

U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
National Wildlife Refuge System  
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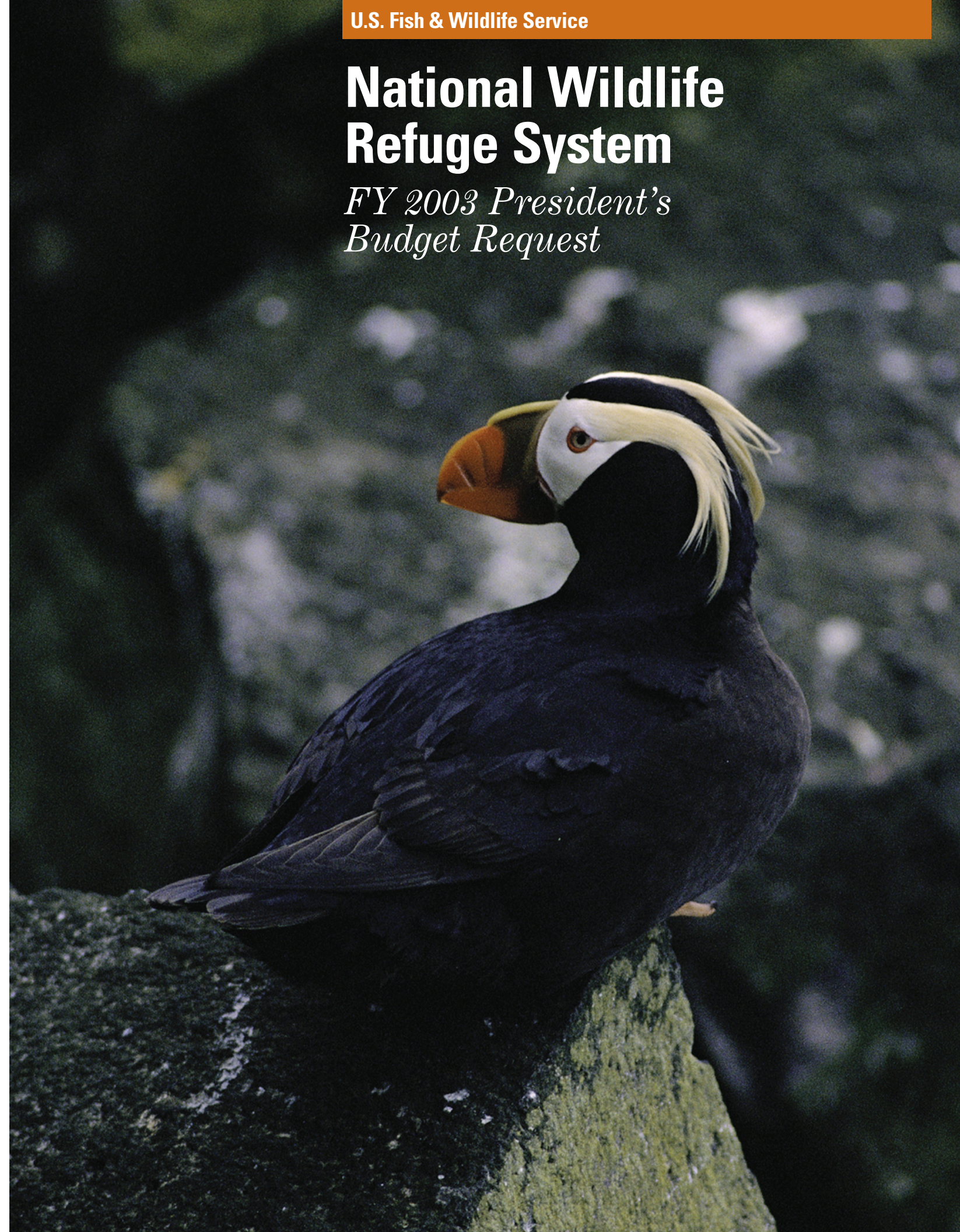


CELEBRATING A  
**CENTURY**  
of CONSERVATION

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# National Wildlife Refuge System

*FY 2003 President's  
Budget Request*



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
National Wildlife Refuge System

FY2003

President's  
Budget Request



The National Wildlife Refuge System manages 95 million acres for just over \$3 an acre.

On March 14, 2003, the 95 million acre National Wildlife Refuge System will celebrate its first century of service to the American people. The Centennial is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to showcase the National Wildlife Refuge System and its wildlife conservation mission. It will translate the Secretary's vision of "Conservation through Communication, Consultation, and Cooperation" into new partnerships to accomplish our mission and empower local communities to help conserve our nation's wildlife resources.

