and a

chorus of local and national groups opposed the plan, citing the harmful effects on wildlife caused by repeated passes of the noisy Navy jets and the serious bird strike hazard for Navy pilots.

Pocosin Lakes NWR hosts more than 100,000 snow geese, tundra swans, and other waterfowl each winter in addition to endangered red wolves and black bears. NWRA repeatedly called for the Navy to abandon its bid to build the OLF proximate to the refuge, highlighting the threat the project posed to wildlife in its [2005 State of the System Report](#).

After abandoning the Pocosin Lakes site, the Navy announced it will consider five new sites, at least one of which could also impact a NWR: Sandbanks in Gates County and Hales Lake in Camden/Currituck counties in North Carolina, and Cabin Point, Mason and Dory in Virginia.

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View [NWRA's Press Release on the Navy's decision](#).

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

INSIDE WASHINGTON

President's Budget: \$15 Million Cut for Refuges

On February 4th, the Administration delivered its proposed budget to Congress, and as in recent years, refuges were not a priority. With proposed level funding of \$434.1 million for FY09, this budget is actually a CUT, as refuges need an annual increase of at least \$15 million to keep up with inflation.

While the NWRA is disappointed by this request, the President's budget is simply a blueprint for Congress outlining the Administration's priorities for each federal agency.

The Administration also called for an increase in the price of the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly known as the Duck Stamp, from \$15 to \$25. Roughly 98% of every dollar generated by the sale of each Duck Stamp goes directly into critical land acquisition for the Refuge System, making the program a valuable source of funding, yet without adequate outreach to encourage other users of the Refuge System to buy these stamps, duck hunters will remain the primary purchasers. The Administration further called for a dramatic reduction in other critical land acquisition programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

President Bush again included assumed revenue from the sale of oil and gas leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. The Administration has repeatedly called for opening the Arctic NWR to oil and gas exploration since he took office in 2001. However, time and time again, Congress has rejected this plan. This Congress is expected to continue to reject this proposal but we will work with our partners to ensure the refuge is protected.

For the Department of the Interior, the President's priorities include the National Parks Centennial and several new initiatives, some of which could be beneficial for refuges. NWRA will work to encourage Congress to increase funding for the NWRS to \$514 million for FY09. You can help by [sending an instant message](#) to your Congressional delegation!

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

CARE Advocates \$514 Million for FY09 Refuge System Budget

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement, or CARE, is calling upon Congress to increase funding for the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) to \$514 million for next year (FY09) in order to reach a target goal of \$765 in annual appropriations by FY 2013, the amount CARE estimates the Refuge System needs annually to meet its core mission.

Currently, the NWRS budget is funded at \$434.1 million for FY08. CARE and Friends nationwide had requested an appropriation of \$451 million, the amount allocated in the 2003 Refuge Centennial year adjusted for inflation. And while current funding represents a \$39 million increase over FY07, it is still substantially short of what the System needs to operate at full capacity.

CARE is calling upon the resources of each of the 22 organizations that comprise the coalition in outreach to their members and to diverse constituencies in Congress. CARE will also publish an updated report detailing the refuge funding crisis along with state fact sheets that include current numbers and new budget request. These will be available for download starting in late February and early March on the CARE website <http://www.fundrefuges.org/CARE/carehome.html>.

CARE is also again working with House and Senate champions to lead Dear Colleague letters to Interior Appropriators. In the House, CARE is coordinating with the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus and in the Senate leaders are still being identified. For more information on CARE's goals or detailed information on any of the numbers, please contact Desiree Sorenson-Groves, NWRA's Vice President for Government Affairs, dsroves@refugeassociation.org or (202)-333-9075.

[Find out how you or your Friends group can help in 3 easy steps!](#)

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

FRIENDS GROUP NEWS

FRIENDS



April 4-6, 2008

National Conservation Training Center,
Shepherdstown, West Virginia

for the *Future* CONFERENCE
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • National Wildlife Refuge Association

Friends Conference to Emphasize Future Challenges and Action

Representatives from 85 geographically diverse Friends groups along with FWS personnel will meet at the 2008 National Friends Conference in West Virginia to learn how climate change impacts refuges, ways in which refuge supporters can address threats from beyond refuge boundaries and how refuges can help connect children with nature. Hosted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge Association, the "Friends for the Future" National Friends Conference will be held April 4-6 at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, WV, followed by NWRA leading Friends to Capitol Hill on April 7th.

The 2008 National Wildlife Refuge System Friends Group of the Year and the Volunteer of the Year will be recognized in front of their peers at an April 5th reception. The awards, sponsored annually by NWRA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, honor the extraordinary dedication and devotion of Refuge System supporters and their innovative efforts to meet Refuge System challenges.

The conference will feature a special "[Beyond the Boundaries](#)" track that will provide participating Friends groups with the tools and knowledge they need to engage their local communities, effectively negotiate conservation strategies with private landowners, and communicate conservation needs through the media.

Budgetary and space limitations have restricted this year's conference to invited attendees, with priority given to Friends groups established since the 2005 National Friends Conference and to groups facing immediate threats beyond their refuge boundaries. The hope is that a larger National Conference in 2009 will include all who wish to participate.

Following the FWS sponsored portion of the conference, NWRA will provide advocacy training, preparing Friends to visit their Congressional members and staff the following day. A centerpiece of their message will be that refuges are in dire need of funding to support key wildlife, law enforcement and public use programs.

For more information on the "Friends for the Future" conference or the follow-up "Flock to the Hill" advocacy activities, please contact Mark Hufford, NWRA's Director of Grassroots Outreach, at mhufford@refugeassociation.org or 202-333-9075, ext. 24.

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

Friends Group Affiliates Now Eligible for Funder Research Support

NWRA has expanded the benefits available to Affiliate Friends Groups to include assistance with finding and researching prospective funders. Affiliates may request that NWRA provide them with profiles of funders, large and small, with a record of making environmental grants to recipients in the vicinity of their refuge.

For more information, contact NWRA Office Manager Debbie Harwood at debbie@refugeassociation.org.

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

Friends Focus: Midway Friends Seek to Solve Garbage Crisis

Despite its remote location more than a thousand miles from Hawaii, Midway Island has become one of the Pacific's largest garbage dumps. Each year, hundreds of dead albatross chicks lie dead on the beach, their digestive systems clogged with trash they've ingested.

To begin countering this insidious threat, the Friends of Midway Atoll NWR (FOMA) recently launched a Marine Debris Coastal Monitoring Project, made possible by \$200,000 in grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and Dow Chemical Co.

"Ocean currents collect and deposit tons of plastic -- cigarette lighters, fishing gear, bottles, and anything else that floats -- on Midway's shores every day," said FOMA President Darlene Moegerle. This garbage is seriously damaging the fragile habitat that serves as home to 1.5 million adult and baby Laysan albatross and black-footed albatross, threatened green sea turtles and endangered Laysan ducks. Moegerle concludes, "The new Monitoring Project is the essential first step to assessing and ultimately solving the problem."

For more information on the Friends of Midway visit:

<http://www.friendsofmidway.org> or check out the refuge website at: <http://www.fws.gov/midway>

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)



Adult Laysan albatrosses at Midway Atoll NWR often inadvertently feed plastic cigarette lighters and other sea detritus to their chicks.
© Christy Finlayson

February 15 – deadline for [requests to speak at the Public Witness Hearing](#)

April 4 – Friends Conference, Washington, DC

DID YOU KNOW...?

According to FWS estimates for 2007, invasive plant species cover 2.3 million acres of refuge lands -- that's more than the area of Delaware and Rhode Island combined!

To find out how you can help, [click here](#).

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

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