

The Time to Act is Now!

The new administration in Washington has released an outline of a proposed FY 2018 federal budget. The Department of the Interior (the DoI of which the Fish & Wildlife Service is a part) is set to receive a 12% cut in overall funding. While the details of how the cuts will affect the many components of the DoI are not included in this outline, it appears very likely that the National Wildlife Refuge System will face even more drastic cuts, possibly as much as 20%. A cut this large would be devastating to our refuge system and to our local refuges. If enacted, they would result in layoffs, unfilled positions, elimination of programs on refuges, even the closure of some refuges.

In addition, the administration has requested increased spending on defense in the FY17 budget that, if approved, could result in an additional 10% cut in the refuge system budget before FY18 even begins.

Fortunately, these are currently only proposals. The actual budget must come from congress, and may look quite different in its final form. Our elected representatives do listen to and respond to their constituents, which means that we, as friends and supporters of the refuge system, can have a voice in trying to halt these disastrous cuts.

The Friends group therefore calls on you to let your elected representatives know that you oppose such a drastic cut to the Refuge System budget, that there is great value to maintaining our refuges, and that our refuges are important to you and your family. Please make your voice heard in DC by writing a letter, sending an email, or even better, calling your US representative and senators.

[HERE](#) is a link to a letter template you can use. Feel free to edit it to make it more personal to your relationship with the refuge system. The Friends group has already sent similar letters to Senators Purdue and Isakson and to US Representative Buddy Carter. To find out who your representatives in Washington are and to get their addresses, click [here](#).

It is more important now than ever that those of us who love our refuges step up to show our support. How can you help?

- Contact your elected representatives (see above)
- Contact members of the [House Subcommittee](#) who will draft the actual appropriations bill for the DoI (more on this later).
- [Join the Friends](#) or make a [contribution](#)
- Volunteer with Fish & Wildlife at your favorite Refuge
- Donate to the [National Wildlife Refuge Association](#), our affiliate in DC that advocates for the refuge system with the federal; government
- Sign up for [Amazon Smile and/or Kroger Community Rewards](#)

Thanks for your continued support of our refuges...needed now more than ever.