



*Celebrating a
Century
of Conservation!*

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

America's National Wildlife Refuge System

Special Management Areas

The National Wildlife Refuge System is the world's most unique network of lands and waters set aside specifically for conservation of fish, wildlife and plants. President Theodore Roosevelt established the first refuge, 3-acre Pelican Island Bird Reservation in Florida's Indian River Lagoon, in 1903. Roosevelt went on to create 55 more refuges before he left office in 1909; today the refuge system encompasses more than 500 units spread over nearly 94 million acres.

A wide variety of land designations overlay national wildlife refuges. These special designations do not change the mission or management mandate of any refuge. All refuges are managed for the conservation, management and restoration of the nation's fish and wildlife habitat.

Among the varied special management area types found on refuges are cultural resource sites, historic sites, research natural areas, wild and scenic rivers, national natural landmarks, and national trails. Some of these designations may place refuges within larger networks of protected lands, such as national marine sanctuaries, or international networks of protected lands such as wetlands of international importance.

Special land designations originate from a variety of sources—Congress, the President, other agencies or non-government organizations.

Wilderness Areas

Wilderness is a special designation applied by Congress to federal lands "...where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man is a visitor who does not remain." About 20 percent of the lands and waters of the National Wildlife Refuge System are designated as wilderness—more than 20 million acres on 65 refuges.

In designated wilderness areas, national wildlife refuge staff carry out management activities in a way that preserves the wild and undeveloped character of the land. The public can enjoy solitude and the beauty of nature without many of the intrusions of modern, industrial society.

The National Wilderness Preservation System, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and U.S. Forest Service, encompasses a total of more than 105 million acres.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Wild and Scenic designations are made by Congress upon recommendation from the President. For a river to be eligible for the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, it must be in a free-flowing condition and possess scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other unique values worthy of preserving.

Of the 10,815 river miles in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, more than 1,400 miles are managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Examples include the 285 mile long Ivishak River, managed as part of Arctic NWR in Alaska and a five-mile segment of the Niobrara River flowing through Ft. Niobrara NWR in Nebraska.

National Monuments

The Antiquities Act authorizes the President to establish as national monuments "historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest" located on federal lands.

Several national monuments exist on Fish and Wildlife Service lands. Within the National Wildlife Refuge System, the 195,000-acre Hanford Reach National Monument is managed to preserve extraordinary biological, geological, paleontological, archaeological and



historic features. The monument encompasses the 51-mile Hanford Reach in Washington State—the last nontidally influenced, free-flowing stretch of the Columbia River. Hanford Reach supports some of the most productive salmon-spawning areas in the Pacific Northwest. The monument also contains one of the last remaining large blocks of shrub-steppe ecosystem in the Columbia River Basin.

National Natural Landmarks

National natural landmarks exemplify a natural biotic or geologic feature unique to a particular region. Designated by the Interior Secretary, national natural landmarks must encompass one of the best-known examples of a unique feature and must be located in the United States or on the Continental Shelf. National natural landmarks managed entirely or in part under the National Wildlife Refuge System contain important ecological or geological features deserving protection or further study. These areas have been maintained relatively free of human disturbance for long periods of time and thus approximate a stable environment.

Biosphere Reserves

Biosphere reserves are protected areas of representative terrestrial and coastal environments which have been internationally recognized under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) "Man and the Biosphere Program." The main goals of biosphere reserves are: 1) conservation of important biological resources, 2) development of environmentally sound economic growth, 3) support of environmental research, monitoring, education and training, and 4) as a framework to bring people together to accomplish these goals.

Five units of the National Wildlife Refuge System are included in biosphere reserves, including the Aleutian Islands Unit of Alaska

Maritime NWR (Aleutian Islands Biosphere Reserve); Blackbeard Island, Wolf Island and Cape Romain NWRs (Carolinian-South Atlantic); and Farallon NWR (Central California Coast).

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network

Shorebirds migrate across the Western hemisphere—some from the Arctic to Tierra del Fuego—their movements carry them through wetlands with immense natural value to wildlife and to humans alike, located in many nations throughout the hemisphere. The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network uses shorebirds as symbols of the intense conservation challenge that wetlands face and of the need for international cooperation in the protection of these areas. The network links wetlands and associated upland sites essential to migratory shorebirds in a voluntary, non-regulatory program of research, training and collaborative effort for habitat management, protection, and environmental education.

Twenty areas within the National Wildlife Refuge System have been designated as shorebird reserves.

Wetlands of International Importance

Adopted in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance provides a framework for the conservation of wetlands worldwide. The Ramsar Convention protects a variety of wetlands—marsh, fen, peatland, salt water; fresh water; static water; flowing water; brackish water; even riparian and coastal zones adjacent to wetlands are included.

Areas within the National Wildlife Refuge System that have been designated as units of Ramsar sites include Izembek Lagoon NWR and State Game Area in Alaska; Forsythe NWR in New Jersey; Okefenokee NWR in Georgia and Florida; Nevada's Ash Meadows NWR; Florida's Pelican Island

NWR; and Sand Lake NWR in South Dakota.

National Register of Historic Places, National Historic Landmarks Hundreds of sites within the National Wildlife Refuge System are listed on—or eligible for—the National Register of Historic Places. Several sites have been designated as national historic landmarks.

To date, the Fish and Wildlife Service has identified more than 8,000 cultural resources as a result of surveys completed on approximately 1 percent of the land it manages. These include an 11,000-year old archaeological site, shipwrecks and their cargo, historic plantations and buildings, burial grounds, lighthouses, and battlefields. While many Service cultural resources are adequately protected, hundreds of sites continue to be threatened by erosion, development, deterioration and theft of artifacts.

National Wildlife Refuge System resources that are registered historic places or historic landmarks include:

- Iowa's DeSoto NWR, with its collection of cargo recovered from the Steamboat Bertrand, which rammed into sand in the Missouri River in 1865
- Lake Ilo NWR in North Dakota, where a six-year archaeological study has yielded a wealth of information about the Paleoindian peoples of the northern plains
- Sevilleta NWR in New Mexico, which features petroglyphs dating to the 12th century A.D.
- The Necker Island Archeological District at Hawaiian Islands NWR

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