

Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for Maine



Along the north Atlantic coast of New England, piping plovers, least terns and common terns share 50 miles of beach with humans – and that doesn't always bode well for the birds. **Nine national wildlife refuges** are working with state and local governments and nonprofit organizations to improve nesting success for these coastal waterbirds. The project is a great change to local communities to learn the natural resource and economic value of these birds.



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

In Maine alone, 36 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf

Maine is home to spectacular natural resources including 10 national wildlife refuges. Its coastal refuges provide essential habitat for nesting seabirds and millions of migratory birds. Maine refuges also protect numerous species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and plant life.

In **2008**, more than **370,000 visitors** enjoyed hiking, bird watching, environmental education, hunting and fishing on Maine wildlife refuges.

Yet, national wildlife refuges in Maine may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation. Maine's wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that total more than \$15 million.

Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 36 additional positions. Those include 16 wildlife biologists, 8 guides and educators, and 10 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, Maine 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

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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.