

Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for Connecticut



USFWS

Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge serves some of the most densely populated areas of the Atlantic seaboard, including many large inner-city communities whose schools can't afford to send student to environmental education programs on the refuge. So the refuge wants to go to the schools. The first step is developing a traveling exhibit, which would be one step in teaching an estimated 15,000 students and more than 25,000 citizens each year the importance of wildlife conservation.



Recovery efforts for the federally threatened Piping Plover involve active management, including wire cages over nests to exclude predators. Years of budget shortfalls have limited the refuge's ability to fully care for all of its wildlife.



Falkner Island Unit of the Stewart B. McKinney NWR

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

In Connecticut alone, 7 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf.

Connecticut is home to spectacular natural resources including Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge and a unit of the Silvio O. Conte refuge. The S.B. McKinney refuge provides vital habitat for the federally endangered Roseate Tern and threatened Piping Plover. The refuge annually hosts millions of migratory songbirds, waterfowl, raptors, and wading birds.

In 2008, more than 25 thousand visitors enjoyed hiking, birding, wildlife photography, environmental education, and hunting and fishing on Connecticut refuges.

Yet, national wildlife refuges in Connecticut may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation.

Connecticut wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that exceed \$1 million.

Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 5 additional positions. Those include 2 wildlife biologists, 1 guides or educator, and 2 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

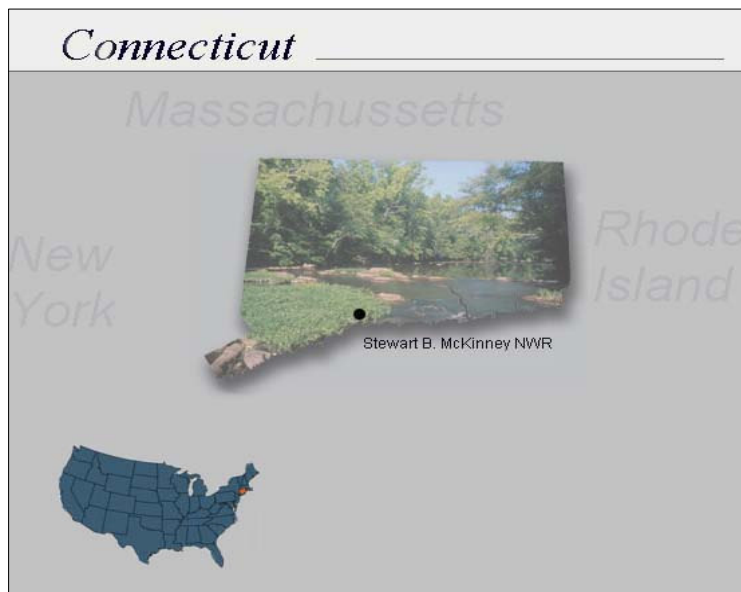
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[www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/
CareHome.html](http://www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/CareHome.html)



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.

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.