



EXPERIENCE THE  
NATIONAL  
**WILDLIFE**  
REFUGE SYSTEM

# Places Where Wildlife and People Thrive

April 17, 2023 for the Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council  
Cynthia Martinez, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System

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- Partners for Fish and Wildlife
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# America's Best Idea Parks, Forests and **WILDLIFE REFUGES**

## State of the System

It all started in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt founded what is now Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge in Florida.

At 120 years old, the National Wildlife Refuge System is the heart of the federal public lands system and ensures America's wildlife have homes across the country.





# Refuge Purposes

Units of the National Wildlife Refuge System serve a purpose distinct from that of any other public lands.

Wildlife conservation drives the purposes for which each refuge is established, the recreational activities offered, and the resource management tools used.





# 850 million acres of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife conservation

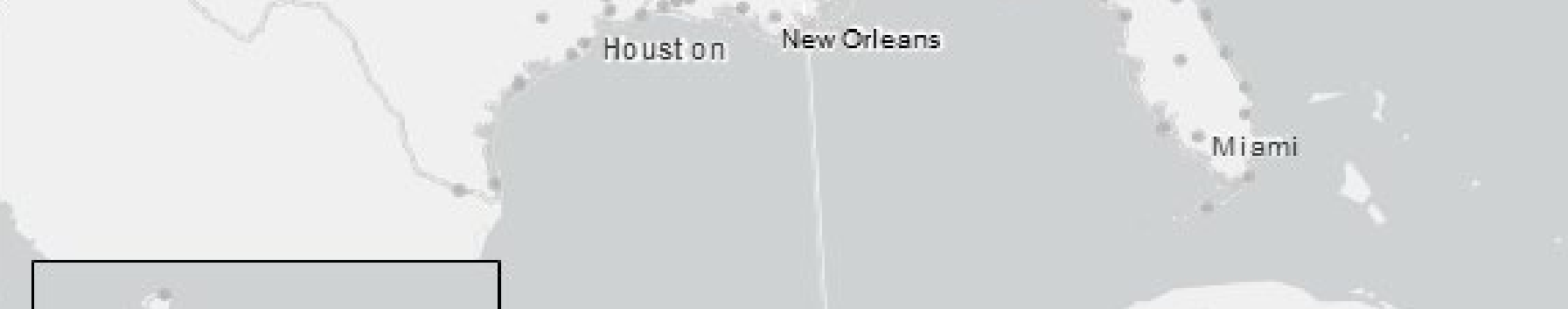


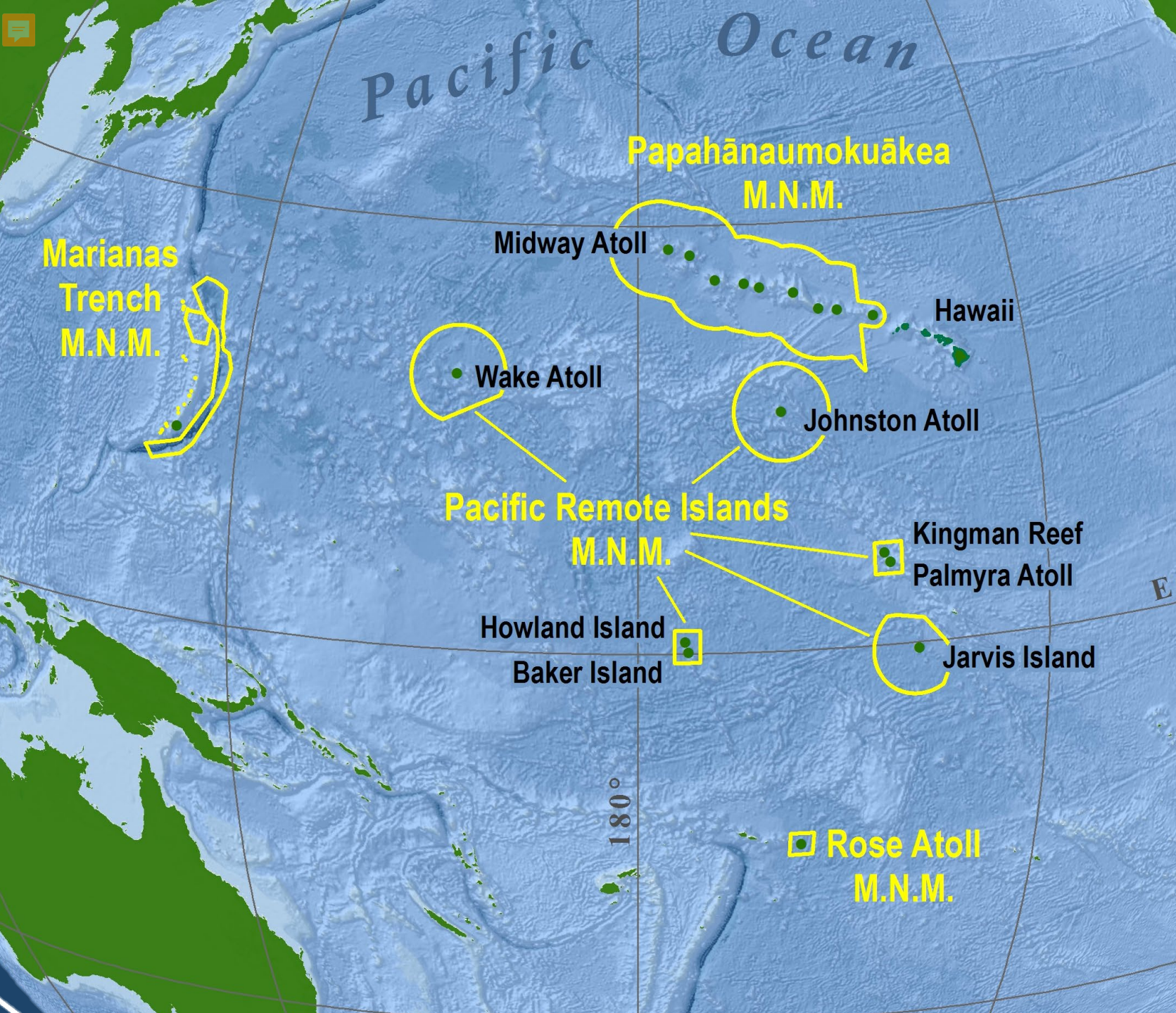
**568**  
National Wildlife  
Refuges

+ **50** States  
+ **5** Territories

**75** Wilderness Areas  
on 64 Refuge System  
Units

