



For Immediate Release
May 11, 2009

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Obama Budget Fails to Meet Core Refuge Needs

Washington, DC- The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA), an advocacy group for the 150-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), today expressed concern about President Obama's budget request for the National Wildlife Refuge System for next year, Fiscal Year (FY) 2010. "Despite an impressive allocation for refuges in the stimulus package, President Obama's FY10 refuge funding request takes refuges a step backward, threatening cuts in wildlife conservation, public use and law enforcement positions," said Evan Hirsche, President of the NWRA. "National wildlife refuges are economic engines within communities, generating an estimated \$1.6 billion in local economic activity including tourism and direct employment. Now, more than ever, it's critical that they operate on all cylinders."

The diverse national partners that comprise the NWRA-chaired Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) have calculated refuges need at least \$15 million each year to cope with inflationary costs. The Administration's request for FY10 includes only \$6 million for fixed costs, which means some work currently occurring on refuges won't continue and may result in job losses.

The lack in inflationary increases was coupled with several bright points for refuges in the President's budget, and advocated for by NWRA, including increases in funding for refuge land acquisition; the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, a key tool in protecting vital lands outside refuge boundaries; the Visitor's Services programs that oversee volunteer efforts; and State Wildlife Grants.

"We applaud President Obama and his commitment to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in the next 5 years, an action that will strategically grow our National Wildlife Refuge System as mandated by Congress," said Hirsche. "With a country mired in an economic downturn, this is a win-win, helping landowners who wish to sell their lands, while adding critically-important lands and waters to the conservation estate."

NWRA, its conservation partners and the more than 250 local "Friends" groups, will work with Congress to ensure refuges receive \$514 million for FY 10 which will ensure enough funding for fixed costs while retaining the initiatives set forth by President Obama.

To view a detailed review of the President's Refuge System budget request, visit: http://refugeassociation.org/New-issues/President_FY10_Request.html. To view NWRA's full recommendations for FY 10, included in testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, please visit: http://www.refugeassociation.org/new-pdf-files/Testimony/FY10_NWRA_House_Testimony.pdf

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to protect, enhance and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System, America's premier network of lands and waters set aside to conserve our diverse wildlife heritage