

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 22, 2008

Dear Colleague:

We urge you to read the attached report entitled *Restoring America's Wildlife Legacy 2008*. The report was prepared by the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement, which is a diverse coalition of twenty-two sporting, conservation, recreation, and scientific organizations that recognize the tremendous value of a healthy National Wildlife Refuge System to wildlife, ecosystems, people, and local economies.

Restoring America's Wildlife Legacy 2008 details the nationwide impact of funding shortfalls in our National Wildlife Refuge System. The report illustrates some of the deteriorating conditions at national wildlife refuges and identifies the consequences of under-funding to the 40 million annual visitors, the habitats, and the wildlife that depend on a thriving Refuge System. Several years of stagnant budgets have rapidly ballooned the operations and maintenance backlog to \$3.5 billion, and led to plans for a dramatic 20% downsizing of the nationwide workforce. With over 300 positions recently eliminated and another 250 on the chopping block, these dramatic reductions are burdening dedicated, but severely overworked, staff.

The report provides quantifiable justification for increasing funding levels for fiscal years 2009 to 2013 in order to address the enormous operations backlog and deteriorating conditions of our nation's 548 national wildlife refuges, 215 of which have no staff at all.

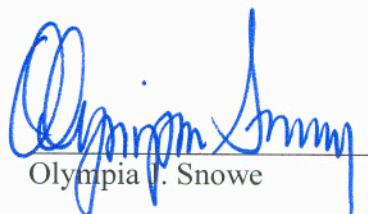
With the support of Chairman Feinstein and Ranking Member Allard of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, last year we successfully embarked on a multi-year effort to increase funding and address the backlog. We thank those of you who joined us last month in sending a letter to the Appropriations Committee requesting \$514 million in funding for fiscal year 2009.

Please take a moment to glance through the report. To learn more about what is happening to the wildlife refuges in your state, please visit: <http://www.fundrefuges.org/CARE/StateFunding.html>. For more information, please contact Kelly Reed in Senator Feingold's office (x4-1221) or Patrick Woodcock in Senator Snow's office (x4-4227).

Sincerely,



Russell D. Feingold



Olympia J. Snowe