When President Theodore Roosevelt set aside tiny Pelican Island on Florida's east coast as a refuge for birds nearly a century ago, he began a conservation legacy that now spans across the entire United States and its territories. The National Wildlife Refuge System, the nation's only network of Federal lands dedicated specifically to wildlife conservation, represents a steadfast commitment to protecting our wildlife heritage. This vast network of strategically located habitats protect wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, serves as stepping stones for millions of migratory birds, and conserves premier fisheries.

The Centennial anniversary is a unique opportunity to broaden public understanding and appreciation for the National Wildlife Refuge System, enhance partnerships on its behalf, and strengthen its stewardship and infrastructure nationwide through improved wildlife and habitat management, visitor programs, and facilities.



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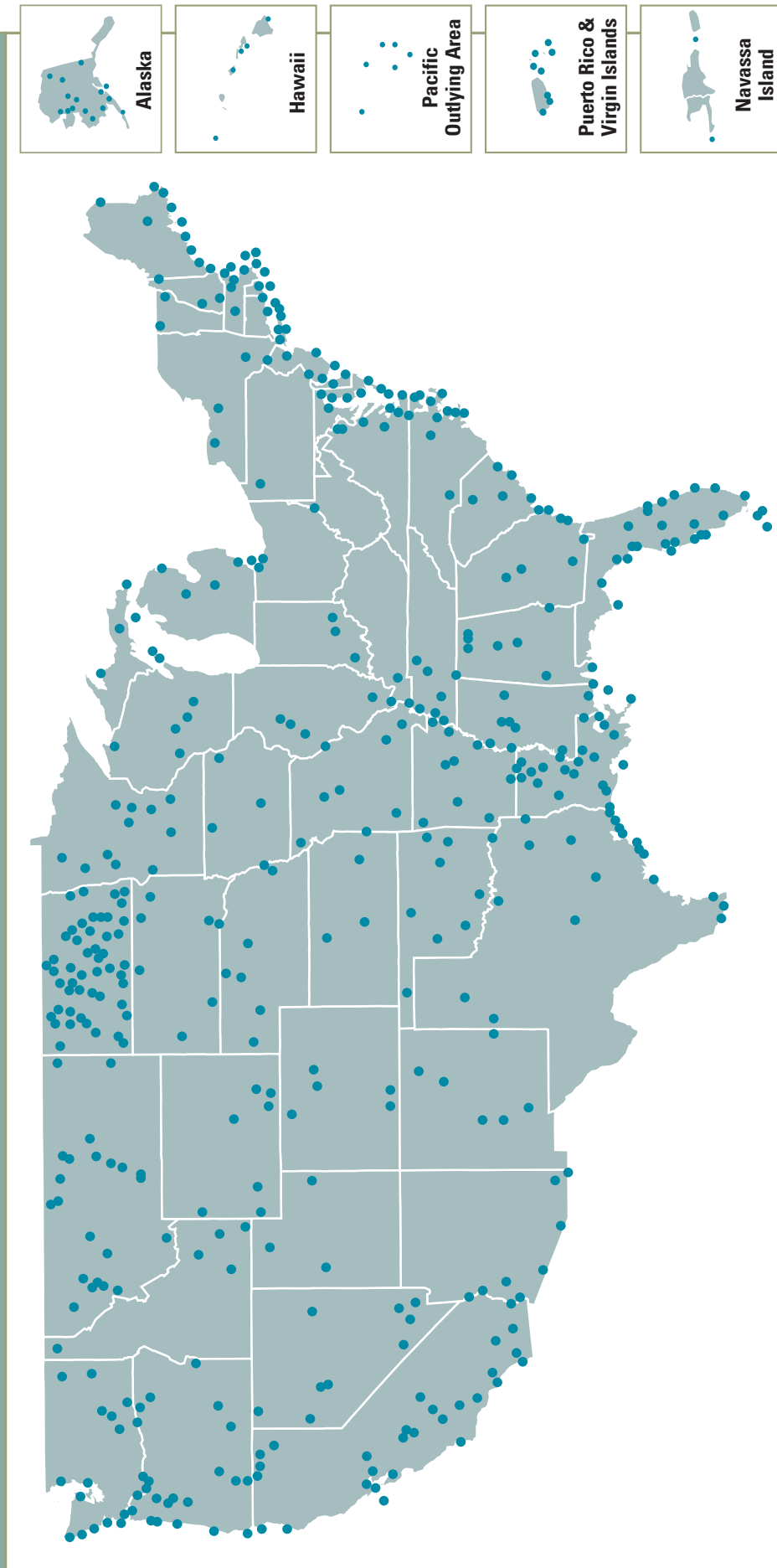


