



Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge



Miami, FL

community

- Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-Palm Beach (MFP) Population 5,564,635.
- 62% of metropolitan area is Hispanic/Latino or Black/African American.

Contains the 4th, 6th and 11th largest public school systems in the United States.

Largest wetland system in the world.

Greater Everglades landscape is expected to increase to 13.5 million over the next 50 years, requiring as much as 1.7 million acres for urban land use.

project summary:

- Community analysis and public outreach with emphasis on culture and reaching diverse communities.
- Develop bilingual messages, exhibits and outreach materials.
- Extensive promotion of the refuge through diversity of media.
- Develop new and build upon existing youth involvement opportunities.
- Actively engage and recruit volunteers.
- Support and grow alternative transportation projects and public access.
- Build upon, and use as a model, existing partnership with faith-based community.
- Provide transportation services for schools.
- Sponsor and participate in traditional and non-traditional community events and functions.
- Host and participate in environmental workshops events for youth.
- Develop a mobile experience that brings the Everglades into communities.
- Cultural and language training for staff, including Spanish and Creole.

play

Attract an additional 100,000 visitors every year through:

- Nature Explore classroom held on refuge, green spaces, and public parks.
- Outdoor, enclosed archery range for archery classes and youth activities.
- Children's fishing pier for youth fishing, environmental education and special events.
- Six thousand new visitors will be able to enjoy the growing tram program and new boat tours.
- Attract 12,000-20,000 visitors through quarterly traditional and non-traditional functions, including music, film, corporate social responsibility, seminars and cultural events.
- Environmental education summer camps and weekend programs.

work

- Employ six youth through internships, Pathways, YCC and AmeriCorps.

learn

- Engage up to six youth through job shadows, and Greening Youth program.
- Nature Explore classroom held in schools.
- Support community educators through specific design and delivery of digital learning program. Conduct virtual environmental education and interpretive tours, reaching over 400,000 students.
- Host 12,000 annual visitors at environmental workshops, including hunting, fishing, camping, archery and orienteering.
- Cultural training for staff.

serve

- Recruit volunteers to support refuge and community efforts.

Virtual interpretation and education programs for 290,000 students.

Nature Explore classroom website will offer access to the latest news and research on children and nature and encourage shared educational materials.

Urban National Wildlife Refuges

INTRODUCTION

The future success of conservation lies ultimately in our ability to inspire Americans to connect with the outdoors and nature, and to become stewards of the environment. With over 80% of Americans living in urban areas, spending less time outdoors, and becoming more ethnically and racially diverse, our challenge is to become relevant in their daily lives. Without public awareness and support, our conservation mission will not succeed.

Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation challenges us to enhance the relevance of the National Wildlife Refuge System (System) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to this rapidly changing America. Building a connected conservation constituency requires connecting with the ever-growing urban population in order to ensure that Americans care about conservation. To this end, the *Conserving the Future* document contains a specific recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 13:

“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 10 demographically and geographically varied cities across America by 2015.”

Urban areas present a strategic opportunity to reach new audiences that are currently not visiting nor aware of the Service. Refuges that are in the heart of where the people are located provide the best opportunity to engage new audiences, whether through an urban refuge or an urban wildlife refuge partnership. Building this constituency ultimately benefits the entire System and the broader conservation community by nurturing new supporters who care.

The goal of the Urban Wildlife Refuge Program is to engage surrounding urban communities in wildlife conservation as partners. Excellence may be achieved through eight standards that serve as a framework for collaboration between the Service and urban communities on and off Service lands:

- 1. Know and Relate to the Community**
- 2. Connect Urban People with Nature via Stepping Stones of Engagement**
- 3. Build Partnerships**
- 4. Be a Community Asset**
- 5. Ensure Adequate Long-Term Resources**
- 6. Provide Equitable Access**
- 7. Ensure Visitors Feel Safe and Welcome**
- 8. Model Sustainability**

In order to demonstrate the potential of urban refuges to reach new audiences in their communities, the Service requested innovative proposals from each region for one urban refuge to receive \$1 million in base funding in FY14. The Service received strong proposals from our 101 existing urban refuges that are within 25 miles of a population of 250,000 or more. **San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC)** received the funding as announced in August 2014.

The approach to excellence for urban national wildlife refuges must be as flexible and unique as the communities the refuges serve. The Service must strive to understand both human and natural environments in order to understand the expectations of the urban community. The Service must strive to provide programs and leadership on conservation initiatives that are relevant to their communities. Service staff, volunteers, and partners must engage urban communities to develop meaningful connections to wildlife that last a lifetime. This starts by building awareness, fostering deeper understanding, and growing participation through programs that bring more people from the urban world into the larger conservation community.

Urban refuges are great places to build a broader conservation constituency, but the challenge is far too big for any one agency or organization to tackle alone. The Urban Wildlife Refuge Program recognizes the importance of embracing traditional and new collaborations. Various entities whose interests may be conservation, education, human health, or other subjects ultimately can help achieve conservation of wildlife, plants, and their habitats that are essential to maintaining a healthy planet for people.