

### National Wildlife Refuge System

National Wildlife Refuge System Operations and Maintenance	FY 2005 Actual <sup>1</sup>	FY 2006 Enacted	FY 2007			Change From 2006 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs & Related Changes (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Wildlife and Habitat Management	\$(000) [141,766]	146,819	+2,294	-998	148,115	+1,296
	FTE [1,410]	1,414	-	-	1,414	-
Visitor Services	\$(000) [62,805]	62,033	+1,041	+2,210	65,284	+3,251
	FTE [697]	700	-	-	700	-
Refuge Law Enforcement	\$(000) [25,266]	27,124	+283	-1,097	26,310	-814
	FTE [169]	179	-	-	179	-
Conservation Planning	\$(000) [13,131]	13,060	+223	-2,985	10,298	-2,762
	FTE [76]	67	-	-	67	-
<b>Subtotal, Refuge Operations</b>	<b>\$(000) [242,968]</b>	<b>249,036</b>	<b>+3,841</b>	<b>-2,870</b>	<b>250,007</b>	<b>+971</b>
	<b>FTE [2,352]</b>	<b>2,360</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,360</b>	<b>-</b>
Refuge Maintenance	\$(000) [132,785]	133,465	+1,060	-2,794	131,731	-1,734
	FTE [661]	663	-	-	663	-
User-Pay Cost Share (included above)	\$(000) [196]	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total, Refuge Operations &amp; Maintenance</b>	<b>\$(000) [375,753]</b>	<b>382,501</b>	<b>+4,901</b>	<b>-5,664</b>	<b>381,738</b>	<b>-763</b>
	<b>FTE [3,013]</b>	<b>3,023</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,023</b>	<b>-</b>

<sup>1</sup>Congress approved a new budget structure for the National Wildlife Refuge System beginning in FY 2006. FY 2005 funding and FTE are shown here in the new budget structure for comparison purposes only, and do not reflect actual expenditures in the new budget structure.

### Summary of FY 2007 Program Changes for National Wildlife Refuge System Operations and Maintenance

Request Component	Amount	FTE
Program Changes		
• Wildlife and Habitat Management General Operations	+1,488	0
• Wildlife and Habitat Management Challenge Cost Share Partnerships	+2,402	0
• Spartina at Willapa NWR	-1,379	0
• Invasives with Friends	-985	0
• Minimum Staffing	-1,971	0
• Wildlife and Habitat Management Program Savings	-553	0
• Refuge Visitor Services	+1,388	0
• Visitor Facility Enhancements	-985	0
• Visitor Services Challenge Cost Share	+1,876	0
• Visitor Services Program Management Savings	-69	0
• Refuge Law Enforcement General Operations	-1,067	0
• Refuge Law Enforcement Program Savings	-30	0
• Conservation Planning, Refuge Planning	-137	0

• Comprehensive Conservation Plans	-2,833	0
<b>Request Component</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>FTE</b>
• Conservation Planning Program Savings	-15	0
<b>Total Program Changes, Refuge Operations</b>	<b>-2,870</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Refuge Maintenance:</b>		
• Equipment Replacement	-396	0
• Heavy Equipment Replacement	-937	0
• Deferred Maintenance – Projects	-1,237	0
• Program Management Savings	-224	0
<b>Total Program Changes, Refuge Maintenance</b>	<b>-2,794</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Related Program Changes in other Accounts<sup>1</sup></b>		
• Refuge Construction Projects	-20,659	0
• Refuge Land Acquisition	+178	-5
• Add Sites, Refuge Recreation Fee Program	+550	0
<b>TOTAL, Program and Related Account Changes for Refuge Operations and Maintenance</b>	<b>-25,595</b>	<b>-5</b>

### National Wildlife Refuge System Overview

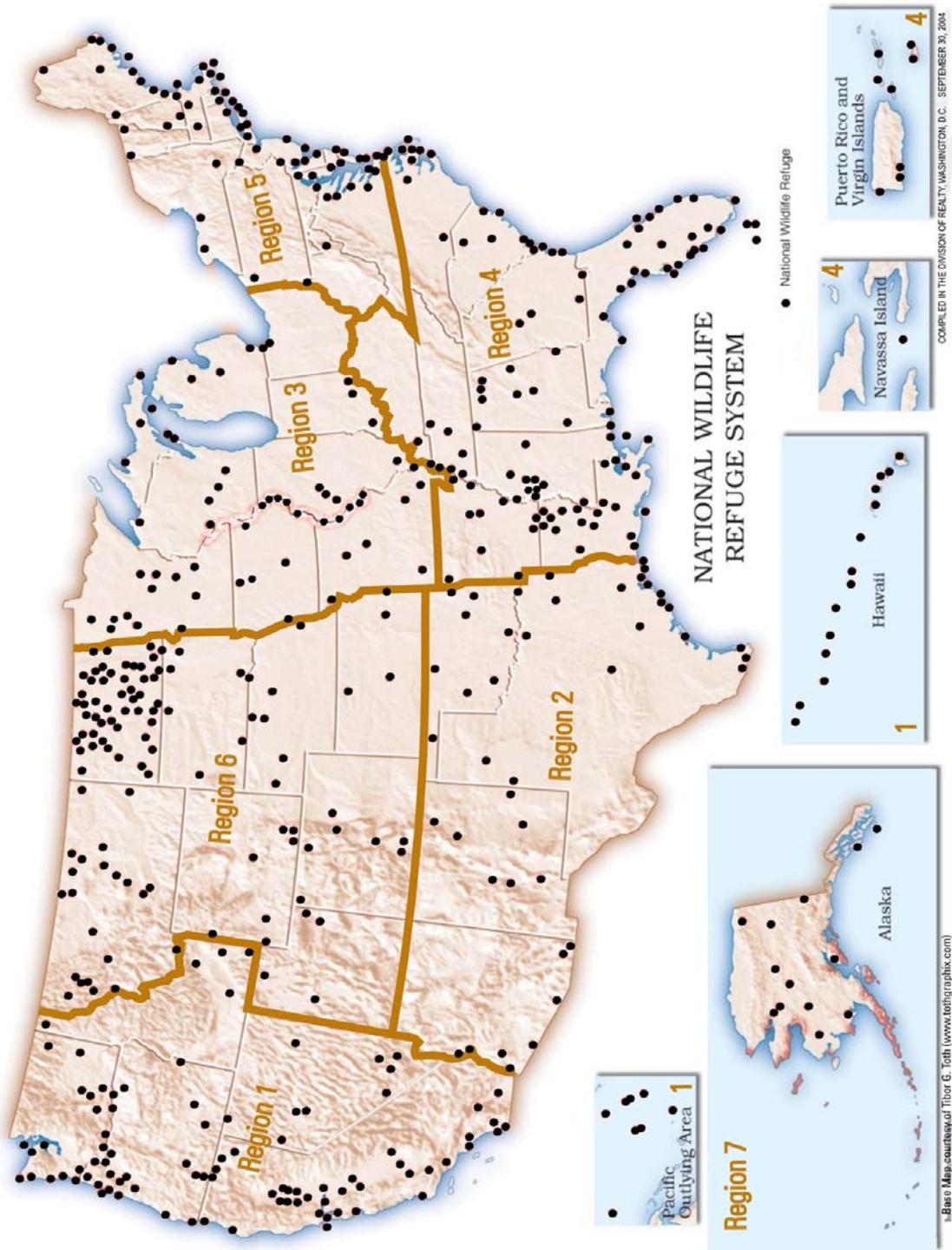
The Fish and Wildlife Service’s 96 million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System (refuge system) is considered by many to be our nation’s foremost commitment to conserving wildlife and biological diversity. The 545 refuges range from the tiny half-acre Mille Lacs Refuge, encompassing two rocky islands in Minnesota’s Lake Mille Lacs, to the massive Arctic Refuge spanning 19.6 million acres of boreal forest, tundra and estuary in Alaska. The refuge system also encompasses 1.4 million acres managed under easement, agreement or lease, including 37 wetland management districts and 50 wildlife coordination areas. Thus, the refuge system uses a variety of tools and legal arrangements to protect our nation’s fish and wildlife.

Passage of the Refuge Improvement Act in 1997, for the first time, provided the refuge system with a clear comprehensive mission, which is:

“...to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”

The Service’s refuge system fulfills its mission through the management of activities in five major areas – Refuge Operations (including Wildlife and Habitat Management, Visitor Services, Refuge Law Enforcement, and Conservation Planning) and Refuge Maintenance. Through these sub-activities, the refuge system monitors, restores, and protects wildlife and habitat, maintains facilities, supports wildlife-dependent recreation, and conducts other activities to achieve strategic goals. Each of these activities appeals to strategic and end outcome goals articulated in the DOI Strategic Plan, including:

<sup>1</sup> Does not include FY 2006 supplemental construction funding for refuges.



**Resource Protection:**

- *Goal 1* - Improve Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources that are DOI Managed or Influenced in a Manner Consistent with Obligations Regarding the Allocation and Use of Water
- *Goal 2* - Sustain Biological Communities on DOI Managed and Influenced Lands and Waters in a Manner Consistent with Obligations Regarding the Allocation and Use of Water
- *Goal 3* - Protect Cultural and Natural Heritage Resources

**Recreation:**

- *Goal 1* - Provide for a Quality Recreation Experience, including Access, and Enjoyment of Natural and Cultural Resources on DOI Managed and Partnered Lands and Waters
- *Goal 2* - Provide For and Receive Fair Value in Recreation

**Serving Communities:**

- *Goal 1* - Protect Lives, Resources and Property

The refuge system's programs support Service goals for resource conservation, protection, recreation, and service to communities. The refuge system is also proud to work with other Federal agencies to conduct vital conservation projects to achieve these goals. For example, the Service is working with the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct ongoing biological monitoring of wildlife populations and habitat to improve refuge management.

**Management Improvements**

In recent years, the refuge system has taken steps to deliver its mission in a performance-driven manner, as directed by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and the President's Management Agenda (PMA). These steps have included embracing strategic planning from the Department of Interior and Fish and Wildlife Service levels, distilling and focusing on the products Americans expect from the refuge system, and implementing budget and performance systems that enable prudent management. The net result is a refuge system that effectively delivers the services expected by the American public, and does so with an efficiency and performance-minded organizational culture.

In the Administration's review of the refuge system using the Program Assessment and Rating Tool, the refuge system scored well on its purpose and mission, reasonably well on its ability to manage programs, but poorly on its strategic planning and demonstration of results. In response to these scores, the refuge system has written its own draft strategic plan and linked it to a budget-centered annual performance planning system. The draft refuge system Strategic Plan steps down directly from the DOI Strategic Plan and the Service Operational Plan, thus maintaining lines of accountability throughout all levels. The Refuge System Strategic Plan is built on 12 primary goals:

1. Conserve, manage, and where appropriate, restore fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats to fulfill refuge purposes, trust resource responsibilities, and biological diversity/integrity;
2. Provide quality environments with adequate water;
3. Ensure that unique values of wilderness, other special designation areas, and cultural resources are protected;
4. Welcome and orient visitors;
5. Provide quality wildlife-dependent recreation and education opportunities. Volunteers, friends, and conservation partners actively contribute to refuge system mission;

6. Facilitate partnerships and cooperative projects;
7. Protect resources and visitors through law enforcement;
8. Provide infrastructure and equipment adequate to support mission and maintained in good condition;
9. Completed quality and useful comprehensive conservation plans are completed on schedule and with full engagement of partners;
10. Strategically manage a refuge system of appropriate size and quality to conserve fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for present and future generations;
11. Reduce wildfire risks and improve habitats; and,
12. Pursue organizational excellence.

The Refuge System Strategic Plan further refines each of these goals into a collection of performance measures designed to provide meaningful data to guide refuge managers in improving operations.

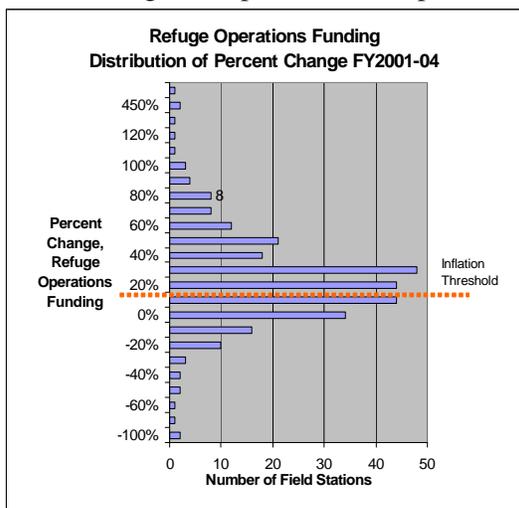
The refuge system has incorporated these measures into its performance planning system, known as the RAPP (Refuge Annual Performance Planning) system. Managers must enter the performance numbers for their refuge(s) into the RAPP, first in a “planning” phase at the beginning of each fiscal year when they receive their budget, and again in an “actuals” phase at the end of the fiscal year after they have executed their budget with resulting accomplishments. In this manner, the RAPP reinforces the connection between budget and performance. The performance numbers accumulate regionally and nationally, flowing into higher levels of reporting within the Service Operational Plan and DOI Performance and Accountability Report.

