



American Birding Association ♦ American Fisheries Society
American Sportfishing Association ♦ Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation ♦ Defenders of Wildlife
Ducks Unlimited ♦ Izaak Walton League of America
Marine Conservation 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 ♦ Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited ♦ U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance
Wildlife Forever ♦ Wildlife Management Institute

September 12, 2018

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

We, the above signed members of the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE), thank you for including funding for the National Wildlife Refuge System maintenance backlog in H.R. 6510, the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act.

The National Wildlife Refuge System stands alone as the only federal land and water conservation system with a mission that prioritizes wildlife and habitat conservation alongside wildlife-dependent recreation for the benefit of the American people. However, chronic underfunding of the System has led to the accumulation of a large backlog: \$1.4 billion as of today for the USFWS.

Over the past seven years, the Refuge System has worked to reduce that backlog. In FY2010, the operations and maintenance backlog stood at \$3.5 billion, yet through diligent application of available federal funds, a targeted prioritization to address the backlog, and a thorough examination of listed projects, the Refuge System has been able to reduce the maintenance backlog to \$1.4 billion. The Refuge System systematically made addressing their backlog a priority and an increase of funding allocated to them, such as what is proposed in H.R. 6510, would allow them to completely eliminate their remaining backlog.

CARE was formed in 1995 to address these funding issues. Consisting of 23 organizations, from sportsmen to wildlife conservationists, to scientists, we have just one goal – to increase funding for the Refuge System.

Found in every U.S. state and territory, national wildlife refuges conserve a diversity of America's environmentally sensitive and economically vital ecosystems, including wetlands, coasts, forests, prairie, tundra, deserts, and oceans. They provide Americans

with an opportunity to visit conservation lands and engage in wildlife dependent recreation, where appropriate, The 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act outlined the “Big Six” priority public uses: hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

Thank you again for including funding for the National Wildlife Refuge System maintenance backlog in H.R. 6510.

Please contact Caroline Brouwer, Director of Government Affairs at the National Wildlife Refuge Association and CARE Coordinator at 202-420-9625 or cbrouwer@refugeassociation for more information or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement