



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Southwest Airlines Becomes Official Airline of the NWRA**

**Washington, DC** – The National Wildlife Refuge Association is pleased to announce that Southwest Airlines has been chosen as the organization’s “Official Airline”. Southwest has generously sponsored NWRA’s Refuge Photo Contest, promoted NWRA’s work through *Spirit Magazine*, and has put employees to work at national wildlife refuges around the country. With a new \$20,000 donation to NWRA, Southwest ups its already exceptional commitment to supporting NWRA’s wildlife conservation mission.

“We’re honored to welcome Southwest Airlines as our Official Airline,” said Evan Hirsche, NWRA President. “For years our staff have relied on Southwest to take us to where the refuges and wildlife are; by designating Southwest as NWRA’s Official Airline, we’re making official what everyone already knows!”

America’s 554 national wildlife refuges are invaluable to wildlife and offer outstanding opportunities for people to experience and appreciate our natural world -- there’s a national wildlife refuge within just an hour’s drive of nearly all major metropolitan areas. Yet America’s wildlife and refuges face challenges from invasive species, pollution and human encroachment, and their wellbeing depends on an informed public and engaged local communities.

“Southwest Airlines shares the National Wildlife Refuge Association’s vision of a world where conserving our environment is a commitment shared by all, which is why we are thrilled to have partnered with the National Wildlife Refuge Association to preserve these natural spaces,” said Linda Rutherford, Vice President of Communication and Strategic Outreach. “Being a good steward of the environment is the right thing to do, and each day our Employees Share the Spirit to make our world a better place.”

NWRA works across the country to conserve the most biologically-sensitive landscapes, enlisting the support of local citizens and diverse state and federal partners. In addition, NWRA provides training and guidance to more than 250 local refuge Friends volunteer groups that are vital to creating local public support for national wildlife refuges and wildlife conservation. Southwest Airlines’ award-winning customer service and on-time arrivals help to ensure NWRA staff can focus on the most important task at hand: Protecting America’s Wildlife.

*The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America’s wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries that secure its ecological integrity.*

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