

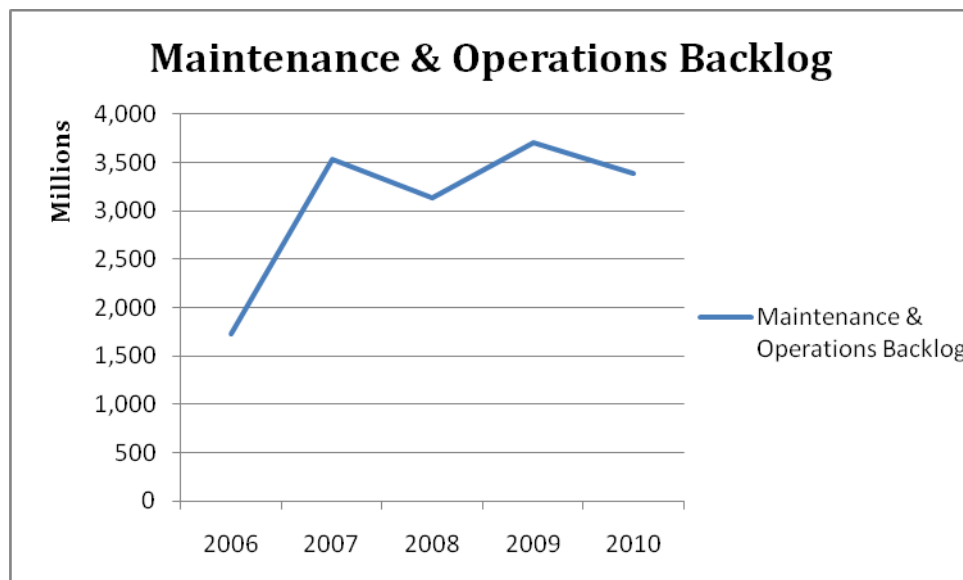
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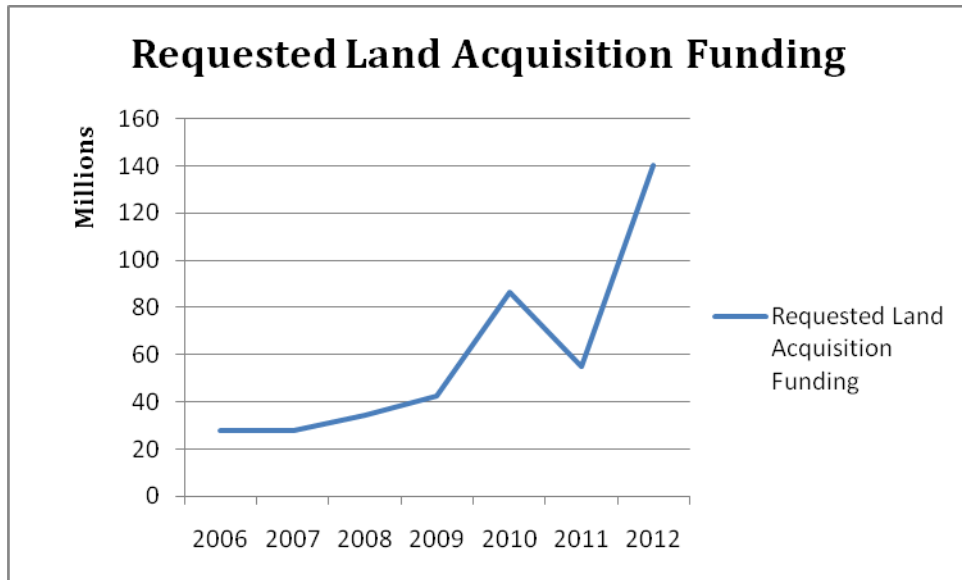
National Wildlife Refuge System Understaffed, Poorly Maintained Due to Unsustainable Backlogs, Continual Federal Land Acquisition

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs held a hearing titled “*Buying More Land When We Can’t Maintain What We Already Own: The National Wildlife Refuge System’s Operations and Maintenance Backlog Story.*” Members heard from the Obama Administration and interested parties on the current state of the System, the effects of the maintenance and operations backlog and the Obama Administration’s efforts to buy more land even though the government can’t maintain what it already owns.

“Today, the cumulative backlog of the National Wildlife Refuge System is \$3.3 billion which includes more than 1,200 invasive species projects; 1,400 national fish hatchery projects; 3,342 ‘mission critical’ projects; 5,994 refuge road projects and more than 12,000 refuge facilities that are in need of repair. As a direct result of this backlog, there are miles of impassable or unsafe roads, millions of refuge acres infested with invasive species, a severe shortage of law enforcement personnel and 326 refuges that are either unstaffed or closed to the public ... What we need is a new paradigm or vision for addressing this problem,” said **Chairman Fleming (LA-04)**.



There are currently 12,234 backlog projects at a cost of \$3.38 billion, over 25 percent of which are considered “mission critical.” 110 national wildlife refuges are closed to the public, over 11,000 facilities are in need of repair and 216 lack professional staff.



Despite the maintenance and operations backlog, the Obama Administration requested \$140 million for more refuge land acquisition in the FY 2012 budget, \$53.6 million above FY10 appropriated levels. Due to continual federal land acquisition, the agency is incapable of maintaining and managing the land they already own.

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