



News from

# Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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## Rep. Kind: Future of Nation's Refuges at Risk

***Diverse Coalition Issues New Report Showing that Chronic Under-Funding Is Threatening America's Wildlife and Wild Lands***

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI), co-chair of the Congressional Wildlife Caucus today expressed concern over the future of the nation's wildlife refuge system in response to a new report released by the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE), which is comprised of conservation, sportsman, recreation, and scientific organizations. According to the report, the system is operating at half the budget it needs, and chronic under funding will threaten the refuge system with increased crime, invasive species, habitat fragmentation, global warming and a sharply reduced workforce.

"Already, about a third of all wildlife refuges have no staff at all, and the Fish and Wildlife Service's regional workforce plans have identified scores of additional refuges that are going to close their gates or have on-site staff removed," Rep. Kind said. "Not only does this hurt the hunters and anglers that can no longer gain access to these areas, but lack of staffing can also cause biological operations to cease and invasive species to expand unchecked. We cannot allow our refuges, some of the last remaining areas of pristine wildlife habitat in America, to deteriorate."

The report, "Restoring America's Wildlife Legacy 2007," details the nationwide impact of funding shortfalls and illustrates many of the deteriorating conditions at national wildlife refuges. It also outlines the consequences of under-funding and recommends funding levels for fiscal years 2009-2013 to offset the damage already occurring throughout the system.

The report indicates that our refuge system is at great risk due to severe budget shortfalls. "Operating today with less money than in 2004, the refuge system has reached a crisis point," states the report. "Because the refuge system can no longer keep pace with inflation, it is now in the process of eliminating staff and services."

Last month, Rep. Kind led an effort, along with the other co-chairs of the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus and 76 additional representatives to obtain \$451.5 million in funding for the system in FY07, which a comprehensive analysis indicates is the amount needed for the system to keep up with inflation and maintain operations. In a letter to the leadership of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, Kind cites the 40 million Americans that visit refuges each year, with at least one refuge in every state.

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“I am proud to represent a district with three wildly popular wildlife refuges, which attract families from across the nation and the world,” Rep. Kind said. “As co-chair of the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus, I am committed to bringing this funding crisis to light and pressing my colleagues in Congress and the Bush Administration on the merits of fully funding our refuge system.”

According to recently released regional workforce plans from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the refuge system is cutting 20 percent of its staff, a permanent loss of 565 positions. The report finds that without these jobs, visitors will encounter:

- Shortened or eliminated visitor center hours;
- Dilapidated viewing platforms and hiking trails;
- Reduced or cancelled hunting and fishing events;
- Outdated educational materials and visitor information.

Without further funding, habitat maintenance and law enforcement staff will be limited in their ability to:

- Control invasive plant and animal species;
- Enforce safety regulations and protect refuge visitors;
- Manage habitat;
- Implement necessary conservation measures for endangered or threatened species.

The report goes on to conclude that “Unless Congress increases the annual appropriations for the refuge system soon, the Fish and Wildlife Service will be unable to perform its Congressionally mandated duty to ‘administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations.’”

The report can be found on line at <http://www.fundrefuges.org/care/carehome.html>