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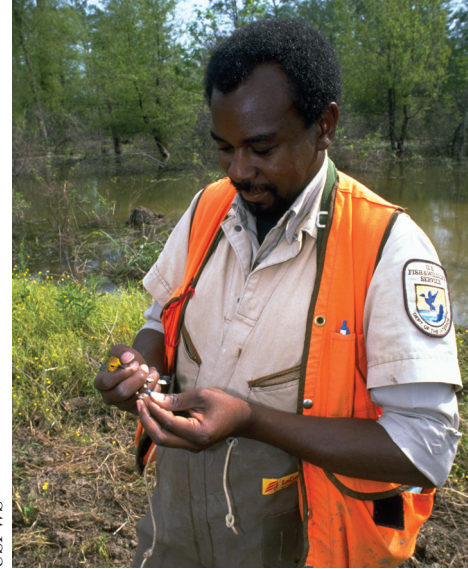
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National Wildlife Refuge System



## Conclusion

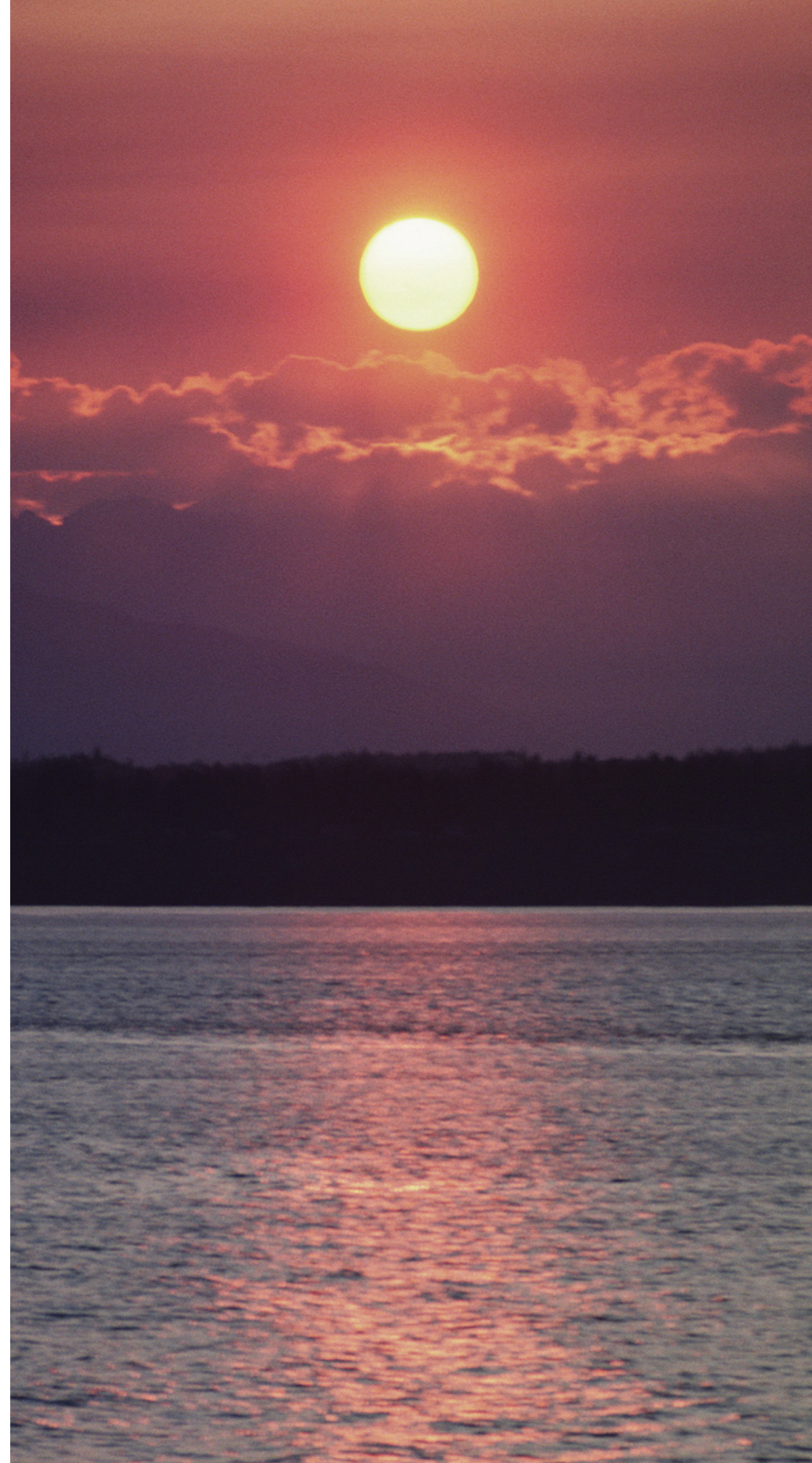
Since the landmark *Refuge Improvement Act of 1997*, *Volunteer and Community Partnership Act of 1998*, and with the *Refuge Centennial Act of 2000*, the FY 2003 President's budget request demonstrates a clear commitment to our national wildlife refuges and the people who enjoy them.



