

Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for Oregon



USFWS- Gary Stolz

Due to funding shortfalls, the 20 year old seabird monitoring program could be discontinued in 2009 at **Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge**.



Neither Siletz Bay, Cape Meares and Oregon Coast Refuges has enough data about plant and wildlife species to make entirely sound and scientifically viable decisions about biological trends and, ultimately, about the effectiveness of management practices that will ensure biodiversity. The answer is a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based inventory of fish, wildlife and their habitats.



USFWS- Aaron D. Drew

Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge, Oregon

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

In Oregon alone, 124 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf.

Oregon is home to 15 National Wildlife Refuges, which provide essential habitat for thousands of resting and feeding Canada Geese in the winter. Oregon refuges also protect ecosystems as diverse as marsh, sagebrush, grasslands, riparian habitat, and upland. These wildlife refuges are national treasures, providing habitat to the three threatened species of Gray Wolf, Canadian lynx, and Bald Eagle, among others.

In 2008, more than 3.9 million visitors enjoyed hiking, birding, wildlife photography, environmental education, and hunting and fishing on Oregon refuges.

Yet, national wildlife refuges in Oregon may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation. Oregon wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that exceed \$79.6 million.

Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 108 additional positions. Those include 49 wildlife biologists, 20 guides and educators, and 29 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, Oregon 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

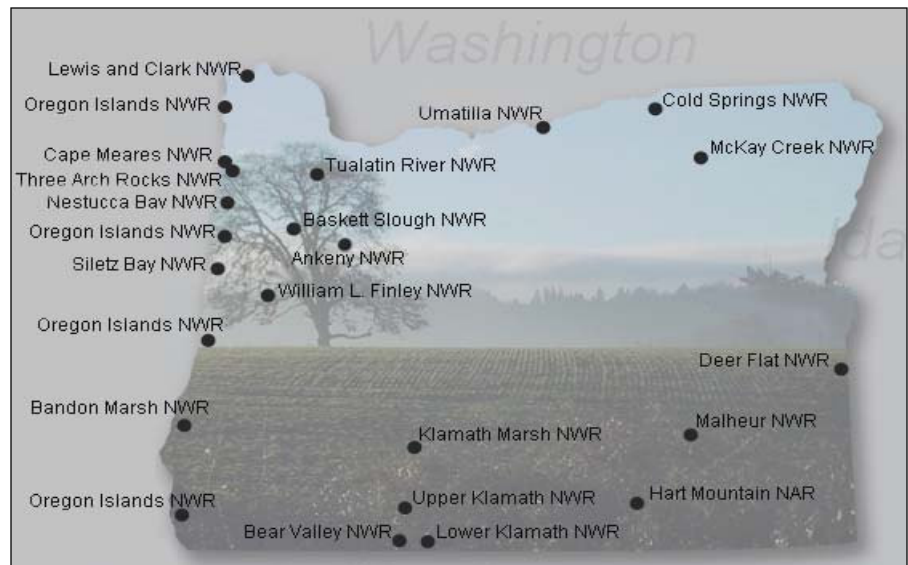
About C.A.R.E.

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
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
Ducks Unlimited
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
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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 *Malheur National Wildlife Refuge* in Oregon, for every dollar spent on the refuge's budget, almost \$6 are generated in recreational expenditures to the local economy. Nearly \$580,000 of local community tax revenues are generated through visitor spending.

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 operation operations and maintenance backlog.