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**CONTACT:** Desiree Sorenson-Groves, [dgroves@refugeassociation.org](mailto:dgroves@refugeassociation.org), 202-290-5593

## **National Wildlife Refuge Association Applauds President's FY2016 Budget Request**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** - The National Wildlife Refuge Association applauds President Obama's FY2016 budget request for including a \$34 million increase for the National Wildlife Refuge System budget and \$900 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund among its conservation priorities.

The President's budget request includes \$508.2 million for the Refuge System's Operations and Maintenance Budget. This \$34 million increase for the Refuge System would provide funding for restoration projects, staff positions that have remained vacant for years, and improved recreation for the 46.5 million visitors that contribute over \$4 billion in economic output.

"President Obama's budget proposal reflects the importance the nation places on conservation, particularly in places like national wildlife refuges that generate jobs and revenue in every state and territory," said David Houghton, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

The budget includes increased funding for the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, an initiative of the National Wildlife Refuge System, which seeks to engage urban constituencies. Also included were two new legislative proposals. The first would give the Secretary of Interior limited authority to increase the price of a Duck Stamp to keep pace with inflation, with the approval of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission; and the second would give the Service the authority to recoup the cost of damages from responsible parties when they harm Refuge System or Fish Hatchery resources.

Other funding highlights include:

- Land and Water Conservation Fund at the full \$900 million, including \$164.6 million for Refuge System acquisitions;
- The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program at \$52.4 million;
- The Coastal Program at \$13.375 million;
- North American Wetlands Conservation Fund at \$34.1 million;
- Multinational Species Conservation Fund at \$11.06 million;
- State Wildlife Grants at \$70 million;

The Refuge System returns almost \$5 for every \$1 appropriated, and provides more than \$32 billion in ecosystem services.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association urges Congress to support the President's funding request for the Refuge System, Land and Water Conservation Fund, and wildlife conservation programs.

Congress is expected to take up the President's budget in the coming months and hopes to pass final appropriations bills by the end of the fiscal year, September 30, 2015.

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*The National Wildlife Refuge Association is the only independent nonprofit that promotes and protects the world's largest wildlife conservation network: the National Wildlife Refuge System. [www.refugeassociation.org](http://www.refugeassociation.org).*

