

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1538

Expressing support for the designation of the week beginning on October 13, 2024, as “National Wildlife Refuge Week”.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 8, 2024

Mr. THOMPSON of California (for himself, Mr. WITTMAN, Mr. VASQUEZ, Ms. STANSBURY, Ms. MACE, and Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for the designation of the week beginning on October 13, 2024, as “National Wildlife Refuge Week”.

Whereas the United States Fish and Wildlife Service administers the National Wildlife Refuge System to conserve, manage, and, where appropriate, restore fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of current and future generations;

Whereas, in 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt established the first national wildlife refuge on Pelican Island in Florida;

Whereas, in 2024, the National Wildlife Refuge System has grown to include 572 national wildlife refuges, 38 wetland management districts, and 5 marine national monu-

ments, with units located in every State and territory of the United States;

Whereas the National Wildlife Refuge System encompasses more than 850,000,000 acres of unique habitats and ecosystems, including tropical and boreal forests, wetlands, deserts, grasslands, arctic tundra, remote islands, and marine areas, and spans the 12 time zones of the United States, from the United States Virgin Islands to Guam;

Whereas national wildlife refuges support nearly 800 species of birds, 220 species of mammals, 250 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 1,100 species of fish;

Whereas national wildlife refuges provide protection to more than 380 threatened and endangered species;

Whereas more than 65 national wildlife refuges were established to conserve federally threatened or endangered species such as the American crocodile, California condor, Devil's Hole pupfish, and Antioch Dunes evening-primrose;

Whereas national wildlife refuges are the primary Federal lands that support waterfowl habitat;

Whereas, since 1934, the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund has generated more than \$2,000,000,000 and enabled the conservation of more than 6,300,000 acres of habitat for waterfowl and numerous other species in the National Wildlife Refuge System;

Whereas more than 180 national wildlife refuges conserve marine, coastal, and Great Lakes habitats, helping to protect communities by reducing the risk of storm-surge flooding, especially in low-lying floodplain and coastal areas;

Whereas meaningful engagement and proactive collaboration with Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, Alaska Native organizations, and the Native Hawaiian community is an integral aspect of the costewardship of shared natural resources, including National Wildlife Refuge System lands and waters;

Whereas important cultural and historic resources are protected on national wildlife refuges, such as—

(1) archaeological sites detailing the lives of Native Americans and early colonists at Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia;

(2) World War II sites in the Pacific, from Attu in Alaska to Midway Atoll in the Hawaiian Islands; and

(3) the remains of the home of Harriet Tubman's father at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland;

Whereas Tribal consultation is a cornerstone of historic preservation on national wildlife refuges where cultural resources and traditional sacred spaces are important to Native American Tribes, such as Pahrnagat National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada, where the Nuwuvi people finalized a plan with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to respect and showcase ancient petroglyphs;

Whereas national wildlife refuges use a range of management tools, including fire management, invasive species control, water management, wildlife health assessments, inventory and monitoring species, facility condition assessments, five-year infrastructure project plans, and other tools to conserve habitat and ensure opportunities for public access and recreation;

Whereas national wildlife refuges are important recreational and tourism destinations in communities across the

United States and offer a variety of recreational opportunities, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation;

Whereas the National Wildlife Refuge System receives more than 68,000,000 annual visits, which generate more than \$3,200,000,000 for local economies and support 41,000 jobs;

Whereas 436 units of the National Wildlife Refuge System have hunting programs and 378 units have fishing programs that, respectively, support more than 2,600,000 hunting visits and more than 8,600,000 fishing visits annually;

Whereas the National Wildlife Refuge System hosts nearly 42,000,000 annual birding and wildlife observation visits;

Whereas national wildlife refuges are important to local businesses and gateway communities;

Whereas, for every dollar appropriated to the National Wildlife Refuge System, an average of approximately \$5 is returned to local economies;

Whereas national wildlife refuges provide an important opportunity for children to discover and gain a greater appreciation for the natural world;

Whereas more than 23,000 volunteers contributed approximately 900,000 volunteer hours in fiscal year 2023, equal to the number of hours worked by 550 full-time employees;

Whereas, approximately 180 national wildlife refuge “Friends” organizations provide additional volunteer labor and serve as an important link between national wildlife refuges and local communities;

Whereas 101 units of the National Wildlife Refuge System are within 25 miles of population centers of 250,000 people or more;

Whereas, through the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service works to dismantle barriers that have blocked underserved communities from full and equal participation in outdoor recreation and wildlife conservation;

Whereas the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program fosters strong new conservation coalitions, educates and employs youth, engages communities, builds trust in government, and connects individuals with nature;

Whereas national wildlife refuges provide opportunities for people from all backgrounds to explore, connect with, and preserve the natural heritage of the United States;

Whereas, since 1995, natural wildlife refuges across the United States have held festivals, educational programs, guided tours, and other events to celebrate “National Wildlife Refuge Week” during the second full week of October;

Whereas the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has designated the week beginning on October 13, 2024, as National Wildlife Refuge Week; and

Whereas the designation of National Wildlife Refuge Week by the House of Representatives would recognize more than a century of conservation in the United States, raise awareness about the importance of wildlife and the National Wildlife Refuge System, and celebrate the myriad recreational opportunities available for the enjoyment of this network of protected lands: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

1 (1) supports the designation of “National Wild-
2 life Refuge Week”;

3 (2) encourages the observance of National Wild-
4 life Refuge Week with appropriate events and activi-
5 ties;

6 (3) recognizes the importance of national wild-
7 life refuges to wildlife conservation, the protection of
8 imperiled species and ecosystems, and wildlife-de-
9 pendent recreational uses;

10 (4) acknowledges the importance of national
11 wildlife refuges for their recreational opportunities
12 and contribution to local economies across the
13 United States;

14 (5) finds that national wildlife refuges play a
15 vital role in securing the hunting and fishing herit-
16 age of the United States for future generations;

17 (6) identifies the significance of national wild-
18 life refuges in advancing the traditions of wildlife ob-
19 servation, photography, environmental education,
20 and interpretation;

21 (7) recognizes the important work of urban na-
22 tional wildlife refuges in welcoming racially, eth-
23 nically, and economically diverse urban communities
24 that were long excluded, including work to—

1 (A) foster strong new conservation coalitions;
2

3 (B) provide education and employment opportunities to youth;
4

5 (C) improve communities;

6 (D) build trust in government; and

7 (E) connect individuals with nature;

8 (8) recognizes the National Wildlife Refuge
9 System's ongoing commitment to engagement, relationships,
10 knowledge-sharing, and costewardship of the National Wildlife
11 Refuge System lands and waters with Tribes, Alaska Native
12 corporations, Alaska Native organizations, and the Native Hawaiian
13 community;

14 (9) acknowledges the role of national wildlife
15 refuges in conserving waterfowl and waterfowl habitat under the
16 Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703 et seq.);

17 (10) reaffirms the support of the House of Representatives for
18 wildlife conservation and the National Wildlife Refuge System; and

19 (11) expresses the intent of the House of Representatives—

20 (A) to continue working to conserve wildlife; and
21
22
23
24
25

1 (B) to support the United States Fish and
2 Wildlife Service's management of the National
3 Wildlife Refuge System for the benefit of cur-
4 rent and future generations.

○