

Urban Wildlife Conservation Program

National Wildlife Refuge System: Overview

PURPOSE: To garner broad support for conservation, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife service must provide a reason, and opportunities, for urban residents to find, appreciate, and care for nature in their cities and beyond. Therefore, engaging our urban neighbors, and fostering a sense of stewardship, reflects the heart of the urban wildlife conservation program.

STRATEGY: We will accomplish this with two approaches: 1.) Implement the Standards of Excellence at priority URBAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES and 2.) Create a community presence where we are not with URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGE PARTNERSHIPS.

URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGES: Urban areas present a strategic opportunity to reach new audiences that are currently not visiting nor aware of the Service. Refuges that are in the heart of where the people are located provide the best opportunity to engage new audiences. Building this constituency ultimately benefits the entire System and the broader conservation community by nurturing new supporters who care.

STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE:

- 1.) *Know and Relate to the Community*
- 2.) *Connect Urban People with Nature via Stepping Stones of Engagement*
- 3.) *Build Partnerships*
- 4.) *Be a Community Asset*
- 5.) *Ensure Adequate Long-Term Resources*
- 6.) *Provide Equitable Access*
- 7.) *Ensure Visitors Feel Safe and Welcome*
- 8.) *Model Sustainability*

REGIONAL PRIORITY URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGES:

Within a 25-mile distance from populations of 250,000+

- 1.) *Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (Region 8)*
- 2.) *San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Region 8)*
SOCAL URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGE PROJECT: San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex received an additional \$1 million in base funding starting in 2014 to reach new audiences and engage Southern California urban communities and youth in conservation and outdoor recreation.
- 3.) *Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (Region 6)*
- 4.) *Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (Region 6)*
- 5.) *John Heinz at Tinicum National Wildlife Refuge (Region 5)*
- 6.) *Patuxent Research Refuge (Region 5)*
- 7.) *Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge (Region 4)*
- 8.) *Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge (Region 4)*
- 9.) *Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Region 3)*
- 10.) *Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (Region 3)*
- 11.) *Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (Region 2)*
- 12.) *South Texas National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Region 2)*
- 13.) *Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge (Region 1)*
PORTLAND-VANCOUVER URBAN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PROGRAM: The four refuges in the Portland-Vancouver area have received an additional \$1 million in base funding starting in 2015. The Urban Wildlife Conservation Program is a long-term investment of effort, passion, people and dollars in the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Area to ensure that the sustainable treatment of our shared natural resources, for the benefit of people and wildlife, becomes an intrinsic value across the entire community.
- 14.) *Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge (Region 1)*

URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGE PARTNERSHIPS: These partnerships are long-term, place-based partnerships that engage urban communities in conservation on lands that the Service does not own or govern. These lands are located within the community for easy access by residents, and are owned or managed by local non-profits, municipalities, or community groups. The partnerships involve residents in place-based, outdoor experiences that foster connections with fish, wildlife and their habitats. Any Service office may develop an Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership.

PROPOSALS:

The first round of proposal applications were submitted to the Urban Implementation Team in 2013 and eight were selected. In 2014, the proposal applications were submitted to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) through the FIVE STAR AND URBAN WATERS RESTORATION PROGRAM and six new ones were selected. The third round was open through NFWF and closed in February 2015, with three new partnerships announced in July 2015. With the fourth round, four new partnerships were announced in 2016. A new round of proposals will be due no later than February 2017.

BENEFITS:

Partners are funded through FWS and benefit through affiliation with FWS and the credibility of the FWS name, as well as our resource expertise. The benefits to us are likewise leveraged funding from the partners, their connections in the community, and their social expertise. Collaboration is key – no one has to try to do it all or do it alone.