The refuge system has built other features into the RAPP. For example, before entering performance numbers in the RAPP, managers must first develop the numbers in a workbook that also helps them plan their work for the coming year. This helps clarify the relationship between a refuge’s high priority work, and how that work translates into performance measures. Managers must submit their completed workbooks to their regional supervisors and simultaneously enter their performance numbers into the electronic system. Thus, refuge supervisors see not only the raw performance numbers, but also have a description of the priority work that will generate that performance. To formalize that review process, the electronic portion of RAPP (which accumulates and tracks the performance numbers) is deployed through software that not only allows review, but also requires either formal acceptance or rejection of performance numbers at all levels within the organization. By developing RAPP, the refuge system has taken a tremendous step towards correcting shortcomings identified in its PART review and addressed budget and performance integration - a primary element of the PMA.

The refuge system took another significant step to address budget and performance integration by restructuring the Refuge Operations subactivity into four new sub-activities directly aligned with the products expected of the refuge system. These new sub-activities include Wildlife and Habitat Management, Visitor Services, Refuge Law Enforcement, and Conservation Planning. The refuge system has also realigned maintenance funds between Refuge Operations and the Facilities and Equipment Maintenance sub-activity. This restructuring clarifies the relationship between budget development, staffing choices, and performance delivery, again reinforcing the integration of budget and performance. It also organizes Refuge Operations and Maintenance similar to other activity areas in the refuge system, which are managed under individual or families of accounts such as land acquisition (both the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Migratory Bird Conservation Act Fund), fire management, construction, and transportation funds (i.e. the Refuge Roads Program). The refuge system manages all funding resources to maximize the accomplishment of its mission and strategic goals by using the various accounts in

a coordinated fashion within refuges and with conservation partners. The new budget structure was first implemented in FY 2006, and further refinements of the budget structure are planned over the next few years.

In addition to budget and performance integration, improved financial management has been a key focus for the refuge system. The refuge system developed a Budget Allocation Handbook and used it for the first time to distribute funds in FY 2005. The Handbook summarizes for all Refuge accounts, funding authorization, purpose, guidance, allocation formulae, and reporting requirements. An analysis of funding and staffing patterns was also completed on the refuge system to characterize distribution of staff and funds from FY 2001 to FY 2004 between field, regional and national offices. For example, it was determined that in FY 2004, field offices held 82% of refuge staff positions and spent 77% of Refuge Operations and Maintenance funds. The



study also revealed that for the 287 refuges examined (see figure):

1. Field station operational budgets rose by 30% overall between 2001 and 2004,
2. Stations receiving large funding increases are newly established refuges,
3. 201 field stations saw an increase in operations funding above inflation (an inflation threshold was calculated from estimated increases for payroll and goods and services), and
4. Eighty-six stations had a flat or declining operations budget after factoring in inflationary costs.

The refuge system will use this analysis as a tool to understand the impacts of funding and cost changes, and in developing strategies, such as

workforce planning, to inform management decisions.

Strategic Management of Human Capital and Competitive Sourcing are two other primary elements of the PMA that the refuge system has advanced. Through a comprehensive workforce planning exercise, the refuge system is developing a plan for strategically managing its human capital, which amounts to approximately 1,414 full-time equivalents (FTE). To date, the foremost products have been a collection of staffing models that quantify workload for individual refuges and a region-by-region assessment of the efficiency strategies used to deploy the current workforce. Following decisions on broader Service-wide workforce planning issues, the refuge system will be ready to develop and implement its own business rules for deploying its workforce most efficiently. The workforce planning efforts of the refuge system also stages well for Competitive Sourcing studies, helping to define support areas that could be commercially obtained.