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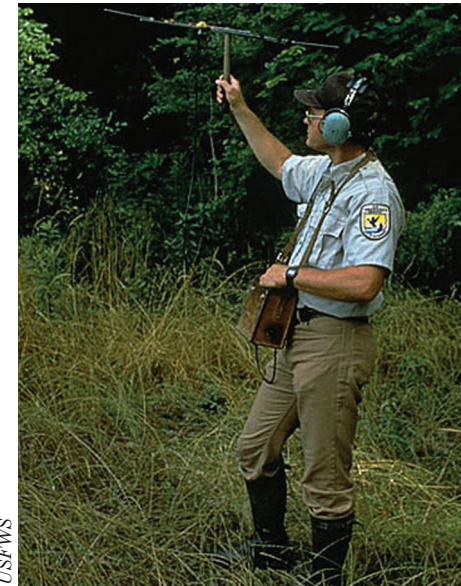


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## Refuge Operations (+ 25.8 million)



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*The National Wildlife Refuge System has identified 1,270 essential staff vacancies. Budget increases since 1998 have reduced essential staffing needs by 12%.*



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*The refuge system values community-based partnerships and volunteerism, and refuge "friends" groups have grown from 70 in FY 1996 to 218 in 2001. More than 28,000 volunteers contributed 1.1 million hours on refuges in FY 2001.*

The President's FY 2003 budget for the National Wildlife Refuge System totals \$376.5 million, a \$56.5 million increase over FY 2002. It promotes a strong conservation ethic, resource stewardship, and positive cooperation with citizens and local communities.

The request for Refuge Operations focuses on "taking care of what we have" by addressing critical operating needs and preparing for the 2003 Centennial.

### Improving Resource Stewardship and Visitor Services (+ \$12 million)

- The budget includes \$12 million for 96 operational projects on National Wildlife Refuges, representing the highest priority needs in the System.
- These priorities reflect a commitment to wildlife stewardship (+ \$3.2 million), habitat stewardship (+ \$4.4 million), visitor services (+ \$2.6 million), and new and expanded refuges (+ \$1.8 million).
- The budget strengthens migratory bird efforts, wildlife monitoring and species recovery; restores and enhances essential wildlife habitats; meets core Federal trust responsibilities; and enhances priority public uses—hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

### Cooperative Conservation Initiative (+ \$5 million)

- The budget includes a minimum of \$5 million for implementing the Cooperative Conservation Initiative on or adjacent to National Wildlife Refuges. This initiative implements the Secretary's goal of conservation through cooperation, consultation and communication. Building on the National Wildlife Refuge System's successful challenge cost-share program, we will work with a wide range of partners to implement innovative, community-based projects that restore natural resources and foster wildlife habitat conservation.

### Visitor Facility Enhancements (+ \$2 million)

- These projects combine construction of new visitor facilities such as duck blinds, visitor contact stations, and/or observation decks with the maintenance of existing facilities to improve visitor and wildlife experiences.
- Visitor facility enhancement projects instill pride for refuges in their surrounding communities, and provide new and unique visitor and wildlife experiences.

### Other Program Increases/Decreases

- The budget request also includes an increase of \$3.2 million for uncontrollable pay costs, a \$3.7 million internal transfer for land acquisition planning and a reduction of \$1.1 million in travel costs.