CRITERIA:

In making selection and funding decisions, we look at the following criteria:

- The partnership effort will be “visible” and targeted to reach urban populations, to connect urban residents with nature, and to enhance awareness of the Service’s role/mission. The Service will work with key partners in the community that can influence and help set the stage for developing a conservation constituency,
- Existing partnership opportunities and matching resources are available. Service participation is value-added and needed to support a conservation effort with wildlife benefits,
- The partnership will be sustainable; both by the Service and partners, and the Service can act as a catalyst for change and nurture long-term stability and support,
- and the partnership will support other Refuge System *Conserving the Future* recommendations or other Service priorities.

REGIONAL PRIORITY URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGES:

- 1.) *New Haven Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (New Haven, CT)*
- 2.) *Forest Preserves of Cook County Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (Chicago, IL)*
- 3.) *Houston Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (Houston, TX)*
- 4.) *Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (Providence, RI)*
- 5.) *Lake Sammamish Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (Seattle, WA)*
- 6.) *Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (Baltimore, MD)*
- 7.) *L.A. River Rover Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (Los Angeles, CA)*
- 8.) *Valle de Oro Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (Albuquerque, NM)*
- 9.) *Condor Kids (Santa Barbara, CA)*
- 10.) *Wallkill Connection: Fostering Urban River Stewards (Yonkers, NY)*
- 11.) *Habitat Is Where It’s At (New Orleans, LA)*
- 12.) *Community Greening and Restoration Project (Denver, CO)*
- 13.) *PSJA, Preserving for Future Generations (Pharr/San Juan/Alamo, TX)*
- 14.) *Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship (NESt) (Philadelphia, PA)*
- 15.) *South Fork Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (Atlanta, GA)*
- 16.) *Anchorage Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (Anchorage, AK)*
- 17.) *Springfield Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (Springfield, MA)*
- 18.) *Apple Snail Adoption Partnership (ASAP) (West Palm Beach, FL)*
- 19.) *Mill Creek Healthy People/Healthy River Partnership (Cincinnati, OH)*
- 20.) *Greenway Renewal Project (Elizabeth, NJ)*
- 21.) *Canoemobile (Twin Cities, MN)*

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR PRIORITIES: The Department is developing an urban agenda that focuses on engaging youth and providing outdoor recreation opportunities in cities, with a focus on five priority cities to be determined. Secretary Jewell also issued a Secretary's Order on Engaging the Next Generation in March 2014. Both efforts will build upon the efforts already operating in DOI bureaus, such as the Urban Wildlife Refuge Program, and pursue a comprehensive strategy to involve millions of young people to play, learn, serve and work outdoors. Specifically the Order's goals are:

- **PLAY:** Develop and/or enhance outdoor recreation partnerships in 50 cities over the next four years to create new, systemic opportunities for outdoor play for more than 10 million young people.
- **LEARN:** Provide educational opportunities to at least 10 million of the nation's K- 12 student population annually. In addition to welcoming students into nature's classroom, we are developing and strengthening new online education resources to reach more students.
- **SERVE:** Engage one million volunteers annually on public lands, effectively tripling the numbers currently within the DOI. In order to achieve the volunteer goal, we will place a renewed emphasis on volunteer coordination and management.
- **WORK:** Develop the next generation of lifelong conservation stewards and ensure our own skilled and diverse workforce. DOI will provide 100,000 work and training opportunities to young people within its bureaus and through public- private partnerships.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE PRIORITIES: *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* challenges us to enhance the relevance of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to a rapidly changing America. Building a connected conservation constituency requires connecting with the ever- growing urban population in order to ensure that Americans care about conservation. With over 80% of Americans living in urban areas, spending less time outdoors, and becoming more ethnically and racially diverse; our challenge is to become relevant in their daily lives. Without public awareness and support, our conservation mission will not succeed. The Urban Wildlife Refuge Program was developed to address recommendation 13 in *Conserving the Future*.

"Create an urban refuge initiative that defines excellence in our existing urban refuges, establishes the framework for creating new urban refuge partnerships and implements a refuge presence in 10 demographically and geographically varied cities across America by 2015."

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