United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 2, 2008

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Wayne Allard, Ranking
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Feinstein and Ranking Member Allard:

We write in strong support of our National Wildlife Refuge System and ask that you provide a modest increase in funding for FY2009 for the management of this American treasure. Thank you for your strong leadership in providing a critically needed increase for the operations and maintenance of the Refuge System in the FY 2008 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. The $434.1 million funding level included in the final FY 2008 bill was a significant down payment in putting the Refuge System on the road to recovery. We respectfully ask you that you continue that leadership and provide an increase to $514 million for the Refuge System in the FY 2009 Interior appropriations bill.

The Refuge System is our nation's wildlife trust, forming our core commitment to maintaining wildlife diversity and abundance for future generations. Nearly 40 million Americans enjoy visiting the Refuge System each year, and their travel and recreation generates $1.7 billion in sales to regional economies, and creates more than 27,000 jobs and $543 million in employment income. Our Refuge System is the premier wildlife system in the world, although accumulating debts are putting this national treasure at risk—the Refuge System faces an operations and maintenance backlog in excess of $3 billion and a devastating 20 percent cut in staff.

An investment in the Refuge System is sorely needed to keep our long-standing commitment to the national network of wildlife conservation lands first envisioned by President Theodore Roosevelt and recently affirmed in the passage of the bipartisan 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement issued a 2007 report, "*Restoring America's Wildlife Legacy,*" that concluded the annual operations and maintenance budget should total $765 million by FY 2013 to adequately fund the Refuge System. As a result, we believe that an investment of $514 million for our Refuge System is a prudent allocation of resources and we encourage you to provide this level of support in the FY2009 Interior appropriations bill.

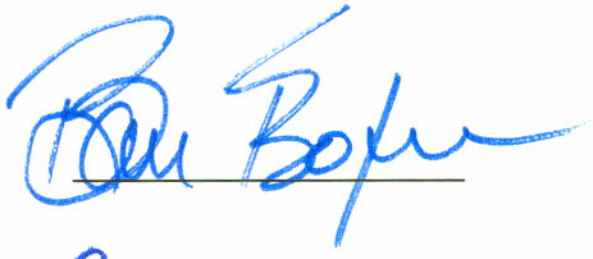
We stand ready to work with you to ensure this important federal lands system is maintained for the American public. Again, thank you for your leadership in supporting and safeguarding our National Wildlife Refuge System.

Sincerely,

Russell D. Feingold

Olympia J. Snowe

FY '09 WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM



Senators signing FY09 Wildlife Refuge letter:

Russell D. Feingold
Olympia J. Snowe
Joseph I. Lieberman
Jack Reed
Jeff Bingaman
Arlen Specter
Richard J. Durbin
John Warner
John F. Kerry
Hilary Rodham Clinton
Christopher J. Dodd
Carl Levin
Herb Kohl
Joseph R. Biden Jr.
Ron Wyden
Edward M. Kennedy
Bernard Sanders
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Tim Johnson
Debbie Stabenow
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Norm Coleman
Mike Crapo
Barack Obama
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