The final element of the PMA that the refuge system has made significant headway with is Expanded Electronic Government. Not only have significant advances been made internally with this initiative, such as deploying the RAPP (described above) and completing the digitization of all refuge system boundaries and lands status, but advances have also come externally. For example, the agency-published *Your Guide to Fishing on National Wildlife Refuges*, was adapted from a hardcopy book to an internet-based version, thus allowing the public to locate fishing opportunities online. Similarly, systems were established allowing the public to track and participate in the development of refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans over the internet.

### ***Use of Cost and Performance Information***

**Wildlife and Habitat Management:** For twelve years, the Refuge System has been promoting adaptive management in its biological program. Field biologists are encouraged to track the success of their management actions and adapt them accordingly through specialized training and policies on habitat management planning, setting objectives, monitoring, and program evaluation. This effort is coming to fruition in places like Turnbull NWR (Washington), where a ponderosa pine restoration project has been built around management actions like forest thinning and prescribed burns, monitoring, and annual evaluations. Laguna Cartagena Refuge (Puerto Rico) is also using annual evaluations to assess restoration achievements and adjust performance to accomplish 10 to 20-year objectives, including restoring an open-water lagoon that was previously a highly important waterfowl breeding habitat. The adaptive process allows refuges to set clear objectives, and use evaluations and feedback to improve the timing and degree of management activities, to increase long-term habitat benefits, and focus management actions.

**Refuge Maintenance:** The refuge system maintains \$16 billion in facilities and other real property. The Facility Condition Index (FCI), a measure of the ratio of repair and replacement costs for each asset, is used to prioritize the use of maintenance funding. The refuge system continues to prioritize maintenance needs through improved data that underlies development of five-year budget plans, including the FCI, which is a key measure for the program and the DOI Strategic Plan. The FCI for facilities entered in the database is currently 0.086, which industry standards rate as "fair." The refuge system is combining the FCI with its new Service Asset Maintenance Management System, or SAMMS, to use assessments, facility maintenance histories, and maintenance schedules to improve its FCI average and reduce outyear project costs. The maintenance section of this justification includes metrics for various categories of facility assets.

**Division of Visitor Services:** The Division is responsible for meeting the DOI Strategic Plan's Recreation goals to provide a quality recreation experience and opportunities for sharing stewardship. During FY 2005, the refuge system provided quality recreational experiences to 40 million Americans by focusing recreation dollars and staff on the six priority uses (wildlife photography, wildlife observation, environmental education, interpretation, hunting and fishing). The Division surveyed Visitor Satisfaction at more than 50 refuges. Survey results show that 95% of respondents were satisfied with the recreational and educational opportunities, and of the visitors who paid a fee, 92% agreed that the fee was appropriate. The survey is conducted every other year and is used to assess performance and modify recreation programs to meet customer preferences.

**Refuge Law Enforcement:** During fiscal year 2005, the Division of Refuge Law Enforcement, in cooperation with the International Association of Chiefs of Police, developed the Law Enforcement Deployment (LEAD) model. The LEAD model, based on workload factors and staffing levels, identifies the necessary number of full-time equivalent positions based on factors such as refuge size, number of visitors/users, specific law enforcement activities, number of endangered/threatened species enforcement actions, and easement enforcement. The model shows the recommended level of officers for each refuge according to workload priorities. Development of the LEAD model allows the refuge system to align its performance with workload demands by deploying personnel to the areas of greatest need.

***Use of Cost and Performance Information, continued***

**Conservation Planning:** The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act directed the Service to complete Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs) for its 554 units, including 517 refuges and 37 wetland management districts, by 2012. The end of FY 2005 marked the eighth year of this 15-year planning window. In essence, 53% of the planning window has elapsed but only 22.4% (124) of the units have completed CCPs. Through FY 2005, the average cost of producing these plans was relatively high and generally exceeded \$400,000 per CCP. The refuge system has examined the program, identified potential bottlenecks, and made some recommendations to streamline the process of CCP development (described in the Conservation Planning section). Based on this analysis, the refuge system will review the CCP process during FY 2007 to identify ways to enhance the completion rate of CCPs while reducing their cost. By investigating the workload factors and cost drivers, the refuge system will streamline the CCP development process to reduce complexity, clarify responsibilities, and separate land acquisition proposals from CCPs.