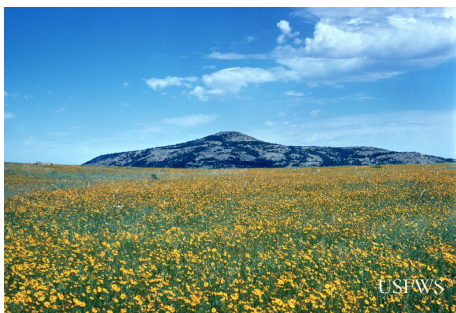


Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for Oklahoma



One of the rare places where the natural carpet of grass escaped destruction because the rocks underfoot defeated the farmer's plow is Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge—a hugely popular destination. More than 1.2 million visitors in 2008 took part in the annual elk and deer hunts, fished on the refuge, or just brought their binoculars to catch sight of wildlife. Popularity comes with a price. The refuge's law enforcement officers can't handle the expanding workload. Since protection is the most basic form of wildlife management, the refuge needs to be able to pay for overtime law enforcement presence.



Due to staffing cuts, **Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge** will now share its lone law enforcement officer with a refuge in Texas, compromising resource protection and safety for more than 200,000 annual visitors.



Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma

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

In Oklahoma alone, 52 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf.

Oklahoma is home to spectacular natural resources including 9 national wildlife refuges. The ecosystems protected by these wildlife refuges include bottomland hardwood and deciduous forests, wetlands, grasslands, and native prairies.

In 2008, more than 1.7 million visitors enjoyed hiking, birding, wildlife photography, environmental education, and hunting and fishing on Oklahoma refuges.

Yet, national wildlife refuges in Oklahoma may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation. Oklahoma wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that exceed \$24.2 million.

Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 40 additional positions. Those include 16 wildlife biologists, 4 guides and educators, and 16 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, Oklahoma 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

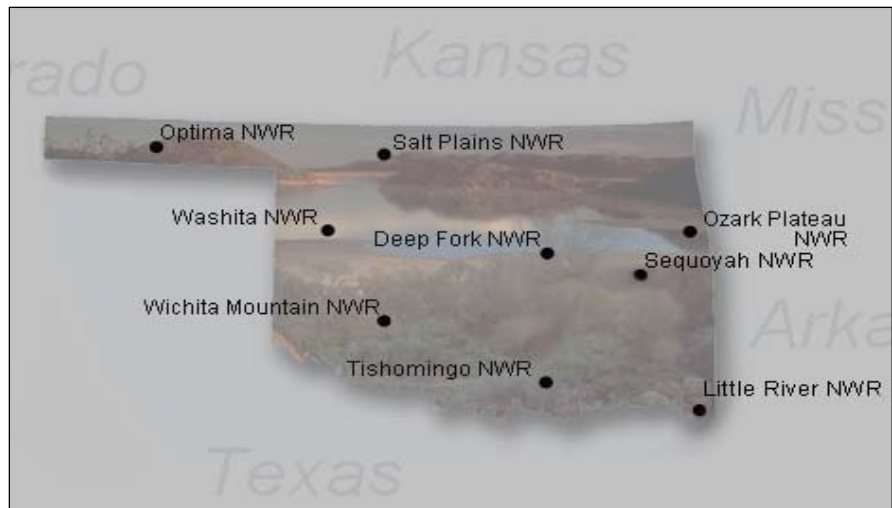
About C.A.R.E.

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

1901 Pennsylvania Avenue NW,
Suite 407
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: 202.333.9075
Fax: 202.333.9077

[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 **Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge** in Oklahoma, for every dollar spent on the refuge's budget, almost \$8 are generated in recreational expenditures to the local economy. Visitor spending generated nearly \$1 million 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.