



# Indiana

## 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.

### Indiana

The National Wildlife Refuge System in Indiana employs people at three national wildlife refuges. These employees manage approximately 63,000 acres of land and host 94,000 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, Refuge System staff in Indiana will be reduced by six positions; from 16 in 2004 to 10 in 2009.

### Reduction in Management Capability and Visitor Services

Due to this reduction in staff, Indiana's 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.

### Personnel Losses

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

#### Indiana Personnel Losses

**6 positions**

**38% reduction**

- 1 Manager/Res. Spec.
- 2 Biologists/ Bio. Tech.
- 1 Maintenance Worker
- 2 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 Indiana

Indiana has three National Wildlife Refuges, the 50,000-acre **Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge**, the 5,583-acre **Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge**, and the 7,800-acre **Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge**. All three refuges provide significant habitats for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and represent important areas for public visitation and enjoyment of fish and wildlife in Indiana.

The shortfall of refuge funds has resulted in the refuges joining together in operational zones to address vacancies and still endeavor to deliver Refuge System services to the Nation.

These three refuges currently have two wildlife biologists and one maintenance position vacant. Currently one law enforcement position covers the entire zone.

These vacancies have resulted in a cessation of nearly all Partners for Fish and Wildlife private lands work, and only minimal enforcement of conservation easement lands in Indiana. Biologists on these stations were key people involved in partnerships with other entities including Ducks Unlimited, the Audubon Society, Waterfowl USA and the Izaak Walton League. These partnerships have been weakened, reducing the ability to compete for grants and outside funding sources critical to enhancing and restoring lands that exist on all three refuges.

The potential loss of administrative staff over the next three years, and the resulting increased demands on field staff to complete these tasks, will increase existing challenges the refuges have in meeting habitat demands and providing quality visitor service programs.