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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Welcome



Welcome to the *Flyer*, the National Wildlife Refuge Association's new monthly newsletter! Apropos to a new year, this new publication is designed to supplement *Wildlife Refuge* magazine, while expanding on the *Capitol Flyer*, our monthly legislative update. Accordingly, each issue will include articles and information relating to NWRA's policy and programmatic priorities, and opportunities to take action in support of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The *Flyer's* launch also coincides with a refreshing redesign of NWRA's website, found at [www.refugeassociation.org](http://www.refugeassociation.org). The redesign incorporates easier and more intuitive navigation, including a search function, while adding features like a news bar that will be updated on a regular basis with the latest news from NWRA.

Importantly, introduction of the *Flyer* and redesign of the website will mean more up-to-date and consistent

communications that will ensure our supporters are better educated and equipped to act in support of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Please visit today and send any comments to [cstoker@refugeassociation.org](mailto:cstoker@refugeassociation.org).

And I wanted to include a special thanks to each of you who made a generous year-end contribution or supports us regularly through the Combined Federal Campaign. With your help we are making a difference!

Cheers to Terrific 2008!



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## NEWS: NWRA IN ACTION

### NWRA Launches "Beyond the Boundaries" Initiatives in Coastal Oregon and Southern Nevada

Building on NWRA's successful "Beyond the Boundaries" program that seeks to conserve key wildlife habitats in refuge buffer zones and corridors by working with refuge Friends, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, states, and other local and national partners, the organization has launched focused efforts in Southern Nevada and Coastal Oregon.

Starting with successful on-the-ground workshops in recent months aimed at forming conservation coalitions among diverse stakeholders, the initiatives will first create strategic landscape-level conservation plans based

on data from State Wildlife Action Plans and refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans, then utilize a variety of conservation tools to protect the most valuable wildlife habitats.

Across the country national wildlife refuges face increasing pressures from beyond their borders – rampant development, inappropriate land uses, air and water pollution, out-of-control invasive species, changing climates, and more. NWRA's Beyond the Boundaries (BTB) campaign, launched in 2005, seeks to give Friends and refuge supporters the tools they need to conserve broad landscapes with refuges serving as the core.

BTB workshops showcase each state's Wildlife Action Plan, explain how refuges fit in, and provide insights on conservation tools and the unique threats and opportunities faced by each refuge.



*Spring at Ash Meadows NWR, NV, home to the Ash Meadows Amargosa Pupfish © Evan Hirsche*

In late October in Newport, OR, NWRA, in partnership with Portland Audubon Society and support from the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, convened participants from 20 conservation groups representing the entire coast to discuss threats and opportunities facing the six refuges that form the complex. Spanning more than 320 miles along the state's coastline, these refuges protect some of the most productive seabird colonies in the country. Follow up meetings are set for January 25th in Charleston, OR and January 26th in Newport, OR.

In mid-November, NWRA, with support from the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex, met with participants from 10 Southern Nevada groups in Las Vegas for a similar BTB workshop focused on the 1.6 million acres and wide variety of endemic fish and plants protected by the four refuges of the complex. Las Vegas is among the fastest growing cities in the country, expecting to reach a population of 4 million by 2030. But with an annual rainfall of approximately 3 inches, water is an overarching conservation challenge. The new coalition will assess and address the Complex's BTB challenges, and a follow-up meeting is planned for early 2008.

These projects have been made possible through generous support from the Bullitt, Hewlett and Wilburforce foundations, as well as the FWS.

For more information on these initiatives or to learn about how you can start a BTB project at your local refuge, contact [Mark Hufford](#), NWRA's Director of Grassroots Outreach.

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## Photo Contest Entries In - Winner will Receive 2008 Toyota Highlander Hybrid!

The third annual Refuge Photography Contest closed on December 15, 2007 with over 2,000 entries from more than 300 photographers in both the General and Youth categories!

This year's Grand Prize is a 2008 Toyota Highlander Hybrid! All photocontestants will receive a complimentary one year membership with the NWRA and the chance to have their submitted images appear in future NWRA publications and the [Refuge Image Library](#).

Winners will be announced in March 2008 in connection with the 105th anniversary of the establishment of the first National Wildlife Refuge.



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## Hewlett Foundation Grant Helps NWRA Protect Western Refuge Landscapes

© (clockwise) Mark B. Bartosik, Eric Chappel and Richard Henry

Following up on a successful 2-year grant to build support among Western refuge Friends groups for protecting the landscapes surrounding national wildlife refuges, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation awarded NWRA a second \$200,000 grant in December. This 2-year grant will allow the NWRA to implement "Beyond the Boundaries" initiatives in connection with several refuges in the West.

Specifically, these funds will be used to protect buffer zones and wildlife corridors that protect the ecological integrity of refuges while linking refuges to other public and private conservation areas. By synthesizing data from State Wildlife Action Plans, refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans and other data sources, NWRA and its partners - including FWS, Friends groups and land trusts - will identify the most important unprotected wildlife habitats, then build community support for their conservation.

The Hewlett Foundation's funds will be leveraged by support from other sources that also recognize the urgent need to conserve wildlife habitats in some of the most biologically rich areas in the West.