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## Refuge Maintenance (+ \$30.7 million)

*In Fiscal Year 2001, the National Wildlife Refuge System restored 68,381 and 146,450 acres of wetland and upland habitats, respectively.*

*The National Wildlife Refuge System owns and maintains over 13,500 miles of fence. These fences must be maintained and posted by refuge maintenance personnel.*

### Comprehensive Conservation Plans (+ \$1 million)

- Refuge planning requires community involvement in refuge management, and provides long-term opportunities for local citizens to interact and participate in the development of refuge management strategies.
- The budget includes a \$1 million increase to initiate and complete comprehensive conservation plans (CCPs) mandated by the 2012 deadline.

The National Wildlife Refuge System will “take care of what we have” by modernizing and improving our maintenance program to ensure safe visits, protect wildlife, enhance habitats, and support our commitment to commemorating a century of conservation by preparing for the future. Regular care of the infrastructure, technology, and tools of professional wildlife stewardship is the essential foundation to future conservation efforts with local communities and citizens. The FY 2003 budget requests funding for several bold, innovative programs that will increase accountability, provide economic benefits to local communities, and improve facilities. The following is a summary of the proposed FY 2003 maintenance request:

### Deferred Maintenance Backlog Reduction

- The budget includes a \$27.2 million increase for deferred maintenance projects to reduce pending projects and improve facilities and infrastructure. This total includes \$2 million for implementation of the (\*SAMMS) and Maximo software.

### Annual Preventative Maintenance

- The budget includes a \$2.0 million increase in annual preventative maintenance funds to help those refuges implement the \*Service Asset and Maintenance Management System (SAMMS) and Maximo software and ensure proper and efficient implementation.
- The budget includes a \$500,000 increase for annual preventative maintenance projects on all refuges to prevent them from deteriorating and being added to the deferred maintenance backlog.

### Improved Equipment Management

- The budget includes a \$500,000 increase to rent and lease equipment which precludes the purchase of costly heavy equipment and benefits local communities.
- The budget includes a \$500,000 increase for an alternatively fueled vehicle fund to provide incentives to managers for the purchase and use of fuel-efficient vehicles.



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*The Refuge System owns and maintains over 2,500 miles of canals and ditches as well as 3,000 miles of dikes and levees. These water delivery facilities are vital to maintain wildlife habitat and meet the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System for the American public.*

## Land Acquisition

### Land Acquisition Projects

- The Land and Water Conservation Fund supports the purchase of lands from willing sellers that are in the best interest of present and future generations of Americans. The FY 2003 budget proposes \$71.1 million for the Refuge System's land acquisition program.
- The National Wildlife Refuge System has targeted 52 high priority projects in 31 states, totaling nearly 50,000 acres, for acquisition from willing sellers. The Refuge System will seek easement protection wherever feasible.
- These acquisitions will preserve America's natural and cultural resources, benefiting local communities by providing public recreational opportunities. The investment we make in acquiring these lands now will be returned to the American people generation after generation.

## Other Programs

### Construction

- The National Wildlife Refuge System works closely with the Department of the Interior to develop the five-year construction plan within Departmental funding targets and priorities.
- The budget includes \$2.2 million to begin construction of two high-priority visitor centers on Ottawa (OH) and Savannah (GA) National Wildlife Refuges.

### Wildland Fire Management

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildland Fire Management program includes approximately 8.5 million acres of fire-dependent ecosystems in the lower 48 states. In FY 2001, the Service treated approximately 241,000 acres using prescribed fire, mechanical treatments, or both. Approximately 54,000 acres of these treatments reduced hazardous fuels in the wildland urban interface, conditions on public lands that pose a significant threat to public safety.
- This program has grown from a \$5 million annual budget and 64 permanent positions in the early 1990s to an annual budget of \$55.7 million and 519 permanent positions today.
- The National Wildlife Refuge System has a long history, dating back to the 1930s, of prescribing fire for wildlife habitat management. Using the National Fire Plan, we have increased our readiness to respond to unwanted wildland fires and renewed emphasis on prescribed fire treatments for fuels management.

### Refuge Roads

- The Refuge Roads program, established in 1998, provides funding for 5 years at \$20 million per year.
- The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) will be reauthorized in 2003, and the recently completed condition assessment of National Wildlife Refuge System roads indicates a need to expand this funding to \$50 million annually.

*The recently completed Federal Highway Administration inventory and condition assessment of the Service's roads and parking lots indicates that there are 4,700 miles of roads and 38.6 million square feet of parking lots. Approximately 37% of the public use roads and 12 percent of the public use parking lots were rated in poor or failed condition.*



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