**38** Wetland  
Management Districts





**850**

Million Acres  
Submerged Lands  
and Waters

**5**

Marine National  
Monuments

**150+**

Marine Protected  
Areas as Part of a  
Worldwide Effort

# Federal Public Lands

## At a Glance



NPS

18,936 FTE

**\$3.6B** Budget

**85M Acres**



USFS

30,577 FTE

**\$7.0B\*** Budget

**193M Acres**



BLM

9,832 FTE

**\$1.5B** Budget

**245M Acres**



NATIONAL  
**WILDLIFE**  
REFUGE SYSTEM

Wildlife Refuges

2,434 FTE

**\$541M** Budget

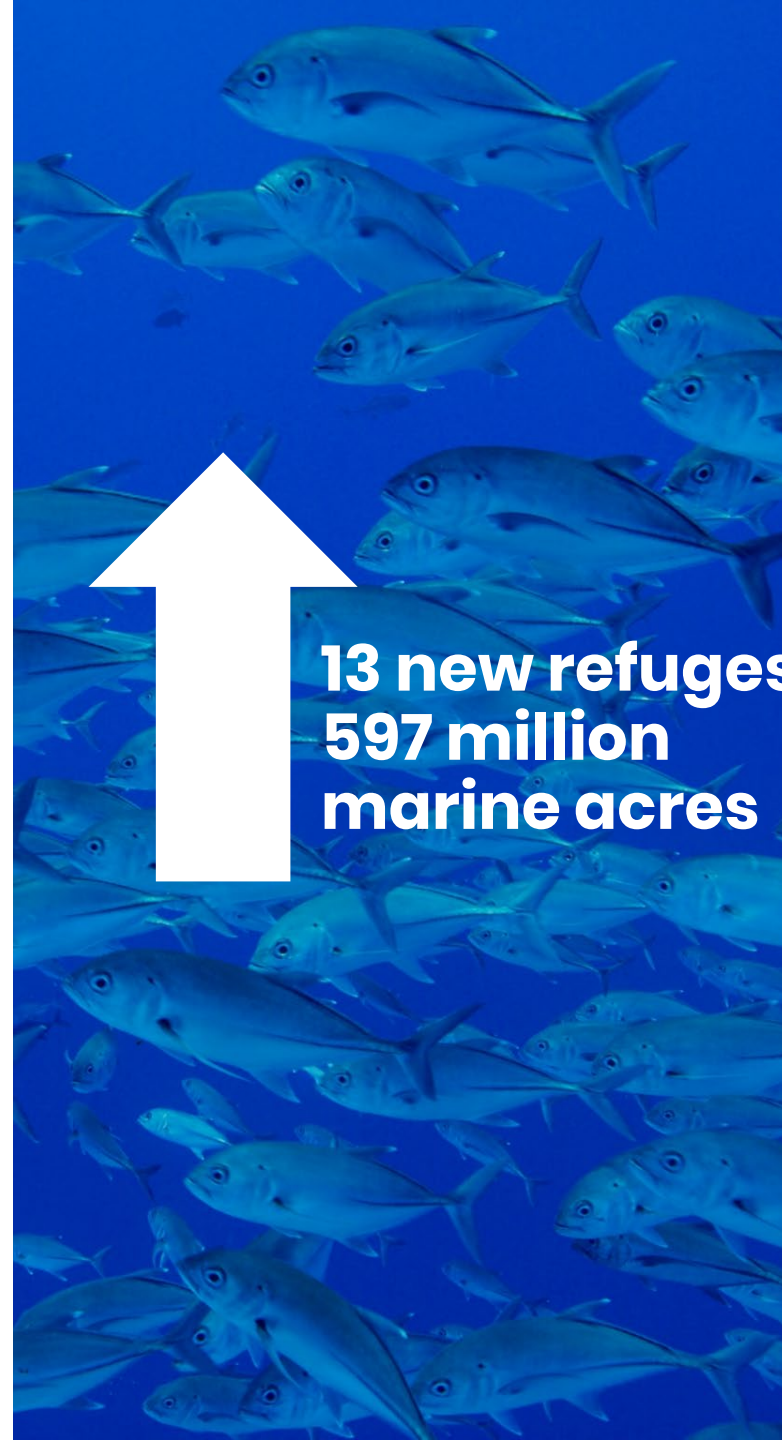
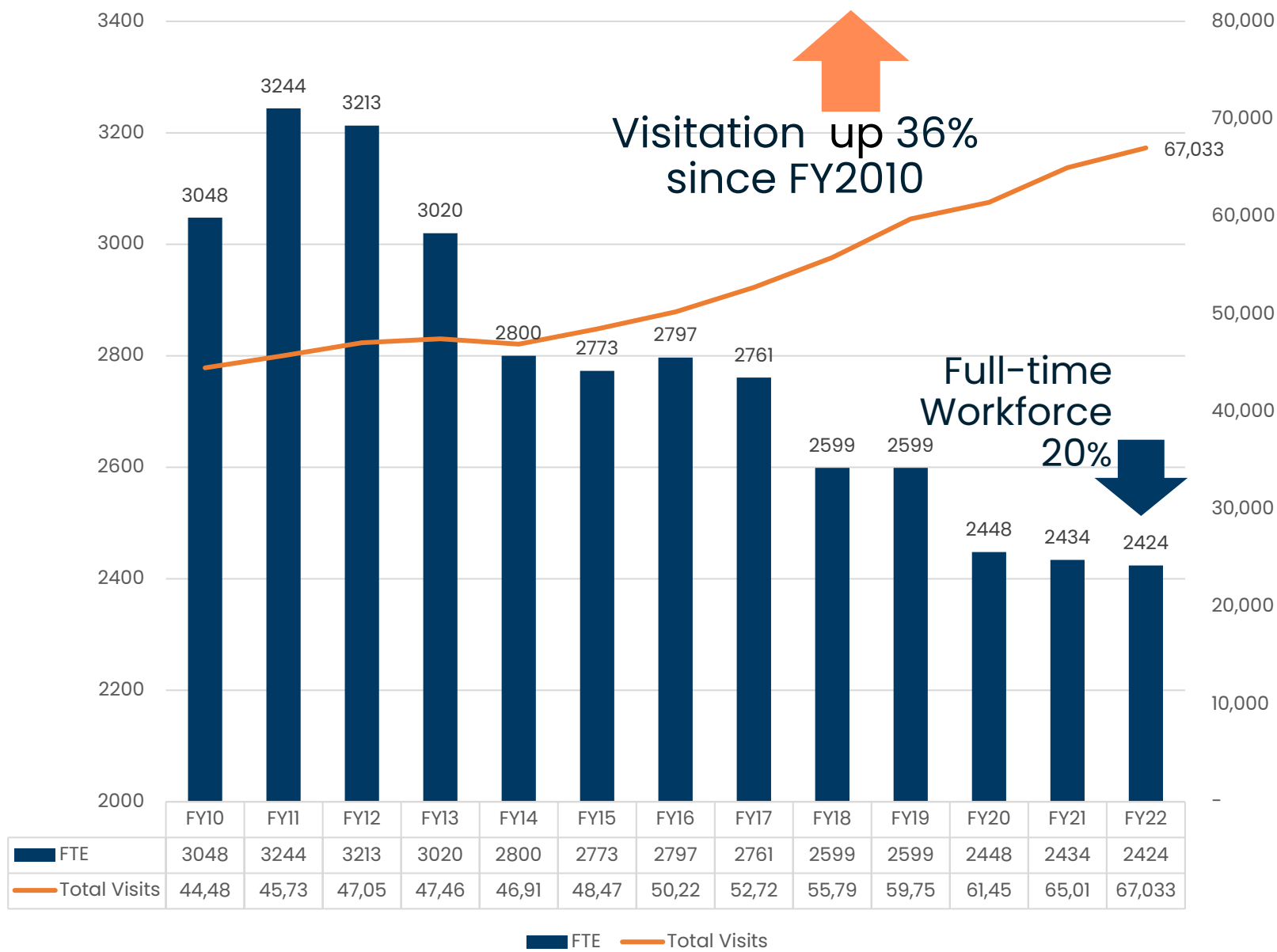
**760M Marine Acres**

**90M Land Acres**



Numbers from FY2023 congressional reports  
and agency budget justification documents.

