



January 2014

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative

National Wildlife Refuge System

THE RECOMMENDATION

Create an urban refuge initiative that defines excellence in our existing urban refuges, establishes the framework for creating new urban refuge partnerships and implements a refuge presence in ten demographically and geographically varied cities across America by 2015.

THE ISSUE

With 80% of Americans living in cities, how do we connect urban America with our wild places, such as national wildlife refuges? How do we teach a new generation to love the land – when pavement is what they usually see? How do we help children find inspiration in nature all around them – when they spend so much time indoors and plugged in? America will have much of their direct contact with nature while in an urban setting, thereby shaping the nation’s conservation values, ethics and priorities, and requiring the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to reach beyond our boundaries. These are the challenges of the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative.

IMPLEMENTATION OF *CONSERVING THE FUTURE*

The Service’s vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System, entitled *Conserving the Future*, proposes in Recommendation 13 an Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative that will increase the Service’s relevancy to urban citizens. This initiative will establish measures to help define and achieve excellence, create a framework for creating new urban partnerships, and establish a refuge presence in ten demographically and geographically varied cities in the U.S.



■ **URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGE PARTNERSHIPS:** 8 Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships were established in 2013, with more coming by the summer of 2014. (See list below)

■ **URBAN AUDIENCE ANALYSIS:** An underlying need for the urban refuge initiative is a better understanding of the factors that facilitate or inhibit connecting urban audiences with wildlife and nature. To address this need, a collaborative research effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and North Carolina State University aims to understand urban audiences, identify barriers connecting, and identify strategies for the Fish and Wildlife Service to overcome these barriers. (Analysis currently in progress)

URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGE PARTNERSHIPS

Where the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Community, and Partners come together to promote conservation



**urban
wildlife
refuge**
PARTNERSHIP

- New Haven (New Haven, CT)
- Forest Preserves of Cook County (Chicago, IL)
- Houston (Houston, TX)
- Providence Parks (Providence, RI)
- Lake Sammamish (King County, WA)
- Masonville Cove (Baltimore, MD)
- L.A. River Rover (Los Angeles, CA)
- Valle de Oro (Albuquerque, NM)

■ **STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE FOR URBAN REFUGES:** (These draft standards for urban refuges and partnerships will be finalized this year)

1. Connect Urban People with Nature via Stepping Stones of Engagement
2. Build Partnerships
3. Be a Community Asset
4. Ensure Adequate Long-term Resources
5. Provide Equitable Access
6. Ensure Visitors Feel Safe and Welcome
7. Walk the Sustainability Walk

■ **ONLINE URBAN HANDBOOK:** Currently producing a tool to provide guidance and information on the urban wildlife refuge initiative.

■ **URBAN ACADEMY:** convene a summit of urban refuge managers, Service employees, and partners to share and institutionalize the urban standards of excellence, discuss overcoming barriers, and measure success. (See right for update on the 2013 Urban Academy)

■ **URBAN WEBINARS:** will be conducted as necessary for urban refuge managers, staff, and partners to address specific needs and issues.

GET INVOLVED

For regular updates, visit: www.AmericasWildlife.org.

For additional information, contact Anna Harris, Implementation Coordinator, at Anna.Harris@fws.gov or (703) 358-2320.



urban academy

The Urban Academy was held at the National Conservation Training Center September 23-25, 2013 with around 200 attendees including staff, partners, and Friends. The goal of the training was to begin a dialogue that connects us to action & create a network for support and ideas to advance the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative.

The training was livestreamed for virtual participation, and followed up with a webinar in December 2013 to discuss next steps of the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative. Some highlights include:

Standards of Excellence: The seven draft Urban Standards of Excellence were trained on and discussed for further review. The Urban Implementation Team is currently working on the final draft of the standards that will be available for review in Spring 2014.

Urban Audience Analysis: The Branch of Human Dimensions is working with USGS, along with NC State University, to conduct focus groups, literature review, and case studies to further the understanding of urban audiences and how to reach them. Analysis is currently being conducted and will be available in 2014.

8 Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships Recognized: The 8 established urban wildlife refuge partnerships and partners were recognized at the Urban Academy, and shortly after two of the eight (Masonville Cove & New Haven) were dedicated. The other 6 will be dedicated in 2014, and a second round of partnerships will also be established.



URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGE PARTNERSHIPS AT 2013 URBAN ACADEMY

USFWS

Upcoming for the Urban Initiative:

- Tools for Understanding Urban Audiences Webinar - February 2014
- Report on Urban Audience Analysis Findings - Spring 2014
- Designations of 6 established Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships - 2014
- New Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships - Summer 2014
- Finalizing Urban Standards of Excellence - 2014