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## McKnight Foundation Grant Allows NWRA to Generate Support for Lower Mississippi River Habitat Restoration

The Minneapolis-based McKnight Foundation has awarded NWRA with a \$75,000 grant to continue work in the Lower Mississippi River alluvial valley to restore agricultural and degraded lands to native forest habitation and adjacent to refuges. With initial funding from the Foundation in September 2007, NWRA, in cooperation with the FWS, USGS and other partners, conducted a detailed assessment of restoration opportunities on refuges spanning from Tennessee to Louisiana. With identified opportunities to restore 50,000 to 70,000 acres of native forest habitat in the near-term, NWRA is now pursuing restoration funding from a variety of sources, including carbon offset dollars to help mitigate the effects of global warming.

The Lower Mississippi, with its rich soil, seasonal flooding and, long, hot growing season, is extremely biologically diverse. The forests of the Lower Mississippi winters millions of waterfowl, and provides critical migratory and nesting habitat to declining birds such as cerulean and Swainson's warblers, swallow-tailed kite and the highly endangered ivory-billed woodpecker. Much of this productive forest has been dramatically reduced in size and degraded by conversion to agriculture to grow corn, soybean and rice. Additionally, the hydrology of the Mississippi River and its tributaries has been dramatically altered, starving

some forests of water or, conversely, flooding other hardwood areas with far more water than naturally occurs.

Significant opportunities exist to expand and restore habitat function to improve biological response of critical wildlife and plant communities. These benefits can be accomplished through the restoration of bottomland hardwood through conversion from agriculture back to forestland, the restoration of wetland hydrology to existing and restored forests, the conservation of existing bottomland hardwood forests, and a variety of management actions that will improve forest structure, diversity, and viability.

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## **NWRA emphasizes, "Refuges are Economic Engines"**

Touting the economic benefits refuges provide to local communities, NWRA's Vice President of Government Affairs, Desiree Sorenson-Groves was quoted in an Associated Press story about the recently-released FWS report, Banking on Nature, that details the ways in which refuges across the country benefit their communities through tourism and recreation.

The story ([view the USA Today article](#)), picked up by more than 110 news outlets worldwide, including USA Today and The New York Times, quoted Sorenson-Groves as saying, "Refuges are economic engines in local communities. There's no doubt about it."

Banking on Nature ([download here](#)), issued in November, describes the incredible return on investment the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) brings to the American people. In fact, national wildlife refuges return \$4 of economic activity for every \$1 appropriated by Congress. In 2006, 548 national wildlife refuges drew more than 35 million visitors and generated over \$1.7 billion for local economies.

The prized lands and waters of the NWRS provide excellent opportunities for Americans to hunt, fish, watch wildlife, participate in outdoor photography, and engage families through environmental education. Refuges create jobs and stimulate local economies – eighty-seven percent of all economic activity generated by refuges is from non-resident visitation.

But when refuges are not adequately funded, the economic vitality of neighboring communities can suffer. In the article, Sorenson-Groves goes on to say, "The budget cuts have an impact . . . You have people who are going to refuges and there's no staff, or a wildlife drive is closed because it can't be maintained."

That's why we must consistently remind our decision makers about the importance of fully funding the Refuge System. Please thank your members of Congress for their generous support of the System in FY08 through the [Refuge Action Network](#).

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## **INSIDE WASHINGTON**

### **Congress Approves \$39 million Increase for Refuges in 2008**

Refuges will receive a much-needed boost in funding thanks to the hard work of Friends and refuge supporters nationwide. On December 27th, the President signed a spending package that included a \$39 million increase for the National Wildlife Refuge System, bringing its total appropriation for FY08 to \$434 million at a time when key refuge wildlife conservation and public use programs are being slashed across the country.

NWRA and the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE), which the NWRA chairs, requested \$451.5 million, the amount appropriated during the 2003 Refuge System Centennial adjusted for inflation. Over the past four years, refuges have had flat or declining budgets, forcing each Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Region to implement strategic downsizing plans calling for a 20% reduction in the national workforce. The Refuge System needs at least \$15 million annually to keep up with the rising costs of inflation. Without the funds, refuges have been forced to close, and visitor programs such as environmental education have been sharply reduced.

While the \$39 million is indeed a much-needed increase, the NWRS needs at least \$765 million annually to meet fundamental wildlife conservation and public use mandates. NWRA and our partners dedicated to protecting and enhancing the refuge system will seek an annual appropriation of at least \$514 million for FY2009, with an ultimate goal of reaching \$765 million by FY2013. Stay tuned to future issues of the Flyer for information on how you can help reach this goal!

And, because we must thank those who made this increase possible, please take a quick moment and send your U.S. Representative and Senators a Thank You message via our [Refuge Action Network](#) – it's fast and easy and will ensure Congress knows we appreciate the support for refuges!

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### **2008 Legislative Calendar – For Refuges, Timing is Everything!**

In anticipation of a new budget year, NWRA has developed a calendar of critical milestones for refuge supporters seeking to take action to benefit the Refuge System in Fiscal Year 2009. Knowing the key dates for action is vital to helping maintain attention to Refuge System needs from a Congress that has already demonstrated strong support. NWRA and the Cooperative Alliance will lead the charge to increase funding for the NWRS to \$514 million for FY09, but we'll need your help to succeed.

