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Sen. Feinstein Honored For Her Support of National Wildlife Refuges Alliance Praises California Democrat's Efforts to Protect and Fund Refuge System

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) was honored today with an award from the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) in recognition of her work as a steward of the National Wildlife Refuge System. She joined Rep. David R. Obey (D-WI) in being recognized for their efforts to protect—and adequately fund—the refuge system.

Her award was presented by Wilderness Society President William H. Meadows at a Capitol Hill reception sponsored by CARE and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 laid the framework for a system that today includes 549 refuges representing nearly 150 million acres of the most visually stunning and biologically diverse lands and waters in the U.S. With at least one refuge in every state, the system attracts more than 40 million visitors each year.

“I care deeply about protecting America’s wildlife habitat,” Sen. Feinstein said. “The National Wildlife Refuge System provides numerous recreational opportunities and is home to hundreds of unique native species, including more than 250 threatened or endangered plants, animals and fish. As the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior and Environment, I remain committed to providing lasting protection for America’s wild places, even during these tough fiscal times.”

Sen. Feinstein was recognized for her demonstrated commitment to protecting these biologically diverse wild spots by working to secure \$434.1 million for the system in FY2008 as Chairman of Senate Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on the Interior Department and Related Agencies. In the recently passed American Recovery and Reinvestment act of 2009, Sen. Feinstein helped ensure green jobs would be created on the National Wildlife Refuge System by securing \$10 million to construct roads, \$115 million for construction and \$165 million for resource management. Feinstein has been a staunch advocate and champion of the National Wildlife Refuge System for many years, including her work improving protection and conservation of native fish,

wildlife and habitats as part of the 15,100 acre restoration of San Francisco Bay's salt ponds to wetlands and for all her work on the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act mandates a "wildlife first" conservation philosophy, and the system's refuges are home to more than 700 bird species, 220 mammals, and 260 endangered or threatened species. While protecting wildlife is the primary mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the system offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities, including wildlife photography and observation, hunting and fishing, environmental education and interpretation. The system generates some \$1.4 billion in annual revenues.

"The Refuge System faces a budget crisis of extraordinary proportions, with a \$3.5 billion funding backlog that has led to staff cuts, refuge closures, and curtailed visitor programs," said Evan Hirsche, president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association and chair of the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement. "We're grateful to have Senator Feinstein leading the charge for a healthy and vital Refuge System. With her vision, our American wildlife heritage has a fighting chance."

Working in partnership since 1995, CARE consists of 22 wildlife, sporting, conservation and scientific groups dedicated to educating Congress and the American public about the Refuge System. Recognizing the value of a healthy system for the wildlife and habitat refuges seek to protect, CARE works to represent the five million national constituents of its member organizations by securing strong investments in these remarkable lands and waters.

Please find additional information on CARE at:

www.refugenet.org/CARE/CareHome.html

Please find additional information from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at:

www.fws.gov/refuges/