\*discretionary appropriations only



**13 new refuges  
597 million  
marine acres**



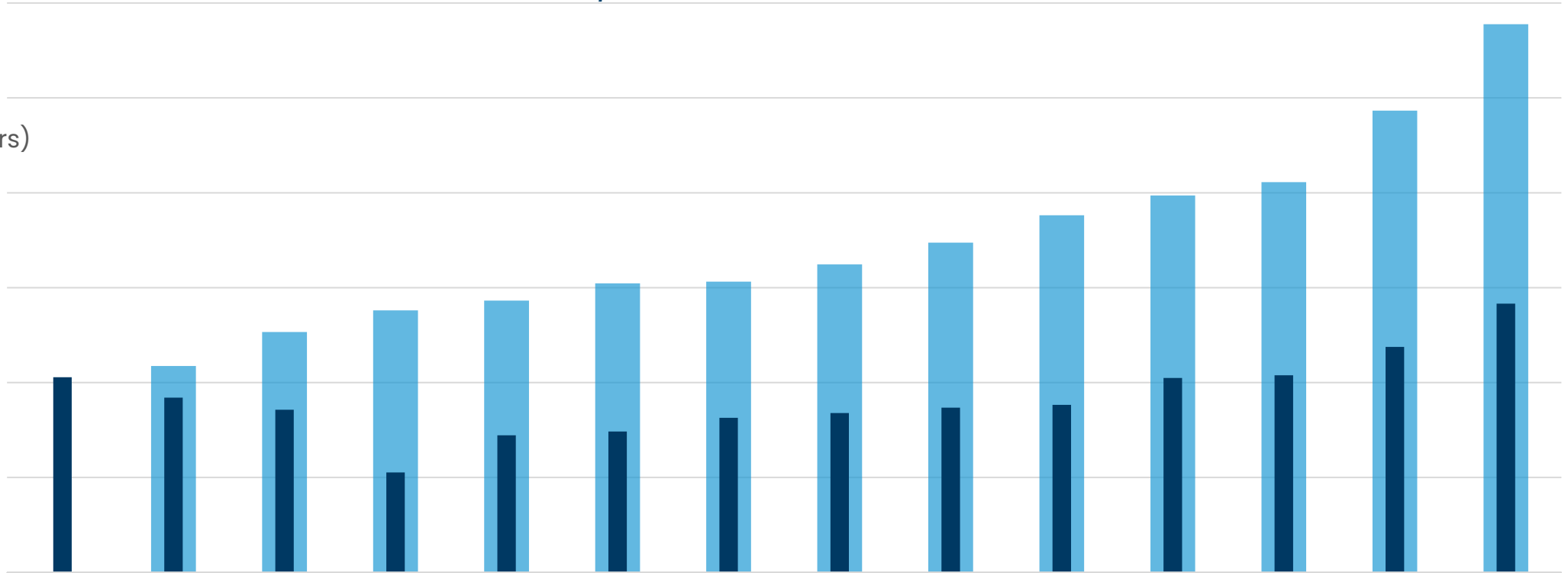
# NWRS Operations & Maintenance

FY 2010 – FY 2023 Budget Requests vs. Consumer Price Index (CPI) Inflation

*(In FY 10 Dollars - per Bureau of Labor Statistics)*

■ Inflation Adjusted (FY 10 Dollars)

■ Actual



|                                      | FY 10    | FY 11    | FY 12    | FY 13    | FY 14    | FY 15    | FY 16    | FY 17    | FY 18    | FY 19    | FY 20    | FY 21    | FY 22    | FY 23    |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| ■ Inflation Adjusted (FY 10 Dollars) |          | \$508,69 | \$526,63 | \$538,01 | \$543,20 | \$552,24 | \$553,18 | \$562,23 | \$573,71 | \$588,18 | \$598,56 | \$605,63 | \$643,31 | \$688,86 |
| ■ Actual                             | \$502,80 | \$492,05 | \$485,69 | \$452,58 | \$472,20 | \$474,20 | \$481,42 | \$483,92 | \$486,75 | \$488,25 | \$502,40 | \$503,85 | \$518,76 | \$541,55 |

## Environmental Stressors

Wildlife Refuges are on the frontlines of adapting and mitigating climate impacts, invasive species, and national wildlife population declines.

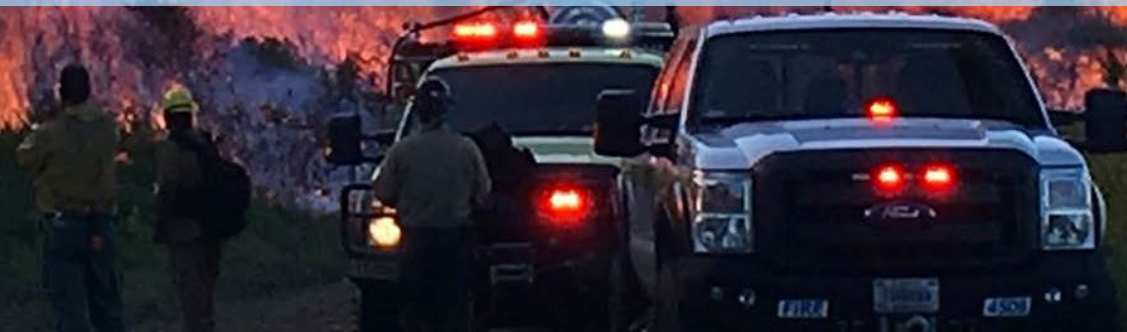




# What We Do

We deploy a host of scientifically sound **management tools** to address conservation challenges.

