



## **Status Report: America's Most Endangered Refuges of 2005**

### **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, AK**

Still threatened by congressional attempts to open this spectacular refuge to oil drilling, the Arctic Refuge is back in *Refuges at Risk 2006* due to the severe impacts of global warming already being seen in the earth's polar regions.

### **Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge, CO**

Defenders successfully pressured the Fish and Wildlife Service to end 30 years of damaging grazing practices on the refuge.

### **Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, AZ**

Though both Buenos Aires NWR and Cabeza Prieta NWR (*Refuges at Risk 2004*) still face daunting border issues, both have vehicle barriers underway that will substantially reduce damaging illegal vehicle traffic on these refuges. Defenders has worked over the past year to ensure that immigration and border security legislation includes provisions to protect sensitive public lands and wildlife habitat.

### **Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, FL**

The refuge is still faced with ever increasing human development beyond its borders. One of several new developments proposed near the refuge, known as Big Cypress, is designed for 25,000 residential units. If this development is approved as planned, there will be tremendous pressure to expand and extend roads east through the currently undeveloped agricultural areas and even through the refuge itself in places that serve as important wildlife corridors for panthers.

### **McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge, TX**

Oil and gas drilling is still a threat to McFaddin NWR and many other refuges that do not control the oil and gas beneath them. Defenders continues to advocate comprehensive reform to develop better oversight of these privately owned mineral rights. McFaddin and over 60 other refuges in the Gulf Coast were hit hard by hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma in 2005. Defenders worked hard to secure \$132 million in federal hurricane relief funding for refuges to ensure that these refuges can be restored for wildlife and reopened to the public.

### **Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, MO**

The Environmental Appeals Board of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rejected an appeal of the air permit granted by the State of Illinois to Peabody's Prairie State coal-fired power plant, which will pollute the Mingo National Wildlife Refuge and impair its protected wilderness air status. Defenders' partner Sierra Club and other health and environmental organizations are considering appealing the decision in federal court.

### **Moapa National Wildlife Refuge, NV**

The Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) has moved aggressively on groundwater applications throughout the state that threaten to deprive Moapa NWR and other wild lands in northern Nevada of water needed to sustain wildlife populations. Unfortunately, federal land management agencies have dropped their protests and agreed to give up their water rights. Defenders joined a coalition of ranchers, counties, and other rural citizens in a petition to the Nevada state engineer, who makes ground water decisions, seeking the right to participate in the groundwater application protest process. Defenders continues to work to ensure that Nevada's protected places and imperiled wildlife are not harmed by SNWA's proposal to divert water from northern Nevada to the burgeoning metropolitan area around Las Vegas.

### **Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge, NY**

One of the primary threats facing the refuge is development on private lands surrounding the refuge, but Defenders' partner Friends of the Bay helped put a major development on hold. This summer the developer withdrew its application after local opposition, but is expected to submit a new proposal soon. Storm water runoff and strained sewage systems remain a major concern, particularly in the Mill Neck Creek watershed.

### **Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, NC**

The Navy continues to pursue a landing field next to Pocosin Lakes NWR, even after an appeals court ruled they violated the law in planning the landing field. Endangered red wolves were recently spotted in the location of the landing field. The Navy will likely release a new draft planning document this fall. Defenders will continue to work closely with area farmers and other groups to press the Navy to move the landing field.

### **Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge, CA**

The Sonny Bono Salton Sea refuge continues to be threatened by a massive diversion of water from agricultural users in the area to the city of San Diego. The state is charged with developing a restoration plan for the Salton Sea to be implemented with the water diversions. A draft plan will be released in October which will ultimately decide the fate of the refuge. Defenders is working hard to ensure that the restoration plan for the Salton Sea truly restores the ecosystems that wildlife and the refuge depend upon.

For more information about Defenders' Refuges at Risk report visit:

**[www.defenders.org/refuges](http://www.defenders.org/refuges)**

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