

**Director Sam Hamilton**  
***Breaking the Color Barrier in the Great Outdoors Conference***  
**Atlanta, Georgia**  
**September 24, 2009**

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the Federal agency charged with representing the interests of wildlife and wildlife conservation. Its mission is to work with others to conserve, protect and enhance wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.
- A major objective of the agency is to provide the public with opportunities to increase understanding and appreciation of the wise use and conservation of fish and wildlife resources. Key to accomplishing this is public visitation to most of the 550 units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the only public lands in this country set aside solely for the interests of wildlife
- The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, strives to protect endangered species, helps maintain and restore fish populations, conserve and enhance wetlands and other types of vital wildlife habitat, and helps foreign governments with their wildlife conservation efforts. It also manages migratory bird populations and through its Federal Aid program distributes millions of dollars in excise taxes out fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.
- The Refuge System includes 550 units encompassing 150 million acres and in 2008 hosted 41.8 million visitors. The agency supports an extensive information and education effort and visitation by all Americans is viewed as a major means of enhancing the level of understand and appreciation of wildlife management and conservation.
- The agency also operates 69 National Fish Hatcheries, 64 Fishery Resource Offices, and nearly 80 Ecological Services Field Stations. Its employees number approximately 7,500 nationwide.

- Establishment of the Refuge System in 1903 by President Theodore Roosevelt was the first time a system of public lands was dedicated solely for wildlife in the world.
- It is a strong supporter of the “Let’s Go Outside” program, a special effort aimed at getting youngsters in the out of doors. The Service hosts a web site encouraging outdoor activities for youths and conducts training sessions nationwide. It also supports an extensive Youth Conservation Corps effort on Refuges.

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