



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Pacific Region

National Wildlife Refuge System Workforce Planning

Background

Similar to many other Federal agencies, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which oversees the National Wildlife Refuge System, is currently experiencing tightening budgets. While the Refuge System's annual budget remains higher than it has been for most of the past decade, the Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that it needs \$15 million in additional funding each year just to meet increased operating costs. Since 2001, funding for the Refuge System has increased from \$300 million to \$383 million in FY 2006, an overall increase of \$83 million, or 28 percent. Despite this, continued increases in salaries and benefit costs, energy, and other uncontrollable inflationary costs continue to erode base funding for resource management and public use programs throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System.

With continued base erosion in the foreseeable future, and with increasing public demand for government efficiency, the Service is examining all aspects of its operations from top to bottom in order to ensure that our limited resources are effectively used to accomplish our mission.

Pacific Region

In November 2004, the Pacific Region's National Wildlife Refuge System program conducted a budget analysis of its 64 national wildlife refuges located in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, and the Pacific Islands. The results illustrated that over 90 percent of field stations' budgets were encumbered by salary costs, and that by 2012 salary costs would comprise

over 95 percent of the refuge budgets, leaving little to no resource management funding available to operate the refuges.

Management Efficiencies

Since 2004, the Pacific Region has taken a proactive approach to deal with rising costs in an era of base budget erosion. To avoid this financial crisis, we have:

- 1) Implemented "base budgeting" in order to monitor and adjust operations as costs rise;
- 2) Researched ways to improve operational efficiencies by unifying management of refuges in close proximity to one another, and/or for ecologically similar refuges (known as refuge complexes)
- 3) Reviewed the viability of zones for certain functions (e.g., fire management and maintenance); and
- 4) Established service centers for administrative functions.

The National Wildlife Refuge System has set a minimum goal of an operating budget margin of 80 percent for salaries and benefits, and 20 percent to support management capabilities. In the

Pacific Region, the 20 percent management capability goal is insufficient to cover rising fixed operating employee development, and other management costs. Over the five year planning period ending in FY 2009, the Pacific Region will have reduced nearly \$3.2 million. Our goal is an operational budget ratio of 75% for salaries and benefits to 25% for management capability at refuges in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington; and a ratio of 65% to 35% for Pacific Island Refuges. These targets, however, do not account for other rising costs such as fuel, herbicides, and fertilizers. Additional management actions necessary in order to cut costs and become even more efficient, may include: the creation of service centers for administrative functions; the creation of "zones" for fire management, maintenance, and law enforcement functions; and unified management for refuges in close proximity and/or for ecologically similar individual refuges, known as refuge complexes.

Personnel and Operational Costs

The Region's refuges, if fully staffed, would have 251 refuge field positions, but over the past two years a combination of 32 permanent and tempo-

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is at a crossroads. To continue the agency's proud tradition of national conservation leadership, we must act decisively and with a clear vision for the future. In the short term, we must prepare for tighter budgets. In the long term, we must position ourselves to maintain strong core functions essential to accomplishing our mission."

Dale Hall, Director
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

rary positions have been left vacant. An additional 17.5 refuge positions will need to be vacated over the course of the next three years in order to ensure sufficient operating funds are available to conduct priority on-the-ground resource management projects. The positions held vacant will occur in each of the four states in the Pacific Region. Refuges in the state of Idaho will leave 8 vacancies; Oregon will leave 10 vacancies; the Pacific Islands will leave 5.5 vacancies; and Washington will leave 26 positions vacant for a total of 49.5 positions.

These proposed management changes will affect employees over the next few years. Some employees are currently occupying positions that have been identified for future elimination. Regional managers are committed to finding other career opportunities for employees in those positions. Some attrition in the workforce will occur through retirements, transfers, and possible incentive programs, allowing regional managers some flexibility to manage positions and vacancies for mutually satisfactory solutions. Employees are encouraged to move voluntarily into the remaining positions, but directed reassignment may be used if necessary to implement the new organizational plan.

What it Means on the Ground

With reductions in staff, refuges will not be able to maintain their current level of fish and wildlife management activities or provide the same level of public use opportunities. Overall impacts to the Pacific Region Refuge programs include:

approximately 20 biological monitoring activities that will be reduced or stopped; over 30 invasive species control activities will be reduced or stopped; 9 wetland restoration projects that will be reduced or stopped; 15 interpretive/environmental education opportunities that will be reduced or stopped; reduction in partnerships and cooperative activities with other entities; and a reduction of public interaction and uses.

Workforce Planning

These workforce planning efforts will be re-evaluated on an annual basis in order to manage our fiscal resources even more efficiently. Any budget increases will be directed to focus refuges, which have been strategically targeted to be fully supported. However, any potential budget decreases will be shared by all refuges including the focus refuges.

The Region appreciates the significant support of its Friends Groups, volunteers, members of Congress, refuge system supporters, and other partners in conservation as we manage through the workforce plan.

While these are challenging times, Refuge managers and staff across the National Wildlife Refuge System have a long tradition of remarkable conservation accomplishments under difficult conditions. The Service leadership strongly supports the conservation mission of the Refuge System and the men and women in the field who deliver it.



Total Staff Reductions by State FY 2005-2009

(-49.5 Positions = +\$3.2M for Management Capability)

<p>Idaho</p> <p>Number of Refuges: 7 Total Number of Positions: 28</p> <p>Percentage of Workforce Reduced in State: -29% (8/28)</p> <p>The 8 position reductions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Staff: -4 Positions Maintenance Staff: -3 Positions Administrative Staff: -1 Position 	<p>Oregon</p> <p>Number of Refuges: 15 Total Number of Positions: 57</p> <p>Percentage of Workforce Reduced in State: -18% (10/57)</p> <p>The 10 position reductions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Staff: -1 Position Biological Staff: -4 Positions Maintenance Staff: -4 Positions Administrative Staff: -1 Position
<p>Pacific Islands</p> <p>Number of Refuges: 20 Total Number of Positions: 73</p> <p>Percentage of Workforce Reduced in State: -8% (5.5/73)</p> <p>The 5.5 position reductions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Staff: -1.5 Positions Biological Staff: -1 Position Maintenance Staff: -1 Position Administrative Staff: -2 Positions 	<p>Washington</p> <p>Number of Refuges: 22 Total Number of Positions: 93</p> <p>Percentage of Workforce Reduced in State: -28% (26/93)</p> <p>The 26 position reductions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Staff: -5 Positions Public Use Staff: -2 Positions Biological Staff: -6 Positions Maintenance Staff: -7 Positions Administrative Staff: -6 Positions

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