

Nisqually's Wild About Nature



Seattle, WA

community



- Within 50 miles of Seattle; less than 25 miles from the state capital, Olympia; and 19 miles from Tacoma, the 3rd largest city in Washington, with a combined population of 3,212,440.
- Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), the largest Army base in the country, is six miles from the refuge and supports 40,000 active, Guard and Reserve Service members, 15,000 civilian workers, and 60,000 family members. An estimated 30,000 military retirees live within a 50-mile radius of the base.
- Nisqually Indian Tribal Office is nine miles from the refuge, with a population of 5,700 Native Americans on the reservation, and 5,100 off.

Project Summary:

Nisqually's Wild About Nature proposal builds upon and improves the refuge's excellent environmental and education programs, as well as its successful and active partnerships.

We will provide unique educational opportunities to engage youth from a diversity of communities, including the Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Nisqually Indian Tribe, and Tacoma Public School District. This proposal engages and supports traditional and non-traditional partners that have existing, successful youth initiatives. We will engage urban residents where they live and provide funding for transportation to bring them out to nature. We will host a Conservation Summit to discuss barriers to engagement and establish an advisory group to help connect urban audiences to nature.

Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), the largest Army base in the country, is six miles from the refuge. If counted in the census, it would be the 7th largest city in Washington. It has one of the nation's 15 Wounded Warrior Battalions that helps transition soldiers to successful civilian veterans.



play

- Mobile Refuge will be taken to youth programs, including Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA/ YWCA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Nisqually Indian Tribe Youth, and JBLM.

work

- Two student interns from local colleges.
- Youth employment through AmeriCorps, the Joint Base Lewis-McChord HIRE program.

learn

- Expand the refuge's education program to serve 10,000 students by 2016.
- 'Scientist in the Classroom' and 'Salmon in the Classroom' programs will engage diversity of students, including JBLM, the Nisqually Indian Tribe, and Tacoma Public School District, which serves more than 28,000 K-12 students. Programs will be used to train teachers, provide student career examples, and mentor opportunities.
- Youth Fisheries Academy will provide realistic biological field and lab experience.

serve

- Partner with the Washington Conservation Corps, the Nisqually Indian Tribe, and JBLM to develop off-refuge conservation projects in the urban community.
- Youth volunteer opportunities through AmeriCorps, the Joint Base Lewis-McChord HIRE program, and a youth crew to support urban programs.
- Partner with colleges and universities to engage students in Wild About Nature.
- Support partners' youth initiatives, including the Nisqually Indian Tribe, the Youth Advisory Council of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Outdoors Youth Initiative, and Seattle Audubon's 'Finding Urban Nature.'



Partner with Metro Parks Tacoma to provide transportation to target audiences wanting to access natural areas.

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.