

News Release



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AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS: Fish and Wildlife Service Releases Blueprint for the National Wildlife Refuge System

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today made public a renewed vision for the growth and management of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The document, initially drafted by the Service and the National Wildlife Refuge Association, articulates a 10-year blueprint for the Refuge System.

Entitled *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation*, the Service's vision was developed with extensive input from stakeholders through a transparent public process during the last 18 months. The final version of the document is now available online at www.americaswildlife.org.

"For more than 100 years, the National Wildlife Refuge System has conserved America's great wildlife heritage and working lands for current and future generations, and this blueprint will ensure that a new era of conservation – one rooted in strong partnerships with the community – remains vibrant for the next 100 years," said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. "I applaud the Fish and Wildlife Service for their commitment to increasing the public's access to open spaces and to inspiring a new generation to enjoy America's great outdoors and get involved in conserving our nation's wild things and wild places."

Conserving the Future underscores the importance of building and expanding partnerships – working together with other federal agencies, states, tribes, conservation organizations and citizens.

"The conservation challenges of the 21st century demand that the Service renews its commitment to our important relationship with state fish and wildlife agencies and with traditional partners such as anglers and hunters," said Dan Ashe, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "At the same time, we need to be creative and bold in forging new partnerships."

Among the vision's recommendations, the Refuge System will:

- launch an urban refuge initiative to increase the American people's connection with their natural heritage, including wildlife refuges;

- work with state fish and wildlife agencies to prepare a strategy for increasing quality hunting and fishing opportunities – especially for youth and people with disabilities – on wildlife refuges;
- collaborate more with private and regional groups to conserve wildlife habitat;
- undertake an inventory and monitoring of the Refuge System’s land and water resources to better protect them against future threats;
- develop a plan to guide refuges in assessing potential climate change impacts to refuge habitats and species; and
- plan for strategic growth by prioritizing potential acquisition sites and assessing the status of current habitat protection efforts.

To date, three implementation teams are focusing on 1) strategic growth of the Refuge System; 2) an urban wildlife refuge initiative; and 3) leadership development, and six more teams are being formed to focus on aspects of the vision.

In describing the Refuge System’s role in addressing America’s conservation challenges, the vision document states: “Human demands on the environment combined with environmental stressors are creating an urgent need for conservation choices. The scale of issues and challenges we face is unprecedented and impacts us all; no single entity has the resources necessary to address these challenges on its own. *Conserving the Future* acknowledges that strategic, collaborative, science-based landscape conservation -- along with effective public outreach, education and environmental awareness -- is the only path forward to conserve America's wildlife and wild places.”

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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