Every year, Congress and the Administration follow a similar timetable as they progress through the budget cycle. Generally, the President announces his priorities in the annual State of the Union address in late January and presents the Administration's budget blueprint to Congress shortly thereafter. After that, the

House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees begin to assemble their proposals. They typically solicit input from outside organizations and announce their spending proposals in late spring. Summer is the time when lawmakers hammer out how they will fund the various government agencies. Then, after their summer recess, they return to pass the funding bills before the fiscal year ends on September 30th.

The dates below offer a guideline on what Congress will be doing and when you or your Friends group should be prepared to weigh in with decision makers.

January 22 – The second session of the 110th Congress convenes

February 5 – President delivers budget blueprint to Congress with proposed funding for NWRS

February, March, April – House and Senate Interior Appropriations Committees assemble their FY09 proposals including funding for the NWRS and solicit input (Friends should weigh in with their Congressional delegation – House and Senate – and sign up to speak at Public Witness Day in Washington, D.C. – NWRA will notify Friends as soon as the date is announced.)

March 14 – National Wildlife Refuge System turns 105: Invite your elected officials to celebrate at your refuge!

April – House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee holds Public Witness Day (2007 was the first year since 1994 this has occurred; we anticipate it will happen again in 2008. Friends not able to testify in person should submit written testimony for the record. Friends should also submit written testimony to the Senate.)

April 22 – Earth Day: Invite your elected officials to participate in refuge events!

May, June - ongoing - House and Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittees release their proposed spending for the Department of the Interior, including the NWRS, which goes to full Appropriations Committees, then full chambers for vote

May 10 – International Migratory Bird Day: Invite your elected officials to participate in IMBD events on your refuge!

June, July, August – Appropriations season – Congress deliberates and debates all spending bills; some are sent to President

September 28 – National Public Lands Day: Invite your elected officials to NPLD event at your refuge!

September 30 – Fiscal year ends

October 7-14 – Refuge Week: Invite your elected officials to participate in refuge events!

November 11 – Election Day

If Congress fails to pass a funding bill prior to the end of the fiscal year, they must pass a “continuing resolution” funding agencies at the previous year’s levels. Sometimes, as was the case for FY08, they roll all spending bills into one “omnibus.” Because the election falls at the beginning of November this year and members of Congress will be busy campaigning back home, it is entirely possible we will see another year like 2007.

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## FRIENDS GROUP NEWS

### **Friends of the Bosque del Apache NWR in New Mexico Preserve Critical Land Beyond the Boundaries**

The Friends of the Bosque del Apache NWR raised \$63,000 from scratch to purchase the 6272-foot Chupadera Peak, the highest point in the mountain range on the refuge’s western boundary. In less than a year, the Friends reached their fundraising goal with the help of more than 270 donations ranging from \$10 to \$4,500.

The 140 acres encompassing the peak were purchased in September from a land developer, and on December 1, Friends, donors and supporters celebrated with a dedication hike to the peak. Before the purchase, the refuge’s popular 9-1/2-mile Chupadera Wilderness Hiking Trail terminated at the refuge boundary fence, just short of the peak. The trail, in its 1,700 foot ascent, winds its way up the eastern slope of the mountain, passing through the refuge’s 5,282 acre Chupadera Wilderness. In springtime, the route is fragrant with desert wildflowers, and hikers reaching the summit are afforded a 360-degree panoramic view.



*Banana Yucca blossom marks Chupadera summit © John Bertrand*

Located in central New Mexico on the Rio Grande River, Bosque del Apache was established as a national wildlife refuge for Sandhill Cranes and migrating waterfowl in 1939 and encompasses 57,191 acres of Chihuahuan desert land. The refuge is currently proceeding with required analysis before it can formally accept transfer of the title for the land from the Friends. The eventual goal is to add the peak to the refuge’s existing Chupadera Wilderness. When completed, this will be the first time that a gift or bequest of land lying outside a refuge boundary added to a national wildlife refuge has been awarded “Wilderness” status.

Friends of the Bosque del Apache NWR, San Antonio, NM  
Size: 1022 members

Established: 1993  
Website: <http://www.friendsofthebosque.org/Friendsindex.html>  
Annual Activities:  
2nd Annual Rio Film Festival – Jan. 25-26, 2008  
21st Annual Festival of the Cranes – November 13-18, 2008

John Bertrand, a founding member of the Friends of the Bosque del Apache NWR, contributed to this article. If you have news from your Friends group, please send it to [Mark Hufford](#).

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## UPCOMING NWRA EVENTS

January 25 – Southern Oregon Coast BTB workday session, Charlestown, OR

January 26 – Middle and North Oregon Coast BTB workday session, Newport, OR

## DID YOU KNOW...?

National wildlife refuges generate about \$4 in economic activity for every \$1 of government spending on the Refuge System budget.

[source: FWS Report [Banking on Nature 2006](#): The Economic Benefits to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation]

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## PROTECTING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE