

Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge

A Vision *for Connecting Youth With Science and Nature*

Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge is one of our nation's most special wild places. As we mark 20 years since the refuge was established, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has an unprecedented opportunity to establish a world-class visitor and environmental education center in Davis, West Virginia. By establishing partnerships with national leaders in youth engagement and education, such as the National Youth Science Foundation and the Student Conservation Association, our vision is to bring youth from around the country to West Virginia. Here, they will be immersed in the outdoors, and learn to become stewards of our natural resources. By educating young people in the natural sciences and inspiring them to love the outdoors, we will fulfill our mission of ensuring the sustainability of fish, wildlife and plants for future generations.

A Strategic Location for a Youth Education Hub

The Service has the opportunity to acquire a state-of-the-art, LEED certified green building from the Canaan Valley Institute (CVI).* The building currently serves as the headquarters for CVI and has ample space to meet a variety of needs of the Service and partners, including office space, classrooms, laboratories, and other needs. CVI would continue to operate from the building as one of our key partners.

The new location will allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to realize its vision of Canaan Valley NWR as a strategic regional and national hub for youth education. Canaan Valley is envisioned as a keystone initiative for the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Department of the Interior, as part of Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell's agenda to engage and employ youth on our public lands.



America's 500th National Wildlife Refuge

When Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1994, it became the 500th in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The refuge consists of nearly 17,000 acres in the Allegheny Mountains, and protects forest, grassland, and wetland habitats more typical of Maine and Canada. The valley floor includes the largest wetland complex in West Virginia. The refuge is home to 580 species of plants and 288 different animals, including rare species such as the Cheat mountain salamander and West Virginia northern flying squirrel. It provides numerous opportunities for visitors, including 31 miles of trails for wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education.



*The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) intentions are to instruct CVI to transfer the property to FWS once we complete our due diligence and communicate our intent to accept the site.

To make this vision a reality, we will seek strategic partnerships with leading organizations in environmental and outdoor education, engagement and employment. The CVI building is strategically located adjacent to the planned site for the National Center for Youth Science Education (NCYSE), operated by the National Youth Science Foundation, one of the nation's premiere programs focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). NCYSE's Master Plan outlines ways that Canaan Valley NWR can support their educational efforts. We also have strong existing partnerships with organizations like the Student Conservation Association and The Corps Network, and opportunities to work with Outward Bound. To realize our vision, we must develop partnerships with these and other youth-focused organizations.

This opportunity provides significant benefits to youth and to the local community from increased refuge visitation. It also comes at a perfect time for Canaan Valley NWR, as our current refuge headquarter building has fallen into disrepair, and needs significant investments in the coming years to continue operations. By relocating to the CVI building, Canaan Valley NWR can direct investments into youth programs, rather than costly building repairs – a wise investment of taxpayer resources.

Join us in making this vision of a new, world-class youth education center a reality.

Learn More:

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