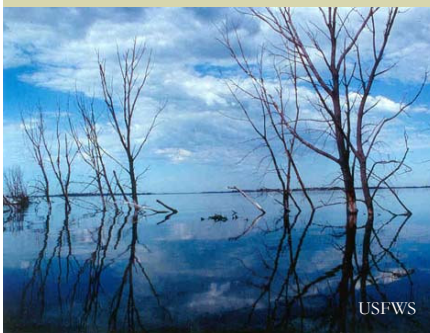


Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for South Dakota



Riparian habitat along the Missouri River in **Karl Mundt National Wildlife Refuge** is a perfect example of the interconnectedness of life. Dam construction eliminated the flooding and silt deposits necessary for cottonwoods to replace themselves.



Many of the cottonwoods are dying; bald eagles and other migratory birds depend on these trees for wintering, nesting and migration stopovers. If current trends continue, cottonwoods could become so scarce that the refuge would lose its habitat benefits. A five-year project would replace such invasive trees as Russian olive, eastern red cedar and Siberian elm with cottonwood seedlings.



Sandhill Cranes at Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge

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

In South Dakota alone, 94 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf

South Dakota is home to spectacular natural resources including six National Wildlife Refuges and six Wetland Management Districts. These areas protect diverse ecosystems including native prairie, wetlands, mountains, and grasslands, and provide essential habitat for countless species of wildlife. At Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge alone, a staggering one million Snow Geese congregate during their annual migration.

In **2008**, more than **364,000 visitors** enjoyed hiking, bird watching, environmental education, hunting and fishing in South Dakota wildlife refuges.

Yet, national wildlife refuges in South Dakota may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation.

South Dakota wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that total more than \$22.2 million.

Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 89 additional positions. Those include 43 wildlife biologists, 8 guides and educators, and 29 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, South 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

Wildlife Forever

Wildlife Management Institute

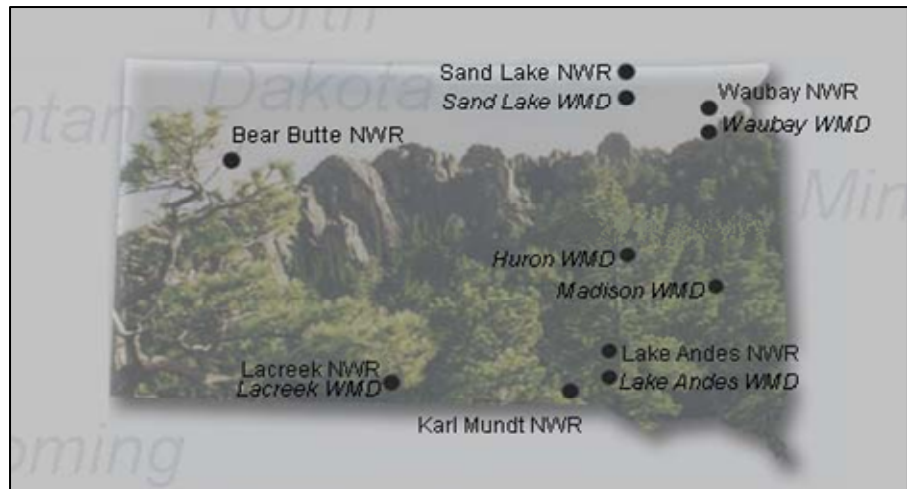
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[www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/
CareHome.html](http://www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/CareHome.html)



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 **Madison Wetland Management District** in South Dakota, for every \$1 spent on the refuge's budget, almost \$9.50 are generated in recreational expenditures to the local economy. Over \$928,000 of local tax revenues are generated through recreational expenditures.

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.