- Habitat Restoration
- Water Management
- Species Interventions
- Law Enforcement
- Land Acquisition



# \$95 Million Infrastructure

We work toward a life-cycle approach to infrastructure management.

This proactive approach emphasizes regular scheduled maintenance instead of deferring maintenance to failure.



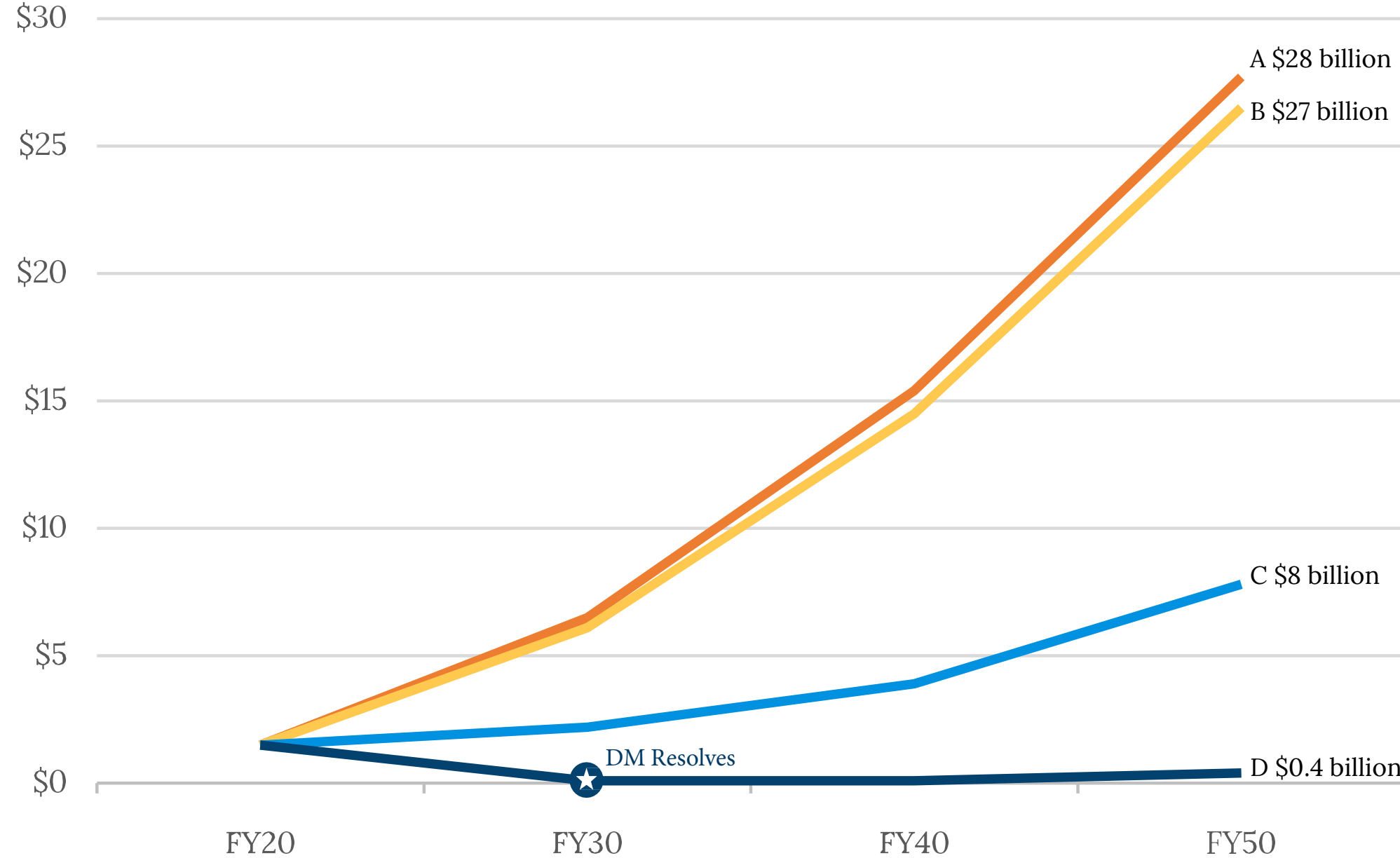
Great American  
Outdoors Act



# DEFERRED MAINTENANCE BACKLOG

Four Scenarios

Billion



**FY22**

**Appropriations** (w/o GAOA @ \$95 Million).

**FY22 Appropriations with GAOA for five years @ \$95 million**

**FY22 + Permanent GAOA @ \$285M w/ 50% invested in Maintenance Workforce**

**Full Life-cycle Funding w/ 50% invested in Maintenance workforce**  
\$665 million per year



## Climate Resilience

# Resist-Adapt-Direct

We address climate stressors through the Resist-Adapt-Direct (RAD) Framework, which helps simplify the response to climate change.

RAD Framework



## Climate Resilience

# Marine Ecosystems

We provide healthy marine habitats that allow ecosystems to better buffer against local and regional stressors and support blue carbon sequestration.

## Climate Resilience

### Carbon Neutrality

We are achieving carbon neutrality through sequestration and investments in energy audits and sustainable infrastructure (net zero, solar).







# \$10 Million for Wildlife Health

Increased preparation and response capacity among states and tribes through grants, FWS, and Department of Interior.

