

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
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
Assateague Coastal Trust
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute

September 18, 2008

The Honorable Robert Byrd
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd:

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE), a diverse coalition of 22 sporting, conservation and scientific organizations representing over 14 million Americans, requests your attention to the urgent needs facing national wildlife refuges as a result of recent natural disasters. The National Wildlife Refuge System, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), is in dire need of emergency funding – specifically for clean up efforts, maintenance and construction. We respectfully urge you to address the refuge needs arising from Hurricanes Gustav, Hannah and Ike and the severe damage caused by floods in the Midwest in the next emergency supplemental bill.

While assessments are still being conducted and calculated, initial estimates are almost \$300 million in damages from recent hurricanes and spring flooding in the Midwest; a number equal to almost three quarters of the Refuge System's budget for this year alone. The FWS received supplemental funding for hurricane relief in 2007 and was able to initiate and complete projects quickly and efficiently, putting dollars directly into local economies.

Across the nation, and particularly in the battered areas along the Gulf Coast, refuges play a significant role in serving as the economic engine of their local communities. Eco tourism plays an important role in these communities and with the fall migration already begun and the peak tourism season about to start, it is imperative to give these refuges the resources they need.

The NWRS has been stressed to the breaking point by maintenance backlogs, and has just begun to recover. This supplemental will ensure that the gains that have been made recently are not nullified by the disasters that have befallen the country.

Thank you very much for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Evan M. Hirsche
for the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement