



EVERGLADES COALITION

Resolution in Support of Increased Funding for National Wildlife Refuge Staffing and Operations Crisis

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest network of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife conservation, is facing a staffing crisis that threatens its ability to protect biodiversity and provide recreational opportunities;

WHEREAS, our national wildlife refuges are essential for protecting biodiversity and climate resilient habitats, providing community-driven conservation, and expanding wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities nationwide;

WHEREAS, the Greater Everglades Ecosystem is home to more than a dozen national wildlife refuges;

WHEREAS, despite being essential for protecting endangered species, conserving habitats, and connecting communities with nature, the Refuge System has lost over 800 permanent positions since FY2011, resulting in a 25% loss in capacity;

WHEREAS, several much-needed positions are eliminated every year as congressional appropriations lag behind inflation and actual funding needs;

WHEREAS, today, no refuges are fully staffed, and more than half of refuges have zero staff on site, leaving trust resources poorly managed and existing refuge staff stressed and overworked;

WHEREAS, the lack of staff has led to a reduction in essential services, with many national wildlife refuges closed to the public and completely unmanaged;

WHEREAS, this situation is unsustainable as the National Wildlife Refuge System continues to grow and experience increased visitation, and as the health of the National Wildlife Refuge System becomes more essential in this age of worsening biodiversity and climate crises;

WHEREAS, an estimated \$560 million is required to hire enough staff to operate the National Wildlife Refuge System at full capacity;

WHEREAS, in response to this dire situation, Everglades Coalition member organizations are working to raise awareness of this issue to Congress and secure the necessary funds to sufficiently staff the Refuge System;

The Everglades Coalition is a 501(c)3 alliance of local, state, and national conservation organizations dedicated to the full protection and restoration of America's Everglades.

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Refuge System is our nation's most important system of public lands for wildlife conservation, and it is imperative that we take immediate action to address the staffing shortages that are threatening the ability of the system to protect biodiversity and provide opportunities for the public to connect with wildlife for generations to come;

WHEREAS, increased funding needs, paired with insufficient budgets, have resulted in a National Wildlife Refuge System that has long been strained under the weight of critically low staffing levels and lost capacity.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED ON MARCH 23, 2023:

The Everglades Coalition, with more than 60 organizations dedicated to protecting and restoring America's Everglades, urges Congress to provide an additional \$560 million above current funding to address the existing staffing shortfall.



Mark Perry
Co-Chair



Kelly Cox
Co-Chair

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evergladescoalition.org