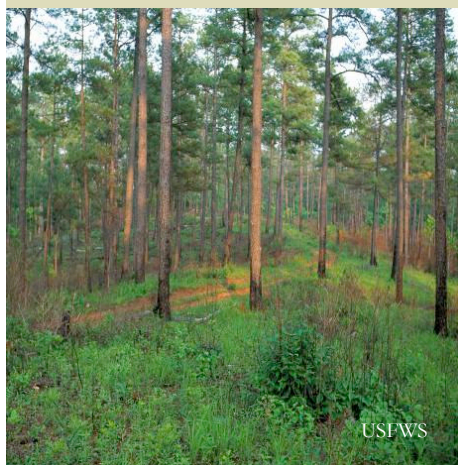


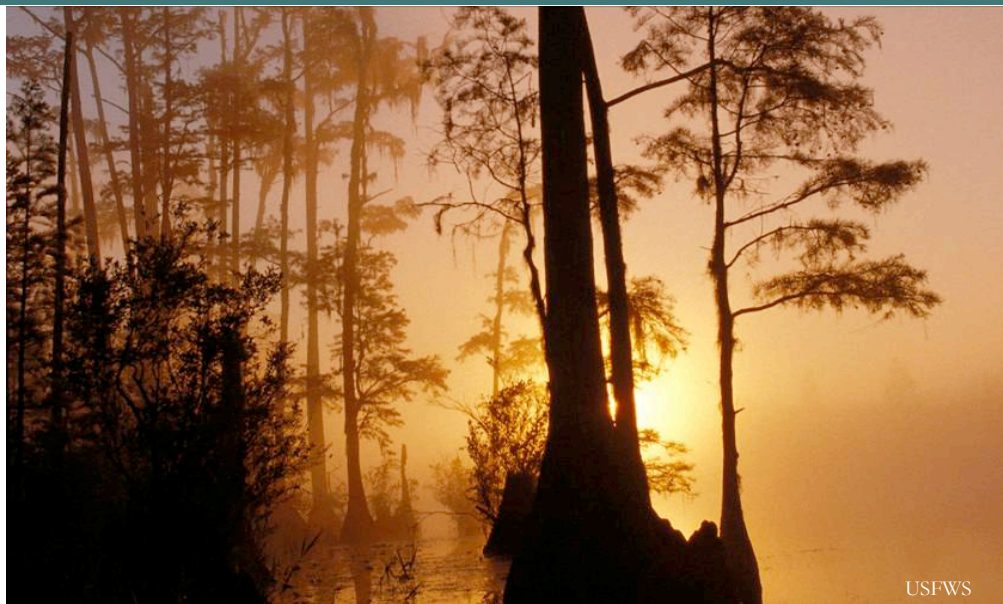
# Restoring Our Refuges: A Plan for Georgia



The loss of essential staff at the **Savannah Coastal Refuge Complex**, home to endangered West Indian manatees, will result in accelerated degradation of expensive, essential marine equipment, and the closure of a wildlife drive which receives 50,000 visitors a year.



Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge plans to restore 7,200 acres of refuge forest lands. The goal is not only to recover endangered species and establish a more fire-resistant forest, but also to provide economic benefits to the hard-hit area, willed with unemployed forestry workers. The refuge hopes to hire local timber management service companies to harvest trees and accelerate refuge restoration plans.



Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Georgia

## **The National Wildlife Refuge System struggles to meet its wildlife conservation mission**

**In Georgia alone, 47 mission-critical projects sit on the shelf.**

Georgia is home to spectacular natural resources including 9 National Wildlife Refuges, including the vast Okefenokee Swamp, home to one of the highest densities of alligators in the world. These wildlife refuges are national treasures, providing habitat for federally threatened or endangered species, including Wood storks.

In 2008, almost 850 thousand visitors enjoyed hiking, birding, wildlife photography, environmental education, and hunting and fishing on Georgia refuges.

**Yet, national wildlife refuges in Georgia may not be able to continue protecting wildlife and offering world-class recreation.** Georgia wildlife refuges are saddled with deferred operations and maintenance projects that exceed \$75 million.

**Today, the state's wildlife refuges need at least 43 additional positions.** Those include 16 wildlife biologists, 7 guides and educators, and 15 essential maintenance and enforcement personnel. Without these people, Georgia refuges will fall further behind in meeting the demand.

**What's the solution?** CARE recommends \$514 million for the Refuge System's FY 2010 Operations and Maintenance budget and an increase to at least \$765 million by FY 2013

## About C.A.R.E.

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement is a diverse coalition of 22 conservation, recreation, sporting, and scientific organizations with more than 14 million members and supporters across the United States. CARE has been working since 1995 to help the National Wildlife Refuge System fight a serious funding crisis.

*American Birding Association*  
*American Fisheries Society*  
*American Sportfishing Association*  
*Assateague Coastal Trust*  
*Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation*  
*Defenders of Wildlife*  
*Ducks Unlimited*  
*Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*  
*Izaak Walton League of America*  
*National Audubon Society*  
*National Rifle Association of America*  
*National Wildlife Federation*  
*National Wildlife Refuge Association*  
*Safari Club International*  
*The Corps Network*  
*The Nature Conservancy*  
*The Wilderness Society*  
*The Wildlife Society*  
*Trout Unlimited*  
*U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance*  
*Wildlife Forever*  
*Wildlife Management Institute*

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[www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/  
CareHome.html](http://www.FundRefuges.org/CARE/CareHome.html)



## **Saddled with declining purchasing power and a \$3.5 billion backlog of deferred operations and maintenance projects, the National Wildlife Refuge System is in a financial vise.**

The Refuge System needs an annual increase of \$15 million in its operations budget just to keep pace with inflation and demand. The Refuge System welcomed more than 41.2 million visitors in 2008, up from 33 million in 1998.

National Wildlife Refuges are undeniable economic engines. According to the *Banking on Nature* report from the FWS:

- Spending by visitors to refuges generated more than \$1.7 billion of sales nationwide, created 27,000 jobs in local communities and added \$543 million in employment income. These economic data do not include Alaska or Pacific island refuges, which together generate millions of annual visitors.
- At *Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge*, for every dollar appropriated to the refuge budget, almost \$34 are generated in expenditures to the local economy. Visitor spending totaled nearly \$40 million, generating 529 jobs, over \$12 million in employment income and almost \$5 million in tax revenue.

Yet, according to Management Systems International, a respected business consultant, the Refuge System has seen its real purchasing power decline by 11 percent between fiscal years 2003 and 2008.

The Government Accountability Office found that with continuing funding constraints and an expanding list of challenges, it may be difficult to maintain the Refuge System as envisioned in law – “where the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge System are maintained; priority visitor services are provided; and the strategic growth of the system is continued.”

There is a solution to safeguard the world’s finest network of public lands dedicated to wildlife conservation: \$514 million in FY 2010 for the National Wildlife Refuge System and an increase to at least \$765 million by FY 2013 – steps that will restore operational quality and begin to chip away at the deferred operations and maintenance backlog.