American  
Rescue Plan Act





## People

Some wildlife refuges are tourist destinations, but most are accessible public lands that nearby communities can enjoy regularly.



NATIONAL  
**WILDLIFE**  
REFUGE SYSTEM

We serve **67 million** annual recreation visits.

**42.1 M**  
Wildlife  
Viewing

**16.4 M**  
Wildlife  
Photography

**8.6 M**  
Fishing

**2.6 M**  
Hunting

**2.1 M**  
Education &  
Interpretation

# Positive and Welcoming Customer Experience

As a High Impact Service Provider (HISP), wildlife refuges are improving the virtual and in-person customer experience.



**For All People**



# We practice **COMMUNITY-CENTERED CONSERVATION**



**180**  
Friends  
Groups

**50+**  
National  
Youth Partners

**15,301**  
Volunteers

**101**  
Urban  
Communities

**1000s** of  
Private  
Landowners

# Community-Centered Conservation

Community-focused: Prioritize community needs with long-term commitments.

Intentional: Adopt methods that are well-informed, purposeful, and measurable.

Inclusive: Implement equitable solutions in solving conservation challenges.

Collaborative: Form transformational partnerships to increase the collective impacts.



A person with long dark hair tied back, wearing a light green long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, is sitting in a field of tall, green grass. The person is looking off to the side. In the background, there are mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is bright and natural.

**For All People**

## Cultural Heritage

Critical means of engagement with Native American Tribes.

We are stewards of 16,914 cultural resource sites and 6 million museum property items.

# Urban Wildlife Conservation

**For All People**

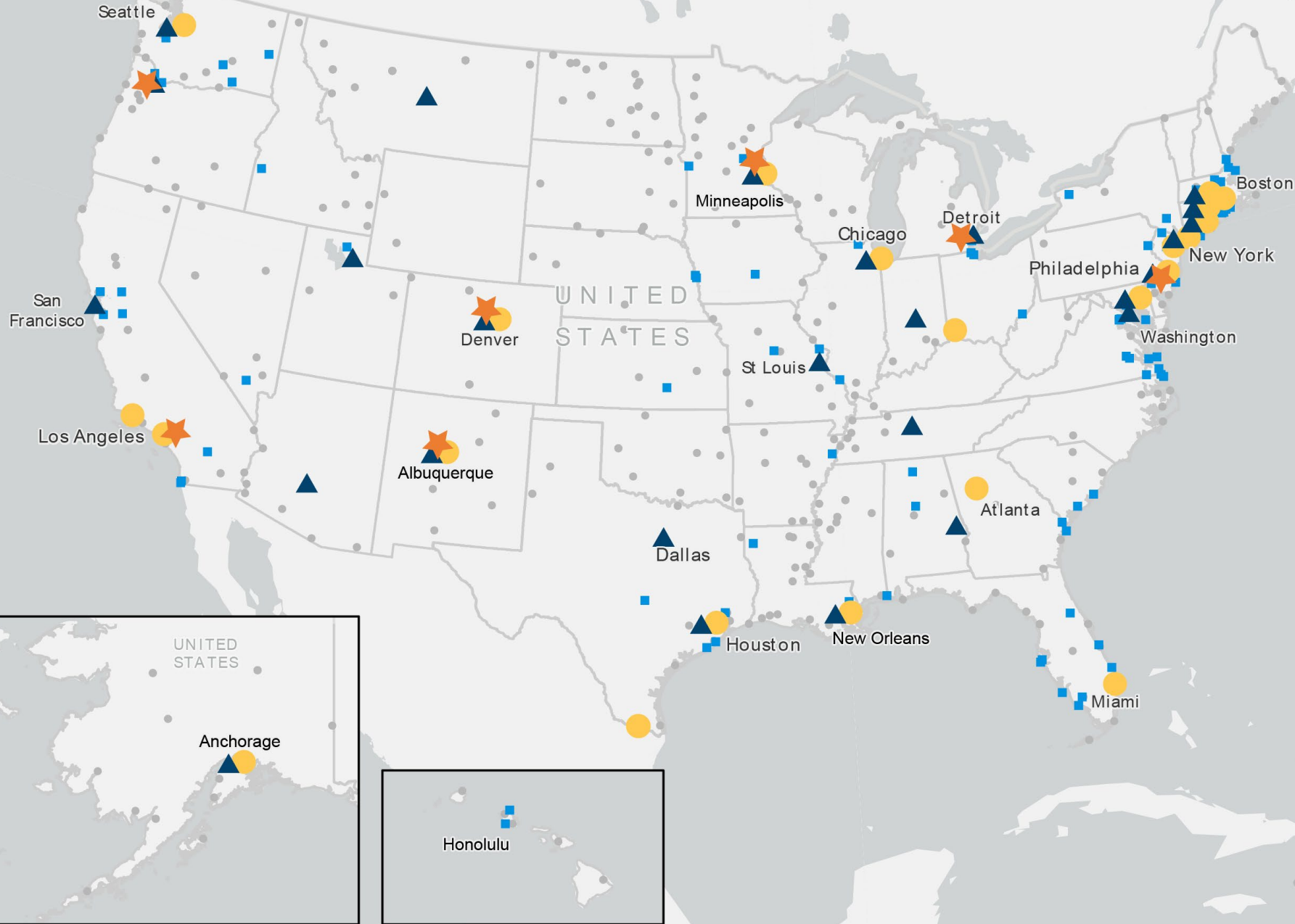
■ **101 URBAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES**

★ **7 FLAGSHIP SITES**

● **32 PARTNER CITIES**  
26 WITH NEARBY URBAN REFUGES

▲ **30 URBAN BIRD TREATY CITIES**

• **568 NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES**







**For All People**

## **Access**

Projects on wildlife refuges aim to increase equity in outdoor access by leveraging FHWA funding with community partners from transportation funding.



