

Silvio O. Conte

National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Massachusetts

Represented by the following Members of Congress:

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D)
Senator John F. Kerry (D)
Rep. John W. Olver (D-1st)
Rep. Richard E. Neal (D-2nd)
Rep. James P. McGovern (D-3rd)

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Purpose

The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was established to protect the abundance and diversity of native species throughout the 7.2- million-acre Connecticut River watershed. This is accomplished through land acquisition and management, and by providing technical and financial support to partners for improved habitat management and environmental education projects. The refuge is one of 545 that compose the National Wildlife Refuge System, and ranks nationally within the top ten priority land conservation projects for plants, fish, wildlife and people.

Public Use Notes

- Great Falls Discovery Center

Management Activities

- Work with many public and private partners to protect rare species, native plants and animals and important habitats

- Provide leadership to partners throughout New England to control invasive species
- Develop cooperative visitor centers to educate the public about wildlife resources and issues within the watershed

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Connecticut River

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Highlights

Congress appropriated \$650,000 for easement and fee land acquisition in fiscal year 2006.

Acquired 23 acres in the state, thus establishing the Fort River Division located in Amherst and Hadley.

About 100 people who among them manage almost 700,000 acres in six states attended one of five invasive plant control workshops coordinated by the refuge. Over 110 people are on a waiting list for 2006 workshops.

From 1996 to 2001, the refuge helped Massachusetts citizens by competitively awarding 70 challenge cost-share projects to support grassroots efforts to restore habitats and provide environmental education.

The Great Falls Discovery Center opened in October 2003. The facility is open to the public on Friday and Saturday, and for special functions or programs by appointment. Walk-through dioramas guide visitors on a journey from the mouth of the Connecticut River to its headwaters in northern New Hampshire.

Issues

Rapid urbanization in the southern half of the watershed threatens the limited high-quality habitat identified for protection.

