

Restoring our Refuges: A Plan for Kentucky



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Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge is recognized as a valuable public resource due to community interest, area tourism, volunteer opportunities and the refuge's proximity to more than 50 educational institutions. Now it is time for the refuge to hire a trained, dedicated staff member who can develop a professional visitor services program to provide quality wildlife-related recreation and environmental education. The refuge also seeks to add a full-time wildlife biologist to develop a science-driven program of surveys and research, habitat initiatives and wildlife monitoring.



Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge will still be unable to fill the four positions identified as necessary to meet the needs of the actively-expanding refuge without increased funding.



Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge, Kentucky

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

In Kentucky alone, 5 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf.

Kentucky is home to spectacular natural resources including one National Wildlife Refuge. Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge protects and manages bottomland hardwood forests, an increasingly-rare ecosystem that supports over 250 species of neotropical birds and at-risk species including freshwater mussels, Wood storks, Bald eagles and Black bears. The refuge is noted for its exceptional migratory bird diversity, which includes waterfowl, neotropical songbirds, wading birds, raptors, and shorebirds.

In 2008, more than 30 thousand visitors enjoyed hiking, birding, wildlife photography, environmental education, and hunting and fishing on Kentucky refuges.

Yet, national wildlife refuges in Kentucky may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation. Kentucky wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that exceed \$4 million.

Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 5 additional positions. Those include 3 wildlife biologists, 1 guide and educator, and 1 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, Kentucky 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
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Trout Unlimited
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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 *Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge*, for every dollar appropriated to the refuge's budget, over \$2 are generated in recreational expenditures to the local economy and visitor spending generated over \$72,400 in tax revenues.

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.