



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Midwest Region

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 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.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is divided into eight regions across the Nation. Each region is reviewing its mission, personnel and operational costs in order to develop a plan that best fits the unique character and needs of each section of the country.

Midwest Region

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Midwest Region National Wildlife Refuge System consists of 54 national wildlife refuges, 12 wetland management districts and more than one million acres of public land and water in the eight states of Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Personnel and Operational Costs

Since fiscal year 2004, the Regional Refuge System has operated with a relatively static annual base budget of \$28.5 million. At the same time, personnel costs have increased each year. Operational costs, such as fuel, utilities and other expenses have also increased.

Management Efficiency

The Region has worked to find efficiencies in operational costs by developing innovative processes such as Maintenance Action Teams, coordinating and sharing research and inventory projects and reducing energy costs. While these efforts have provided some savings, it is not enough to offset personnel and operational cost increases.

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.

At the end of fiscal year 2006 (Sept. 31, 2006), the Region had already reduced staffing levels by 35 positions, approximately 10 percent. An additional 36 positions must be eliminated by the end of fiscal year 2009, an average of 12 positions per year.

These positions will be eliminated through natural attrition, retirement and relocations if needed.

“The National Wildlife Refuge System has always operated with fewer staff and less funding than any other federal land management agency. Now, faced with reducing our field workforce by 20 percent, the Refuge System is forced to reduce wildlife and habitat management efforts, as well as services offered to the visiting public.”

- Midwest Regional Refuge System Chief
Nita M. Fuller

Reduction in Management Capability and Visitor Services

Due to this reduction in staff, the Region'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 over the next three years.

What it Means on the Ground

One example of the impact these personnel reductions will have is at **Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge** in Iowa where 250 acres of prairie restoration planting will not occur and 3,000 students will not be able to participate in educational programs at the refuge.

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

Midwest Region Refuge System Staff Losses

by end of fiscal year 2009

Illinois

9 positions

27% reduction

- 1 Manager/Res. Spec.
- 2 Park Rangers
- 1 Biologist/Bio. Tech
- 4 Maintenance Worker
- 1 Administrative Staff

Michigan

4 positions

20% reduction

- 1 Manager/Res. Spec.
- 2 Park Rangers
- 1 Biologist/Bio. Tech

Ohio

1 position

10% reduction

- 1 Maintenance Worker

Minnesota

27 positions

20% reduction

- 9 Managers/Res. Spec.
- 6 Park Rangers
- 6 Biologists/Bio. Tech.
- 3 Maintenance Workers
- 3 Administrative Staff

Wisconsin

10 positions

25% reduction

- 3 Managers/Res. Spec.
- 1 Park Rangers
- 4 Biologists/Bio. Tech.
- 1 Maintenance Worker
- 1 Administrative Staff

Indiana

6 positions

38% reduction

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

Iowa

8 positions

15% reduction

- 3 Manager/Res. Spec.
- 3 Park Rangers
- 1 Biological Tech
- 1 Maintenance Worker

Missouri

6 positions

18% reduction

- 2 Biologists/Bio. Tech.
- 1 Park Ranger
- 2 Maintenance Workers
- 1 Administrative Staff