

Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for Michigan



Each year, thousands of people from the world over visit central Michigan to catch a glimpse of the Kirtland's warbler, a federally listed endangered species. Yet, there are no visitor facilities on the **Kirtland's Warbler Wildlife Management Area**.



The USFWS wants to give visitors an understanding of the Wildlife Management Area's role in Kirtland's warbler management and an opportunity to see and photograph one of the world's rarest warblers. The Wildlife Management Area seeks to build three informational kiosks, three observation platforms and three photo blinds.



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

In Michigan alone, 26 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf

Michigan is home to spectacular natural resources including 6 National Wildlife Refuges. These refuges are national treasures, providing habitat to endangered Kirtland's Warblers, threatened Dwarf Lake Iris, Gray wolves and millions of migratory waterfowl, raptors, and other birds.

In 2008, more than **124,000 visitors** enjoyed hiking, bird watching, environmental education, hunting and fishing on Michigan wildlife refuges.

Yet, national wildlife refuges in Michigan may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation. Michigan wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that total more than \$35 million.

Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 22 additional positions. Those include 10 wildlife biologists, 6 guides and educators, and 5 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, Michigan 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)

Michigan



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 **Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge** in Michigan, visitor spending generated over \$1 million in revenue and \$427,800 in employment income. In addition, \$141,000 of local tax revenues were generated by 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.