



Illinois

National Wildlife Refuge System Workforce Planning

Background

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System is the only network of federal lands dedicated specifically to wildlife conservation.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is currently undergoing a nationwide workforce planning effort. This effort is being conducted to help ensure the Refuge System is able to complete its high priority mission activities in the face of relatively flat annual budgets and increasing personnel and operational costs.

Illinois

National Wildlife Refuge System staff in Illinois manage 10 national wildlife refuges. These employees manage approximately 111,000 acres of land and host one million visitors annually.

Workforce Planning

In order to keep personnel costs from completely absorbing required refuge operational funds, the Region must reduce refuge staff by 20 percent, a total of 71 positions.

To meet this target, the Refuge System staff in Illinois will be reduced by nine positions; from 52 in 2004 to 43 in 2009.

Personnel Losses

The Region is planning to eliminate these positions through natural attrition, retirement and relocations if needed.

Reduction in Management Capability and Visitor Services

Due to this reduction in staff, Illinois' refuges will not be able to maintain their current level of fish and wildlife management activities or provide the same level of public use opportunities.

It is estimated that a 15 to 20 percent reduction in performance measures involving habitat management and visitor services will occur as a result of these reductions.

Illinois Personnel Losses

9 positions

17% reduction

1 Manager/Res. Spec.

2 Park Rangers

1 Biologist/Bio. Tech

4 Maintenance Worker

1 Administrative Staff



What This Means on the Ground

Habitat management, visitor services and educational programs across the state will be impacted. Each state, refuge and wetland management district in the Midwest Region is going to feel the effects of these personnel reductions.

Impacts in Illinois

Crab Orchard National

Wildlife Refuge: A vacant law enforcement position has reduced law enforcement field presence. This results in a reduction in violation notices issued and incidents detected. An anticipated maintenance vacancy will mean that nearly 100 acres of moist-soil and cropland habitat will go unmanaged and maintenance projects completed will be reduced by 10 percent.

Savanna District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge:

The refuge anticipates a biological technician position will remain vacant. With the loss of this position the refuge plans to stop waterfowl banding activities and various wildlife surveys. The refuge expects a 10 to 25 percent reduction in invasive species control, seed harvest for habitat improvement, and prescribed burning.

Cypress Creek National

Wildlife Refuge: The refuge is a bottomland hardwood cypress/tupelo forest restoration in the Cache River Valley of extreme southern Illinois. The restoration project is a joint venture project with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and The Nature Conservancy.

The refuge currently has one vacant park ranger position that is projected to remain vacant. Because of this vacancy the refuge has eliminated its environmental education program, two special events (fishing days and the youth waterfowl expo) and interpretive programs utilized by more than 5,000 school children and the visiting public annually. Additionally, the refuge is unable to fulfill partnership commitments with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to provide staffing assistance with operations and programming at the Cache River Wetland Center.