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**National Wildlife Refuge Association
Commends Bi-Partisan Bill to Address Refuge System Backlog**

***Bishop/Grijalva Bill to Reduce Refuge System Backlog
Could Dedicate as much as \$130 Million Annually***

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 25, 2018) – Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, Rob Bishop (R-UT), and Ranking Member Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) today released the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act, a bill that aims to reduce the maintenance needs facing our nation’s public lands, including the National Wildlife Refuge System. The bill, if enacted as written, would dedicate as much as \$130 million annually to reduce the Refuge System’s backlog, currently \$1.3 billion.

“The National Wildlife Refuge Association is strongly supportive of this wonderful first step in reducing the maintenance backlog of our National Wildlife Refuge System,” said Desiree Sorenson-Groves, Vice President of Government Affairs for the National Wildlife Refuge Association. “We have been working across political divides for decades to address the operations and maintenance needs of the Refuge System and this bill addresses this core part of our organization’s mission.”

The Refuge System currently manages over \$42 billion of real property assets including public roads, buildings, water management structures, fishing piers, boat ramps and other infrastructure. There is a direct link between adequately constructed and maintained real property, healthy wildlife habitats and populations, availability of safe and reliable public use opportunities, and a healthy economy. Assets must be maintained – for safety, and to welcome and orient visitors.

Industry standards and the National Academy of Sciences recommend that between 2%-4% of a company’s Current Replacement Value (CRV) should be invested annually in maintenance to maintain assets in good condition. The Refuge Association believes that an annual appropriation of 1.2% of the Refuge System’s CRV – or about \$500 million – would be enough for the Refuge System to eliminate their existing deferred maintenance backlog while keeping up with current maintenance needs and preventing additional deferred costs, thereby saving taxpayer dollars.

“It’s time the federal government began to manage their assets the way large corporations do,” said Sorenson-Groves. “No Fortune 500 company would ever have a deferred maintenance backlog the size of the ones for our public lands because their shareholders would never allow such a waste of money; as Americans, we shouldn’t either.”

We thank Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva for recognizing the significant challenges in managing the assets of our public lands and we look forward to working with them towards the passage of this bill.

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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