

# Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for Louisiana



Making national wildlife refuges fun and informative may be the best way to recruit a new cadre of conservationists. Southeast Louisiana Refuges hope to reach an estimated 1,500 new visitors each year by conducting 25 new demonstrations or programs annually. The refuge seeks to install multimedia equipment, including slide projectors, monitors and DVD players.



At Sabine National Wildlife Refuge, where Hurricane Rita caused devastating infrastructure and natural resource damage, efforts to repair massive hurricane damage will be hampered by the loss of essential maintenance staff.



Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge

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

### **In Louisiana, 117 mission-critical projects sit unfunded**

Louisiana is home to spectacular natural resources on 25 national wildlife refuges. These national treasures are home to such endangered and threatened species as the Louisiana black bear, brown pelican, red-cockaded woodpecker and gopher tortoise.

In 2008, more than **872,000 visitors** enjoyed hiking, bird watching, environmental education, hunting and fishing on the 9 million acres of Louisiana wildlife refuges.

**Yet, national wildlife refuges in Louisiana may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation.** Louisiana wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that total more than \$97 million.

**Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 100 additional positions.** Those include 47 wildlife biologists, 12 guides and educators, and 30 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, Louisiana 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 **Sabine National Wildlife Refuge** in Louisiana, for every \$1 spent on the refuge's budget, almost \$10.20 are generated in recreational expenditures to the local economy. Over \$1 million dollars of local tax revenues are generated through recreational expenditures.

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.