



June 2013

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative

National Wildlife Refuge System

The Recommendation

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 ten demographically and geographically varied cities across America by 2015.

The Issue

With 80% of Americans living in cities, how do we connect urban America with our wild places, such as national wildlife refuges? How do we teach a new generation to love the land when pavement is what they usually see? How do we help children find inspiration in nature all around them when they spend so much time indoors and plugged in? America will have much of their direct contact with nature while in an urban setting, thereby shaping the nation's conservation values, ethics and priorities, and requiring the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to reach beyond our boundaries. These are the challenges of the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative.

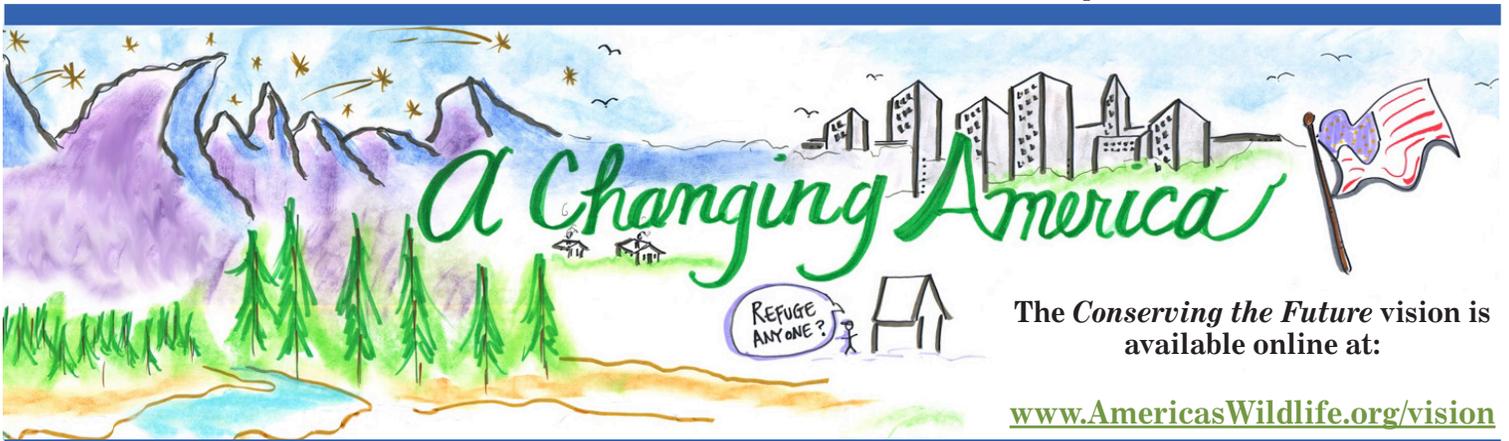
Implementation of Conserving the Future

The Service's vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System, entitled *Conserving the Future*, proposes in Recommendation 13, an Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative that will increase the Service's relevancy to urban citizens. This initiative will establish measures to help define and achieve excellence, create a framework for creating new urban partnerships, and establish a refuge presence in ten demographically and geographically varied cities across the U.S.



The Service's work plan for the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative (Recommendation 13 of *Conserving the Future*) can be downloaded online at www.AmericasWildlife.org/workplans and includes these deliverables:

- **Urban Audience Analysis:** Identify target audiences to evaluate if they understand habitats, behaviors, and barriers to access in urban areas.
- **Standards of Excellence for Urban Refuges:** Develop a set of measurable objectives and standards of excellence for achieving Service goals in urban areas.
- **Urban Partnership Handbook:** Report on new and innovative



The *Conserving the Future* vision is available online at:

www.AmericasWildlife.org/vision

partnership approaches that can provide a presence in urban areas with or without a land base.

- **Urban Academy:** Convene a gathering of urban refuge managers, Service employees, and partners to share and institutionalize the urban standards of excellence, discuss overcoming barriers, and measuring success.

Get Involved

Two years ago, the Service began developing the *Conserving the Future* vision for the Refuge System. Today, with implementation of the vision moving forward, *Conserving the Future* is the perfect avenue for those engaged in protecting wildlife to support the Refuge System.

For regular updates, visit: www.AmericasWildlife.org. There are opportunities for your voice to be heard in the website's social network where draft products will be posted soliciting feedback.

For additional information, contact Anna Harris, Implementation Coordinator, at Anna_Harris@fws.gov or (703) 358-2320.

Updates on Urban Team Progress

Urban Academy: To be held at the National Conservation Training Center, September 23-25, 2013, this is designed for Service staff, Friends, and partners who are working in urban areas. The Academy will provide training on the standards of excellence developed by the Team, model new ways for the Service to develop outreach partnerships urban centers, and share strategies for meaningful engagement with diverse communities, including overcoming barriers. The training will also be available virtually, through live-streaming and recordings, to provide opportunities for remote participants.



