

# Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for North Carolina



**Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge** lost its only park ranger, reducing the hours of operation to just 24 hours per week. The refuge also lost maintenance staff, resulting in a 50% reduction in road maintenance and over 50 miles of closed visitor roads.



Due to budget cuts, refuges have too few law enforcement officers to prevent vandalism such as that which occurred at **Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge**, where a vandal dumped a \$240,000 piece of heavy equipment into the bottom of a canal. This resulted in a temporary closure of the refuge.



Roanoke River Wildlife Refuge

## Wildlife Refuges in North Carolina face \$139 million budget shortfall

North Carolina is home to spectacular natural resources including 10 National Wildlife Refuges that serve as protection for the state's coastline, marshes, swamps, grasslands, and forests. The refuges also provide important habitat for countless species of birds, fish, reptiles, and mammals, including the last wild population of the endangered red wolf. Over 1.8 million visitors enjoy hiking, birding, wildlife photography, environmental education, and hunting and fishing each year on North Carolina refuges.

Years of meager budgets coupled with ballooning fixed costs such as fuel, electricity, and salary adjustments have prevented the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from filling vital positions and completing thousands of essential projects; 191 mission-critical projects are on the shelf in North Carolina today.

**Persistent budget shortfalls have forced a planned 23% staff reduction in North Carolina.** These losses aren't of expendable federal bureaucrats; these are wildlife biologists, refuge managers, interpretive rangers that teach and guide visitors, and essential maintenance personnel. Without these people, North Carolina refuges will continue to cut educational programs, close offices, allow equipment and visitor infrastructure to fall into disrepair, and significantly reduce biological management and monitoring of endangered species at certain refuges.

**But there is a reasonable solution to fix these seemingly complex challenges: increase funding to \$514 million in FY 09.**

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



## CARE recommends \$514 million FY 2009 Operations and Maintenance budget for the National Wildlife Refuge System

The Refuge System now struggles with a crippling backlog of \$3.5 billion and needs an annual increase of \$15 million just to keep pace with inflation. \$514 million will finally lift the Refuge System above FY 04 inflation-adjusted levels, and be an important step toward reaching a level that not only prevents the Refuge System from spiraling into deeper debt, but also permits the FWS to commence long-overdue restoration or management on over 9 million acres, begin repairs on more than 11,400 deteriorating facilities, and start recovering visitor services now languishing or completely eliminated due to scarce funding and staff.

**The Refuge System currently has a Maintenance backlog approaching \$2.5 billion**, creating a veritable logjam of deferred maintenance projects that has handcuffed refuge staff in their pursuit to protect wildlife and serve the public. Coupled with an Operations backlog of more than \$1 billion, this funding shortfall has forced scores of missed project opportunities. North Carolina refuges alone have 191 unfunded, yet essential projects totaling over \$24 million. The Maintenance backlog for North Carolina refuges exceeds \$115 million, which severely impedes refuge staff from protecting wildlife habitat and providing for recreational opportunities.

### **National Wildlife Refuges are undeniable economic engines.**

According to a recent economic analysis by the FWS, *Banking on Nature*

- Visitors to refuges generate impressive economic activity. In 2006, nearly 40 million people visited national wildlife refuges. Their spending generated over \$1.7 billion of sales in regional economies and created 27,000 jobs and \$543 million in employment income. These economic data do not include Alaska or Pacific island refuges, which together hosted over 2 million visitors in 2006.

- At **Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge** in North Carolina, for every \$1 spent on the refuge's budget, nearly \$414 are generated in recreational expenditures to the local economy. Recreational visitor spending totaled nearly \$90 million, generating 1,238 jobs, \$28 million in employment income and \$12.7 million in tax revenue.