



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Natural Resource Program Center

National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System, administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), is the world's premier system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve America's fish, wildlife, and plants. The Refuge System includes 556 National Wildlife Refuges and 38 Wetland Management Districts.



Seabird Survey on Ulak Island.
Credit: Karen Sullivan

Background

The Natural Resource Program Center is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System and will directly support the science-based management of the Nation's 554 National Wildlife Refuges and 38 Wetland Management Districts that manage more than 150 million acres of public lands and waters across the United States in all 50 States, several Territories, and the marine environment.

The underpinning legislation guiding the formation of the Center is the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-57). The Act states that the Secretary shall, "monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge."

What does the Center Do?

The primary purpose of the new Center is to collect and synthesize information which supports management at multiple geographic scales and informs decisions at all organizational levels.

The Center also informs adaptation strategies to climate change and other environmental stressors and assists local managers and staffs on National Wildlife Refuges by providing sound, scientific protocols and data to inform management decisions and evaluate impacts of management actions.



Tagging horseshoe crabs for monitoring. Credit: USFWS

The Center will streamline and enhance the Refuge System's scientific capacity through integrating scientific protocols with other agencies, states, and the scientific communities to provide contributions that transcend the National Wildlife Refuge System and provide consistency of methodologies that will facilitate outreach messages to partners and the public.



How will the Center accomplish this?

The Center will work with partners and develop standardized peer-reviewed protocols for information collection. The Center will manage data in accordance with the data standards of the federal government, the agency, and the Department of the Interior.



Greater sage-grouse. Credit: USFWS

Data will be readily available to field station employees, other agencies, the academic community, and the general public when appropriate. Science-based decision support tools will be developed for on-the-ground managers to bolster the linkage between the science and management actions. Scientific data from the NWRS will inform and validate predictive models on climate change as well as other relevant models.

Why Fort Collins, CO?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is locating the office in Fort Collins in order to leverage resources with key partners and ensure sound stewardship of public funds.

Science offices for both the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey are located in Fort Collins. Having physical proximity to these offices will help the Service integrate systems across the federal government and minimize duplication of effort.

What resources have been appropriated for this effort?

In FY2010 the Service received \$12M to begin this effort with \$3M for the Center and \$9M disbursed nation-wide for the overall effort. In FY2011 an additional \$8M was appropriated for the effort. At present, the Center has filled 11 of its authorized 15 positions.



Endangered Redbelly turtle hatchlings.

Credit: Elizabeth Jackson

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January 2012