



National
Wildlife Refuge
Association

For Immediate Release
July 15, 2016

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Interior Budget Bill Loaded with Riders Targeting the National Wildlife Refuge System Passes the House

(July 15th, 2016 – Washington DC) – Yesterday, the House of Representatives passed a Fiscal Year 2017 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 5538) loaded with damaging riders that affect the National Wildlife Refuge System.

“The policy ramifications of these riders are significant and deserve serious and open debate in Congress. They should not be attached to the Appropriations bill,” said David Houghton, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

The bill does include a vital \$3.5 million increase for Refuge Operations and Maintenance that will allow the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to continue to grow critical programs such as the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership and Refuge Law Enforcement.

Unfortunately this gain is deeply offset by damaging riders that undermine the National Wildlife Refuge System:

- Prevent the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) from implementing its Comprehensive Conservation Plan at Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.
- Prevent the USFWS from implementing a rule on predator hunting regulations on Alaska refuges to prevent baiting, aerial gunning, and killing wolves at den sites. The rule in question prohibits harvesting brown bears over bait, expands season length, and increases harvest limits for predators. The rule codifies how refuges have been managed in Alaska for years and does not affect subsistence hunting regulations.
- Prevent the USFWS from removing unsafe and contaminated structures on Midway Atoll NWR.
- Prevent the USFWS from updating an antiquated rule for managing non-federal oil and gas development on wildlife refuges that would conserve wildlife and reduce costs of oil spill clean ups.
- Prevent the USFWS from addressing recreational use on part of the Havasu NWR that is negatively affecting migratory birds and other wildlife.



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“We do not believe that many within the hunting community would actually be in favor of or endorse the activities such as killing of wolf pups in their dens or brown bears over bait. If the rider that prevents implementation of the state-wide rule in Alaska becomes law, that is actually what is being allowed,” said Houghton.

He added, “We also believe that the recent Government Accounting Office report on operations at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial provides a framework for assessing buildings on Midway that requires a full public discussion prior to decisions on demolition of historic and yet seriously contaminated buildings. There is no need to tie the agency’s hands when it is of mutual interest to protect wildlife habitat while also honoring Midway’s profound military heritage.”

The National Wildlife Refuge System, the world’s largest network of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife conservation, has been protecting our nation’s wildlife for present and future generations of Americans for over one hundred years. The Refuge System generates \$2.4 billion to local economies, supporting approximately 35,000 jobs, nearly \$800 million in employment income, and adding more than \$340 million in tax revenue, and provides more than \$40 billion each year in ecosystem services.

The Refuge Association will remain vigilant and looks forward to working with Congressional leaders to ensure that the Refuge System continues to thrive and provide equal and inclusive opportunities for everyone to appreciate the great outdoors.

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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.

To learn more about the National Wildlife Refuge Association, please visit our [website](#) or join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#).