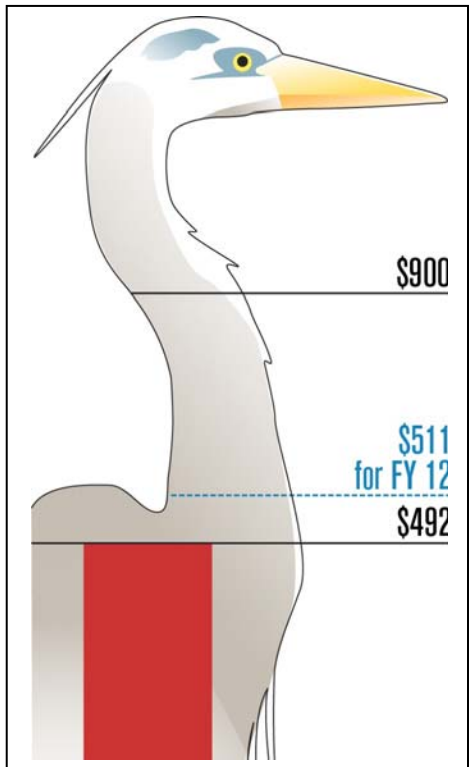




National Wildlife Refuge System \$511 Million in FY 2012



A comprehensive analysis by CARE determined that the Refuge System needs at least \$900 million in annual operations and maintenance funding to properly administer its 150 million acres, recreation programs, habitat restoration projects, and more. Funding increase in FY 2008 through FY 2010 were important, and much appreciated, steps in the right direction. To maintain progress toward the reasonable and achievable long-term goal of \$900 million (a level that does not begin to address the current backlog of more than \$3.3 billion), **the Refuge System needs \$511 million in FY 2012.**

A Century of Wildlife Conservation on the Brink

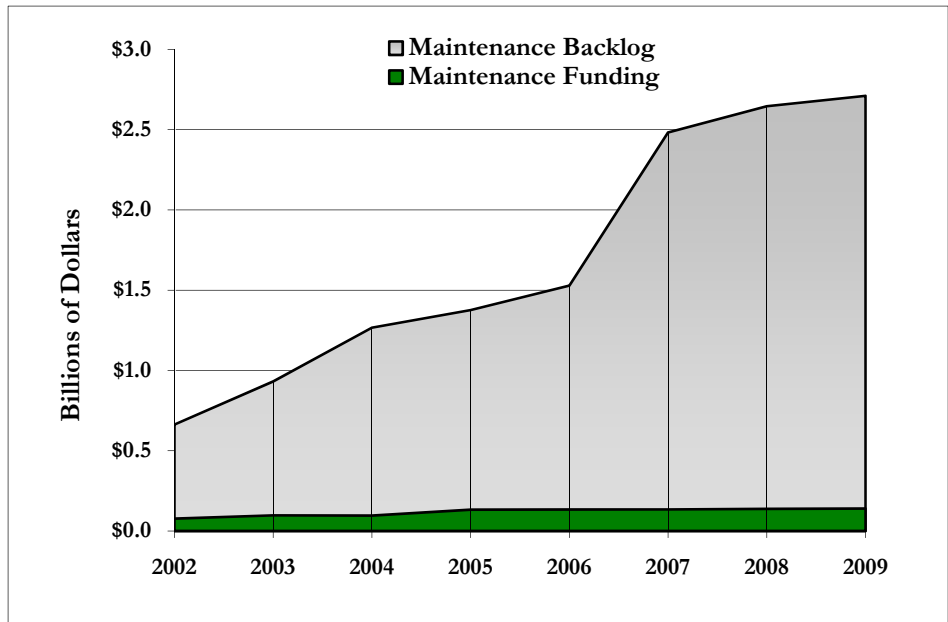
Since 1903, our National Wildlife Refuge System has preserved America's wildlife, hunting and fishing traditions, and ever-shrinking natural areas. Each year, approximately 45 million people hunt, fish, watch wildlife, and participate in educational programs on wildlife refuges in every U.S. state and territory. In addition, refuges are critically important on local and regional scales, as visitors generate approximately \$1.7 billion in annual sales to local economies and support nearly 27,000 U.S. jobs. And in keeping with its conservation mandate, the Refuge System provides a last bastion for more than 280 endangered or threatened species. Unfortunately, refuges aren't as healthy as they may appear.

Although the much needed increases from FY 2008 - FY 2010 helped, previous years of stagnant or declining budgets caused a rapid swelling of the Operations and Maintenance backlog to more than \$3.3 billion. And the funding level for FY11, an \$11 million cut from FY10, is effectively closer to a \$20 million cut when factoring in rising costs. Refuge visitors often show up to find roads and visitor centers closed, viewing platforms and trails in disrepair, and habitat restoration and school education programs eliminated. More than 10,000 refuge facilities are in need of repair, 2.3 million acres are overrun with invasive plant species, and crime is on the rise as only 213 law enforcement officers are now asked to do the job of 845.

An Era of Downsizing

Funding shortfalls following the Refuge System's centennial in 2003 forced a cut of more than 10% of the System's professional workforce and continue to burden dedicated, but overworked, staff tasked with the daunting challenge of managing and restoring complex habitats, offering safe haven for plants and wildlife, providing an eager public with adequate educational and recreational opportunities, providing law enforcement on increasingly urban refuges, and scores of other responsibilities. *Is this America's commitment to wildlife conservation that Theodore Roosevelt envisioned more than 100 years ago?*

Some in Congress have called for a return to FY 2008 spending levels, but this would have severe impacts to the National Wildlife Refuge System. At a time when the maintenance backlog has reached more than \$2.7 billion (see figure at right) and thousands of buildings, roads, observation towers, duck blinds, and heavy equipment are falling into disrepair, our 553 wildlife refuges cannot afford to wait any longer for the attention and funding priority they deserve.



If we do not soon address the challenges facing our Refuge System, the national network of wildlife conservation lands envisioned by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 will never materialize. CARE remains ready to work with Congress to ensure the Refuge System is provided \$511 million for FY 2012 and is protected for the benefit of plants and wildlife, 45 million annual visitors, and future generations of Americans.

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) is a diverse coalition of 21 conservation, recreation, sporting, and scientific organizations that represent 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*
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*
- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation*
- Defenders of Wildlife*
- Ducks Unlimited*
- Izaak Walton League of America*
- Marine Conservation Biology Institute*
- National Audubon Society*
- National Rifle Association of America*
- National Wildlife Federation*
- National Wildlife Refuge Association*
- Safari Club International*
- The Corps Network*
- The Wilderness Society*
- The Wildlife Society*
- Trout Unlimited*
- U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance*
- Wildlife Forever*
- Wildlife Management Institute*

1250 Connecticut Ave., NW • Suite 600 • Washington, DC 20036
 Phone: 202.292.3961

www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/CareHome.html