**For All People**

# Civilian Climate Corps

We are mobilizing the next generation of climate resilience workers.

Maintenance Trades +  
Scientists + Land Managers +  
Fire Fighters + Community  
Engagement+ Resource  
Protection



# Valle de Oro NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Department of the Interior

**For All People**

## Environmental Justice

We have the first public land site to integrate environmental and economic justice into its strategic plan.



**For All People**

## **Community and Resource Protection**

For greater accountability and transparency, federal wildlife officers are using body worn cameras and undergoing cross-cultural training.



# America the Beautiful

Restore, connect and conserve  
30% of lands and waters by 2030  
through an inclusive collaborative  
conservation vision.





**America the Beautiful**

# Land Acquisition

Provides corridor connectivity while helping to keep families on the landscape through easement acquisitions.



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**WILDLIFE**  
REFUGE SYSTEM

**America the Beautiful**

## Marine Potential

The International Union for Conservation of Nature recommends that 30% of lands and waters be conserved by 2030.

Currently 26% of U.S. waters are protected within the NWRS and co-managed Pacific marine monuments make up about 1/4 of U.S. marine protected areas.





**America the Beautiful**

## **Voluntary Land Conservation**

Partners for Fish and Wildlife  
Coastal Program

We work collaboratively  
with private landowners  
and coastal communities  
to benefit wildlife and  
people.



# Partnerships



**Nisqually Indian Tribe**  
*Squally-Absch* People of the river, people of the grass



National Association of Conservation Districts



Private Land-Owners



**NORTHCOAST REGIONAL LAND TRUST**



**RESTORE AMERICA'S ESTUARIES**





# Wildlife Corridors

We emphasize habitat connectivity across large landscapes, which is vital to fish and wildlife.

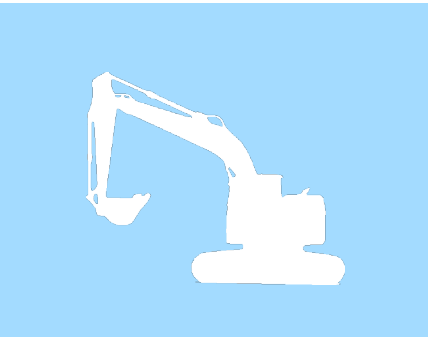


**America the Beautiful**

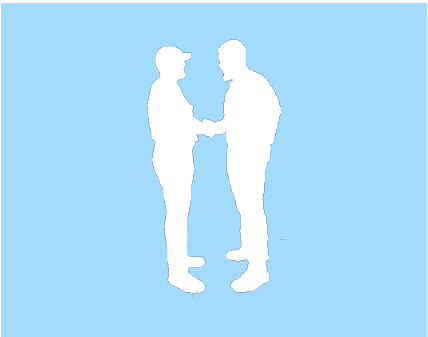


# Program Statistics

*Partners for Fish and Wildlife*



Implemented projects in all  
**50 states and territories**



Leveraged  
**At least 1:4**  
In program to partner contributions



Improved  
**More than 7 million**  
acres of habitat



Completed  
**More than 60,000**  
habitat conservation projects

Worked with  
**More than 50,000**  
partners

Leveraged  
**At least 1:4**  
In program to partner contributions

Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery  
**794 Benefitted**  
**30 Downlisted & Delisted**  
**28 Removed from Candidacy**



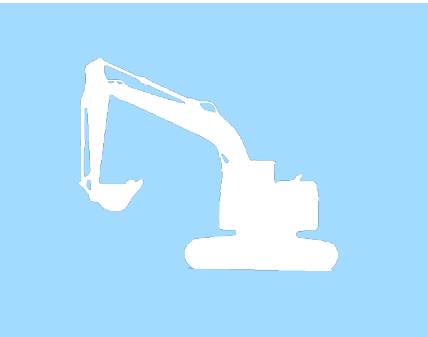
90% of private landowners who work with the Partners for Fish and Wildlife keep habitat restoration projects in place after formal agreements expire.



