



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Memorandum OCT - 9 2002

To Regional Directors, Regions 1- 7

From: **Deputy**

Director

Subject: Invasive Species Initiative

As we enter the new fiscal year and the Centennial year for the National Wildlife Refuge System, I have some great news for all of you. As you know, the President has challenged all Americans to volunteer 2,000 hours during the course of their lives. The Service is helping to fulfill this challenge, in cooperation with the National Wildlife Refuge Association, by launching a new initiative directed at one of the most insidious and pervasive problems facing our National Wildlife Refuges -- *invasive species*. Invasive species contaminate approximately 6 million acres of refuge land and our current backlog of control projects is more than \$150 million and growing rapidly.

On October 10, the NWRA and the Service will announce the initial steps in a long-term effort to educate, equip and activate our friends groups and volunteers to assist in the war on invasive species. Even though it is clear that we will be operating under some type of continuing resolution scenarios for the immediate future, we are hopeful that we will eventually secure our anticipated appropriations for 2003, including invasive species control funding on refuges. In the meantime, for planning purposes, other funding sources could be targeted to this effort such as our existing challenge cost share dollars and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Centennial Legacy Grants. Project leaders should begin identifying projects appropriate for assistance from volunteers, and matching those projects with available funding. Once you have identified an appropriate project and resources to support it, we have a great new tool to identify recruits to reinforce our existing volunteer workforce. I encourage you to use Volunteer.gov/gov, a recently launched web site developed by Interior for all levels of government that is designed to provide Americans with one simple place where they can find a public sector volunteer opportunity that is attractive and interesting. As projects are identified and funding is available these opportunities should be posted on this web site.

Please provide this memorandum to all of your Refuge project leaders and to other employees who can help make this effort a success.

Everyone should stay tuned, as more information on this initiative will be sent to each of you in the coming weeks and months. Our war against invasive species will be a long one, and learning to usefully deploy our tremendous network of friends and volunteers will be invaluable in that effort. What a great way to begin the Centennial Anniversary of America's National Wildlife Refuge System!