

# Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for California



Years of budget shortfalls have led to rapidly deteriorating or broken water control structures at **Lower Klamath** and **Tule Lake Refuges**, which are used by fully 80% of the millions of waterfowl using the Pacific flyway. These control structures are essential to proper management of wetland habitat.



Robotic video cameras have value for scientists and the general public when strategically located on a refuge. San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex hopes to use a portable remote video camera to stream real-time images of tule elk, sandhill cranes, pelicans, geese and ducks. The video feed will be available to local television stations in Los Banos and Merced, encouraging more people to see wildlife at the refuge. Live video feeds of seabirds on Castle Rock have already been made available over the Internet. Now, Castle Rock National Wildlife Refuge seeks to develop formal monitoring protocols to use the cameras to follow trends, detect disturbances and further understand the biology of the seabirds.



*Endangered San Joaquin Kit Foxes, found at Bitter Creek, Kern, Merced, Pixley, and San Luis Refuges*

## **The National Wildlife Refuge System struggles to meet its wildlife conservation mission**

### **In California alone, 248 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf.**

California is home to spectacular natural resources on more than 40 national wildlife refuges. These refuges are national treasures, providing habitat to nearly all the migratory birds on the West Coast and protecting many imperiled species, including the California red-legged frog, San Joaquin kit fox, Riparian brush rabbit, and Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard.

In 2008, more than 2.7 million visitors enjoyed hiking, birding, wildlife photography, environmental education, and hunting and fishing on California refuges.

**Yet, national wildlife refuges in California may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation.** California wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that exceed \$50.8 million.

**Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 209 additional positions.** Those include 103 wildlife biologists, 24 guides and educators, and 59 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, California refuges will fall further behind in meeting the demand.

**What's the solution?** CARE recommends \$514 million for the Refuge System's FY 2010 Operations and Maintenance budget and an increase to at least \$765 million by FY 2013

## About C.A.R.E.

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement is a diverse coalition of 22 conservation, recreation, sporting, and scientific organizations with more than 14 million members and supporters across the United States. CARE has been working since 1995 to help the National Wildlife Refuge System fight a serious funding crisis.

*American Birding Association*  
*American Fisheries Society*  
*American Sportfishing Association*  
*Assateague Coastal Trust*  
*Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation*  
*Defenders of Wildlife*  
*Ducks Unlimited*  
*Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*  
*Izaak Walton League of America*  
*National Audubon Society*  
*National Rifle Association of America*  
*National Wildlife Federation*  
*National Wildlife Refuge Association*  
*Safari Club International*  
*The Corps Network*  
*The Nature Conservancy*  
*The Wilderness Society*  
*The Wildlife Society*  
*Trout Unlimited*  
*U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance*  
*Wildlife Forever*  
*Wildlife Management Institute*

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[www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/  
CareHome.html](http://www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/CareHome.html)



## Saddled with declining purchasing power and a \$3.5 billion backlog of deferred operations and maintenance projects, the National Wildlife Refuge System is in a financial vise.

The Refuge System needs an annual increase of \$15 million in its operations budget just to keep pace with inflation and demand. The Refuge System welcomed more than 41.2 million visitors in 2008, up from 33 million in 1998.

National Wildlife Refuges are undeniable economic engines. According to the *Banking on Nature* report from the FWS:

- Spending by visitors to refuges generated more than \$1.7 billion of sales nationwide, created 27,000 jobs in local communities and added \$543 million in employment income. These economic data do not include Alaska or Pacific island refuges, which together generate millions of annual visitors.
- At *Don Edwards San Francisco Bay Refuge*, for every dollar appropriated to the refuge budget, an astounding \$43.55 are generated in expenditures to the local economy. Visitor spending totaled \$16 million, generating 196 local jobs, \$8.3 million in employment income and \$3.8 million in total tax revenue.

Yet, according to Management Systems International, a respected business consultant, the Refuge System has seen its real purchasing power decline by 11 percent between fiscal years 2003 and 2008.

The Government Accountability Office found that with continuing funding constraints and an expanding list of challenges, it may be difficult to maintain the Refuge System as envisioned in law – “where the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge System are maintained; priority visitor services are provided; and the strategic growth of the system is continued.”

There is a solution to safeguard the world’s finest network of public lands dedicated to wildlife conservation: \$514 million in FY 2010 for the National Wildlife Refuge System and an increase to at least \$765 million by FY 2013 – steps that will restore operational quality and begin to chip away at the deferred operations and maintenance backlog.