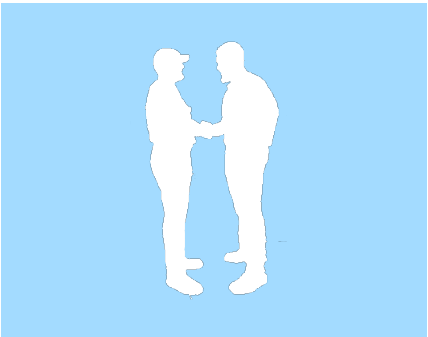


# Program Statistics

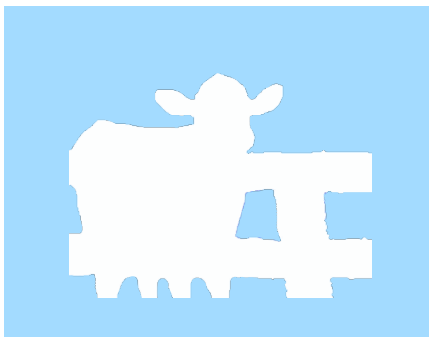
## *Coastal Program*



Implemented projects in  
**39 states and territories**



Leveraged  
**at least 1:5**  
in program to partner  
contributions



Contributed to the delisting  
of  
**at least 15**  
species to date



Completed  
**More than 4,900**  
habitat conservation  
projects



Worked with  
**More than 8,200**  
partners



Protected & improved  
**More than 2.9**  
million  
acres of habitat

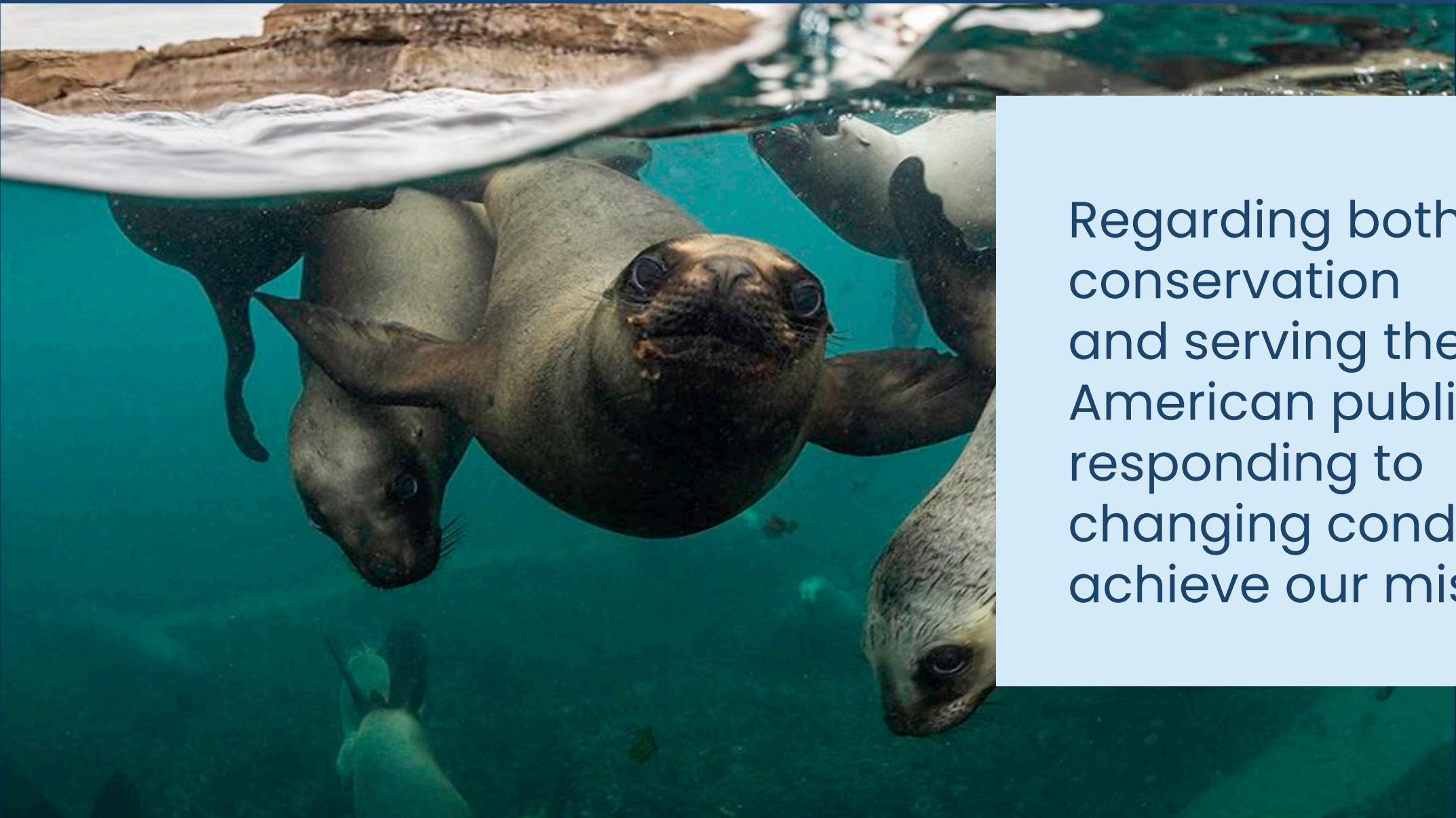




Coastal Program projects address the upstream causes of coastal degradation.



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Regarding both wildlife conservation and serving the American public, we're responding to changing conditions to achieve our mission.