



Newsletter No. 30

Winter 2015

Audubon At Home

Wondering what it takes to attract birds to your garden? Let Audubon PA show you how to create your own backyard habitat for wildlife using six simple principles that lead to better ecological address and a greener "you. " Judith Acker will present the program "Audubon At Home" at the Erie National Wildlife Refuge Saturday, February 21st at 6:30PM. Call 814-789-3585 to register.

Trash to Treasure Contest 2015

Originally created as part of a Summer Fest with a "Recycle" theme, this contest was so popular that we made it an annual event. This contest is for "kids" of all ages. There are award categories for 8 & Under, Ages 9-12, Ages 13-16, and 17+.

Entrants are encouraged to "Rescue some trash from the recycling bin or the garbage and make it into something pretty or useful. Bring it to the refuge to display and maybe win a cash prize." The rules stipulate that the major component of each entry should be something previously used that would normally be thrown away or recycled after they are used.

Each year we receive more entries and they are amazing in their diversity and imagination. Entries must be delivered to the Erie National Wildlife Refuge's headquarters building and they will be displayed there and at Summer Fest. More details coming soon.

ENWR's Nature Photo Contest

2015 is the year for the Erie National Wildlife Refuge's Biannual Nature Photo Contest, so all you amateur photographers out there should warm up your cameras and get ready. More information will be coming soon.

President Requests \$1.6 Billion in Fiscal Year 2016 for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The President's Fiscal Year 2016 discretionary budget request supports \$1.6 billion in programs for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an increase of \$135.7 million over the 2015 enacted level.

“Investing in the conservation of our wildlife and habitat resources results in myriad health and economic benefits to U.S. communities,” said Service Director Dan Ashe. “Investing in the next American generation is also critical, so we are creating new ways to engage young audiences in outdoor experiences, both on wildlife refuges and partner lands. With 80 percent of the U.S. population currently residing in urban communities, helping urban dwellers to rediscover the outdoors is a priority for the Service.”

This budget invests in the science-based conservation and restoration of land, water and native species on a landscape scale, considering the impacts of a changing climate; expansion and improvement of recreational opportunities — such as hunting, fishing and wildlife watching — for all Americans, including urban populations; increased efforts to combat illegal wildlife trafficking, which is an international crisis; and the operation and maintenance of public lands.

America's Great Outdoors – This initiative, a Service priority, seeks to empower all Americans to share the benefits of the outdoors, and leave a healthy, vibrant outdoor legacy for generations to come. In 2016, a total of \$1.5 billion in current funding is proposed for the Service as part of the Administration's initiative to reconnect Americans to the outdoors while developing a landscape level understanding of a changing climate. This includes \$1.3 billion for Service operations, an increase of \$119.2 million over the 2015 enacted level.

A critical component of America's Great Outdoors is the **National Wildlife Refuge System**. Funding for the operation and maintenance of the Refuge System is requested at \$508.2 million, an increase of \$34 million above the 2015 enacted level. Included in that increase is an additional \$5 million for the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, which will extend opportunities to engage more urban youth and adults.

The budget also requests \$108.3 million for grant programs administered by the Service that support America's Great Outdoors goals. Programs such as the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants are an important source of funds for the conservation and improvement of a range of wildlife and the landscapes on which they depend.

Land Acquisition – The 2016 Federal Land Acquisition program builds on efforts started in 2011 to strategically invest in the highest priority conservation areas through better coordination among Department of the Interior agencies and the U.S. Forest Service. This budget includes \$164.8 million for federal land acquisition, composed of \$58.5 million in current funding and \$106.3 million in proposed permanent funding. The budget provides an overall increase of \$117.2 million

above the 2015 enacted level. An emphasis on the use of these funds is to work with willing landowners to secure public access to places to recreate, hunt and fish.

Cooperative Recovery – Species recovery is another important Service priority addressed in this budget. For 2016, the President requests a total of \$10.7 million, an increase of \$4.8 million over the enacted level, for cooperative recovery. The focus will be on implementing recovery actions for species nearing delisting or reclassification from endangered to threatened, and actions that are urgently needed for critically endangered species.

Ecological Services – The budget includes \$258.2 million to conserve, protect and enhance listed and at-risk wildlife and their habitats, an increase of \$32.3 million compared with the 2015 enacted level. These increases include a \$4 million program increase to support conservation of the sagebrush steppe ecosystem, which extends across 11 states in the intermountain West. Conservation of this vast area requires a collaborative effort unprecedented in geographic scope and magnitude. To achieve sustainable conservation success for this ecosystem, the Service has identified priority needs for basic scientific expertise, technical assistance for on-the-ground support, and internal and external coordination, and partnership building with western states, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and other partners.

Additionally, the budget request contains a \$4 million increase to ensure appropriate design and quick approval of important restoration projects that will be occurring in the Gulf of Mexico region in the near future. The Gulf of Mexico Watershed spans 31 states and is critical to the health and vitality of our nation’s natural and economic resources. The 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill dramatically increased the urgency of the Service’s work in the Gulf and our leadership responsibilities. Over the course of the next decade, billions of dollars in settlement funds, Clean Water Act penalties and Natural Resource Damage Assessment restitution will be directed toward projects to study and restore wildlife habitat in the Gulf of Mexico region. The Service is in high demand to provide technical assistance and environmental clearances for these projects, and this funding will ensure that this demand can be met.

To learn more about the President’s FY 2016 budget request for the Department of the Interior, visit: www.doi.gov/budget.



More Than 113,000 Acres Conserved Last Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year 2014, which ended on September 30, 2014, saw some growth in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Refuge System established one new refuge -- Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon — in FY14 and added 113,403 acres, including 28,549 acres in fee title and 84,854 acres under easement or lease, at 78 national wildlife refuges and 26 wetland management districts, spanning 40 states. The total includes 74,435 acres conserved in the Prairie Pothole Region.

As of September 30, 2014, the Refuge System includes 562 national wildlife refuges, 209 waterfowl production area counties (managed by 38 wetland management districts), and 50 coordination areas, spanning more than 150 million acres. Refuge System staff also manage an additional 418 million acres of submerged lands and waters in four marine national monuments. The FY14 Statistical Data Tables for Lands Under Control of the Fish & Wildlife Service are available online at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/land/LandReport.html>.

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