

Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for North Dakota



Countless Snow Geese on fall migration

Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge has been designated as a Globally Important Bird Area. But persistent budget shortfalls limit efforts to protect the refuge from invasive species. Des Lacs is home to breeding American White Pelicans and hundreds of thousands of migratory Snow Geese and other waterfowl.



Northern Pintail drake

North Dakota is a major breeding site and critical habitat for the piping plover, first listed as a threatened species in 1985. Conservation efforts have stabilized the declining population but that's not good enough. The piping plover protection and recovery plan covers 10,000 square miles in the Great Plains, from central North Dakota to eastern Montana, on four national wildlife refuges, five wetland management districts, one Nature Conservancy Preserve and lands privately owned by 80 farmer/ranchers



Tewaukoan National Wildlife Refuge

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

In North Dakota alone, 243 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf.

North Dakota is home to magnificent natural resources, including over 40 National Wildlife Refuges. These refuges are national treasures, providing vital breeding habitat for millions of waterfowl, coyote, red fox, and at-risk species like piping plovers and American white pelicans.

In 2008, more than 433 thousand visitors enjoyed hiking, birding, wildlife photography, environmental education, and hunting and fishing on North Dakota refuges.

Yet, national wildlife refuges in North Dakota may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation. North Dakota wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that exceed \$30.4 million.

Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 232 additional positions. Those include 153 wildlife biologists, 16 guides and educators, and 51 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, North Dakota 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)

North Dakota



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 *Audubon National Wildlife Refuge* in North Dakota, for every \$1 spent on the refuge's budget, nearly \$2.40 are generated in recreational expenditures to the local economy. Visitor spending generated over \$141,000 dollars in local 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.