



Minnesota

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.

Minnesota

National Wildlife Refuge System staff in Minnesota manage 13 national wildlife refuges, eight wetland management districts and a regional office in Minneapolis. These employees manage approximately 539,000 acres of land and host 4.4 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 Minnesota will be reduced by 27 positions; from 134 in 2004 to 107 in 2009.

Reduction in Management Capability and Visitor Services

Due to this reduction in staff, Minnesota's refuges and wetland management districts 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.

Minnesota Personnel Losses

27 positions

20% reduction

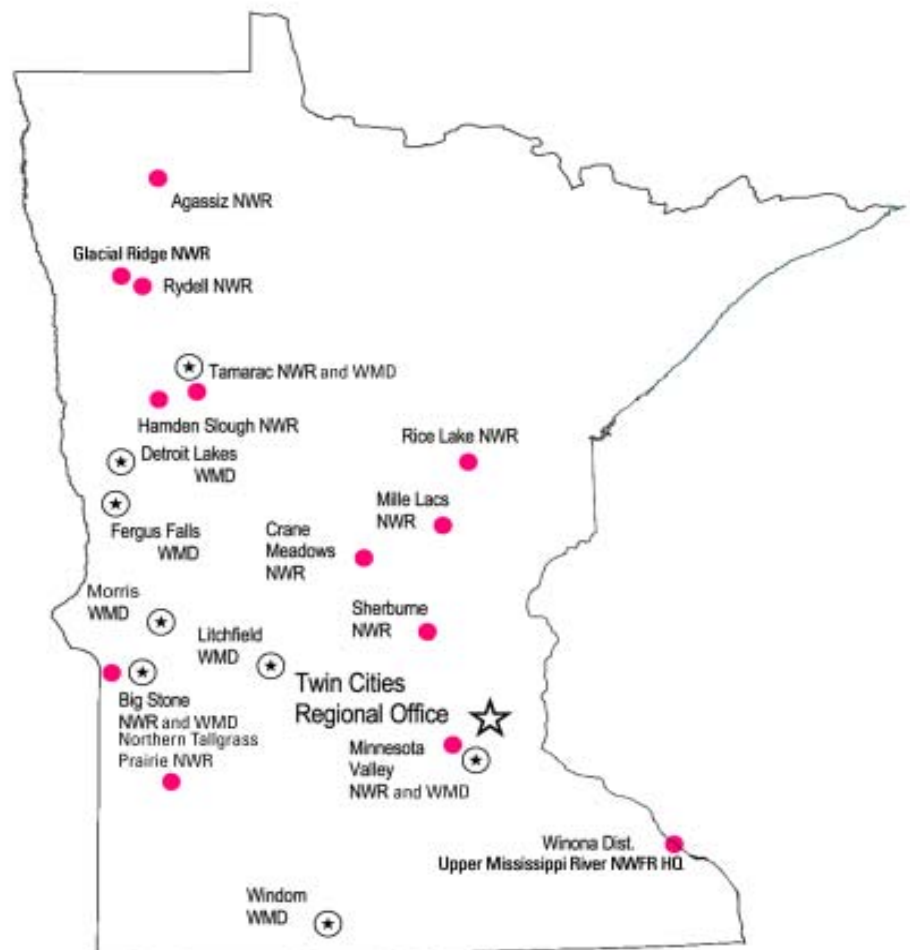
9 Managers/Res. Spec.

6 Park Rangers

6 Biologists/Bio. Tech.

3 Maintenance Workers

3 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 Minnesota

Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge:

Staff vacancies have resulted in a 50 percent reduction of maintenance on public use facilities significantly affecting visitor enjoyment.

Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District:

The projected loss of staff will result in the elimination of biological surveys used to influence wildlife habitat restoration and land protection activities. Several local partnerships will also likely be terminated due to lack of staff.

Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge:

Projected staff reductions will reduce the hours of operation of the Visitor Center and will adversely affect public use of the refuge.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge:

The loss of staff will result in reduced maintenance of the station's public use facilities which will adversely impact the visiting public. Day closures of the Visitor Center are planned.

Glacial Ridge and Rydell National Wildlife Refuges:

Projected staff losses will require the reduction of noxious weed control on both refuges. This will be especially detrimental at Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge where active native grassland and wetland restoration is ongoing.

Fergus Falls Wetland Management District:

Staff shortages will result in reductions in: 1) invasive species control on native prairie by 75 percent; 2) native grass seed harvest by 25 percent; and, 3) restoration of native grass seeding by 65 percent.

Reductions in wildlife management activities will have a negative impact on downstream water quality enhancement which translates into a loss of production for mallards, black-crowned night herons, and black terns.

Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge:

Existing staff at Hamden Slough will be reassigned to Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District.

Litchfield Wetland Management District:

Projected staff losses will result in the station's inability to restore and maintain quality wetland and grassland habitats on approximately 1,100 acres.

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

Projected staff losses over time will reduce biological monitoring used for decision-making on this 240,000-acre refuge and reduce public information, education, and outreach programs reaching millions of visitors. Coordination with four states and the Corps of Engineers will be reduced, causing delay in decisions and actions affecting fish and wildlife habitat and public use on the refuge.

Morris Wetland Management District:

The District no longer actively manages 31 water control structures which negatively affects the ability to manage more than 1,400 acres of wetlands for waterfowl and other wetland wildlife. The expansion of partnerships with local groups will also be significantly compromised.

Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge:

The loss of one of the station's maintenance positions will result in reduced snow removal on refuge roads, hiking trails, parking areas and at the headquarters/visitor center, all of which will have an impact on public use opportunities.