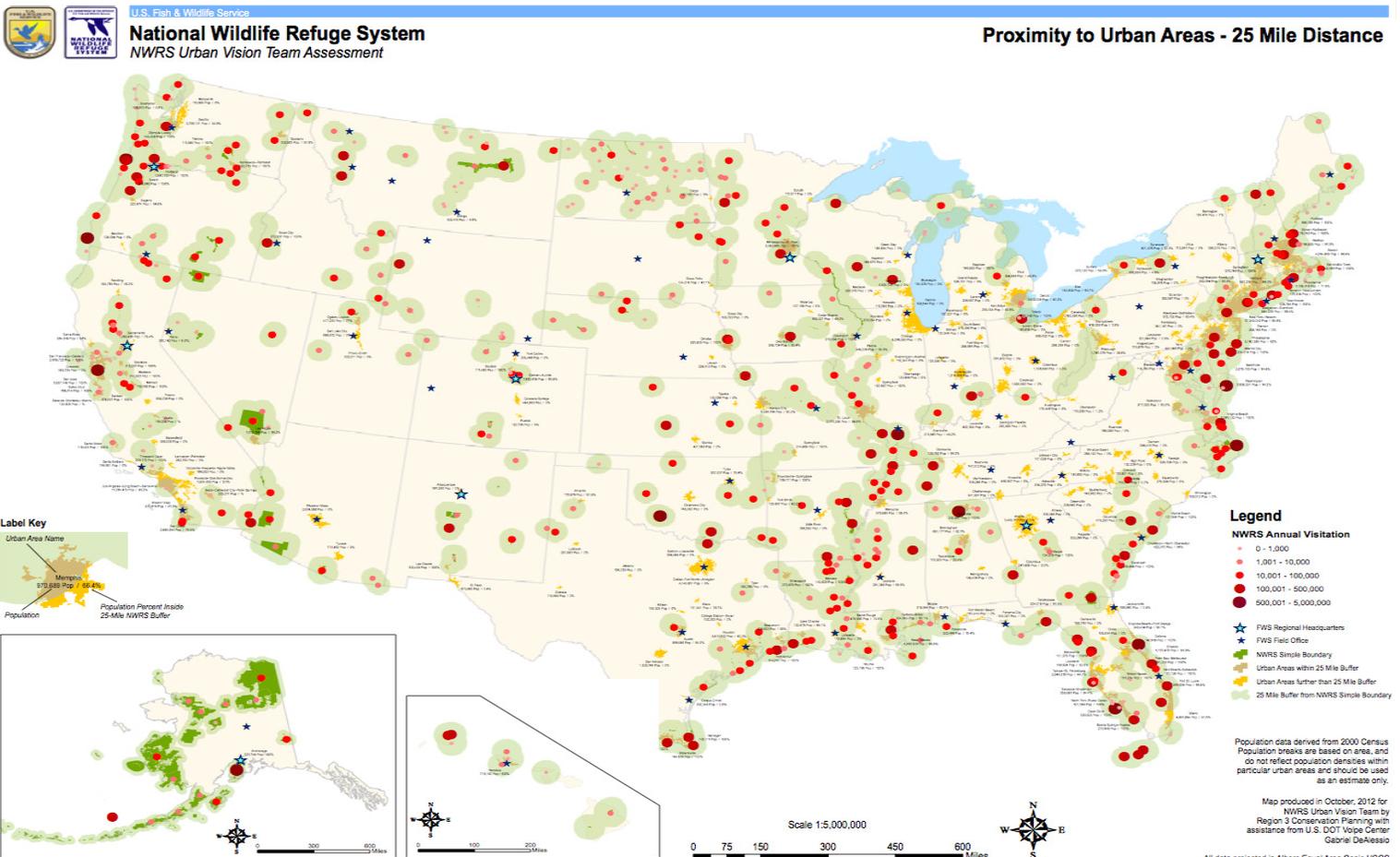
Matt Zinke/USFWS

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

Standards of Excellence: The urban standards of excellence are in the final stages of review and will be available for public review in the summer of 2013 on www.AmericasWildlife.org.

Urban Audience Analysis: The Refuge System's Branch of Human Dimensions will be working with USGS, along with North Carolina State University to conduct focus groups, literature review, and case studies to further the understanding of urban audiences and how to reach them.

Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships: The Urban Team is designating eight "Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships" in demographically and geographically varied cities in 2013, with additional designations to follow by 2015. Through an internal request for proposals, over 60 nominations from the regions and multiple programs were received. The team will formally designate and announce the pilots at the Urban Academy this September 23-25, 2013. These partnerships will engage communities, support wildlife conservation through partnerships, and ultimately nurture a wildlife conservation constituency in urban areas.



Map of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the proximity of refuges to urban areas.