

American Birding Association
American Fisheries Society
American Sportfishing Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
Ducks Unlimited
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Izaak Walton League of America
Marine Conservation Biology Institute
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

June 10, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement, or CARE, a diverse coalition of 22 conservation, hunting, fishing and scientific organizations representing over 15 million Americans, urges you not to cut the Fiscal Year 2012 budget for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). In order to respond to this environmental disaster and its devastating impacts on the NWRS, the FWS needs significantly greater resources, not fewer.

Even in the absence of natural and man-made disasters, the FWS struggles annually with unmet needs – the NWRS alone is underfunded by 44%. For the FWS, already spread thin before oil began threatening nearly 40 wildlife refuges and countless species of fish, wildlife and birds, the 5% budget cut would have dire consequences to its ability to help wildlife recover in the Gulf as well as its ability to manage wildlife on refuges nationwide.

Our national wildlife refuges protect a host of species, including sea turtles, whales, dolphins, brown pelicans and numerous other migratory birds, that are being decimated by the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. The FWS is projecting that 20% of its staff from throughout the nation will be deployed to the Gulf at some point to address the ongoing crisis, thus depriving non-Gulf refuges of critical resources to address on-going needs or future emergencies. As summer approaches, the FWS will already have fewer resources to tackle challenges such as floods, hurricanes, and forest fires as they arise on refuges and elsewhere. Should additional funding cuts occur in the future, these problems will be greatly exacerbated. Understaffed wildlife refuges will be forced to make difficult decisions to cut programs that protect wildlife, such as vital scientific inventory and monitoring programs, and ultimately will compromise the conservation mission of the NWRS.

Accordingly, we urge you to provide significant increases for the FWS generally, and the NWRS in particular, in order to ensure that the FWS can continue to vigorously and effectively respond to the Gulf oil disaster and its devastating impact on America's wildlife.

Thank you for your consideration,

Evan Hirsche
CARE Chairman and President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association