



2007 Refuge Manager Survey

These are the results from the *PEER Refuge Keeper* survey of all refuge managers of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) regarding their views about the system's direction and needs. Of the 337 refuge managers who received the survey, 176 (52%) mailed back the questionnaire with these responses:

Operations & Maintenance (O&M)

1. The maintenance backlog at my refuge has worsened over the past five years.

20% strongly agree 37% agree 10% no opinion 29% disagree 3% strongly disagree

2. My refuge's habitat management programs are negatively impacted by inadequate O&M funding.

57% strongly agree 35% agree 2% no opinion 5% disagree 1% strongly disagree

3. NWRS funding systems allow adequate flexibility to deal with contingencies that arise during the fiscal year.

1% strongly agree 12% agree 5% no opinion 47% disagree 35% strongly disagree

Staffing

4. My refuge is adequately staffed to meet its core conservation mission.

6% strongly agree 8% agree 1% no opinion 35% disagree 49% strongly disagree

5. The current staffing levels for my refuge fall below its core requirements by –

24% less than 25% 51% between 25 and 50% 16% between 51 and 75% 5% more than 75%

6. In my experience, the practice of “complexing” refuges is leaving refuge units basically un-staffed.

26% strongly agree 40% agree 12% no opinion 22% disagree 1% strongly disagree

7. Employee morale at the refuge field station level is –

2% excellent 30% good 39% poor 26% at an all-time low 3% no opinion

Support

8. Base funding (salaries and fixed expenses) at my refuge is declining in real terms.

50% strongly agree 44% agree 3% no opinion 1% disagree 2% strongly disagree

9. NWRS fiscal tracking systems (SAMMS, “ABC”, etc.) have become increasingly cumbersome relative to the benefits provided.

77% strongly agree 19% agree 1% no opinion 2% disagree 2% strongly disagree

10. What percent of time do you now spend on mission-related refuge conservation work, as opposed to purely administrative tasks?

45% under 25% 41% between 25 and 50% 12% between 51 and 75% 1% more than 75%

11. I believe that money and FTEs for my refuge are diverted to meet other Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) needs.

34% strongly agree 32% agree 22% no opinion 11% disagree 2% strongly disagree

Resource Protection/Safety

12. Visitor safety is better protected at my refuge than it was five years ago.

3% strongly agree 24% agree 12% no opinion 32% disagree 28% strongly disagree

13. Resource law enforcement is stronger at my refuge than it was five years ago.

3% strongly agree 24% agree 5% no opinion 26% disagree 41% strongly disagree

14. Members of my family or refuge staff have been harassed or threatened in connection with resource management policies.

26% *yes* 74% *no*

If the answer to question 14 is yes, were you encouraged to report the incident?

58% *yes* 40% *no*

Compatibility

15. Elevation of refuge compatibility determinations to the Regional Office injects politics into what should be a biological decision.

14% *strongly agree* 35% *agree* 25% *no opinion* 24% *disagree* 2% *strongly disagree*

16. I have been pressured to approve activities that I believed were incompatible with the purposes of my refuge.

7% *strongly agree* 13% *agree* 11% *no opinion* 54% *disagree* 14% *strongly disagree*

17. My Regional Office is actively assisting me in addressing problems on my refuge.

5% *strongly agree* 45% *agree* 16% *no opinion* 22% *disagree* 11% *strongly disagree*

Leadership

18. The current leadership of the Fish & Wildlife Service listens to the opinions of refuge managers.

2% *strongly agree* 26% *agree* 11% *no opinion* 36% *disagree* 24% *strongly disagree*

19. I feel that the leadership of the Refuge System does a good job supporting our field operations.

1% *strongly agree* 23% *agree* 12% *no opinion* 44% *disagree* 20% *strongly disagree*

20. There are too many layers of decision-makers in the Regional Office.

23% *strongly agree* 38% *agree* 15% *no opinion* 21% *disagree* 2% *strongly disagree*

21. There are too many layers of decision-makers in the Washington Office.

37% *strongly agree* 38% *agree* 7% *no opinion* 16% *disagree* 1% *strongly disagree*

22. I have confidence in the current leadership of the Fish & Wildlife Service.

0% *strongly agree* 22% *agree* 23% *no opinion* 32% *disagree* 23% *strongly disagree*

Direction

23. The NWRS is currently accomplishing its missions.

0% *strongly agree* 27% *agree* 10% *no opinion* 47% *disagree* 15% *strongly disagree*

24. The NWRS is moving in the right direction.

0% *strongly agree* 14% *agree* 6% *no opinion* 53% *disagree* 26% *strongly disagree*

25. I am optimistic about the future of the NWRS.

1% *strongly agree* 25% *agree* 7% *no opinion* 45% *disagree* 22% *strongly disagree*

26. I believe that the future NWRS would be better served by—

43% *becoming a separate agency* 21% *having a separate chain-of-command within FWS*
4% *staying unchanged* 2% *having less autonomy* 21% *none of the above* [9% left blank]

27. The NWRS could be most improved by— 127 essays submitted

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