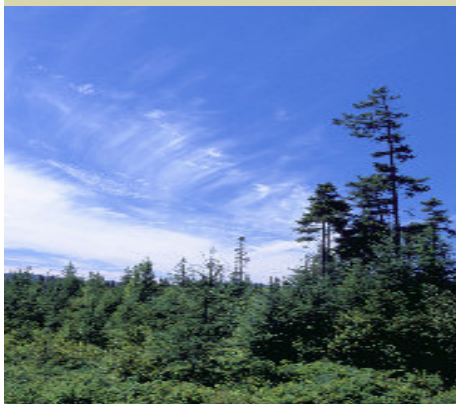


# Restoring our Refuges: A Plan for Idaho



USFWS- JaDonna Dewhurst

Tomorrow's conservationists are being taught in classrooms across the state today. For the nearly 10,000 students who visited Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge in 2008, tomorrow's lessons could be far better as the refuge works to correlate environmental education programs with state and local achievement standards. To accommodate more students, Deer Flat Refuge wants to create ready-made activities that teachers could use in classrooms before and after they lead field trips to the refuge.



Due to staffing cuts, Idaho refuges may discontinue wetland restoration projects and bird monitoring, and sharply reduce educational programs for schoolchildren.



*Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge*

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

**In Idaho alone, 45 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf.**

Idaho is home to 7 National Wildlife Refuges which provide essential habitat for millions of birds, including the largest nesting population of Greater sandhill cranes in the world. Idaho refuges also protect diverse ecosystems such as wetlands, riparian forests, uplands, marshes, and native grasslands.

In 2008, more than 200 thousand visitors enjoyed hiking, birding, wildlife photography, environmental education, and hunting and fishing on Idaho refuges.

**Yet, national wildlife refuges in Idaho may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation.** Idaho wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that exceed \$21 million.

**Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 31 additional positions.** Those include 12 wildlife biologists, 6 guides and educators, and 9 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, Idaho 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*  
*Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*  
*Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation*  
*Defenders of Wildlife*  
*Ducks Unlimited*  
*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 **Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge**, for every \$1 appropriated to the refuge budget, over \$10 are generated in recreational expenditures to the local economy. Visitor spending totaled over \$1.6 million, generating 33 jobs, \$852,000 in employment income and \$277,000 in 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.