



**2006
ADOPTED
RESOLUTIONS**

**RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE
70TH ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION**

**NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA
MARCH 16 - 18, 2006**

**2006 Adopted Resolutions
70th Annual Meeting
of the
National Wildlife Federation
New Orleans, LA
March 16 – 18, 2006**

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Establishment of the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge

WHEREAS, in a preliminary assessment of the Cherry Valley area of northeastern Pennsylvania, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service ranked Cherry Valley very high as a potential national wildlife refuge; and

WHEREAS, six species listed as endangered or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) have been documented within or near Cherry Valley: the bog turtle (possibly the most significant population of the listed subspecies), the dwarf wedge mussel, the northeastern bulrush, the small whorled pogonia, the bald eagle, and the Indiana bat (a historic resident, with efforts under way to re-establish favorable conditions); and

WHEREAS, Cherry Valley provides habitat for at least 79 species of national or regional concern, which either nest in Cherry Valley or migrate through the area during critical times in their life cycle, including neo-tropical migratory birds such as the Cerulean Warbler, the Worm-eating Warbler, and the Wood Thrush; waterfowl such as the American Black Duck; several globally rare plants, such as the spreading globeflower; and anadromous fish species; and

WHEREAS, the Cherry Valley watershed encompasses a large segment of the Kittatinny Ridge, an important migration route for birds of prey throughout the Northeastern United States. Every migratory raptor species in the Northeast is regularly observed along the Kittatinny Ridge during the autumnal migration, including the bald eagle, the golden eagle, and the broad-winged hawk; and

WHEREAS, the Kittatinny Ridge also includes a long segment of the Appalachian Trail, a nationally significant natural-cultural-recreational feature; and

WHEREAS, many of the significant wildlife habitats found in the Cherry Valley, especially the rare calcareous wetlands, have disappeared from other localities in their range; and

WHEREAS, ongoing studies have documented the high water quality of Cherry Creek; and

WHEREAS, public meetings over several years have demonstrated strong, deep, and growing local support for a Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge: Area landowners, business and community leaders, media, and elected officials have consistently voiced their enthusiasm for a Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge; and

WHEREAS, numerous local communities and public and private conservation entities share complementary goals for protecting Cherry Valley and are energetically conserving wildlife habitat and farmland. Along with State land-management agencies and the National Park Service, these local entities represent potential strong partners for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; and

WHEREAS, a number of local landowners have already put their land into conservation easements or other conservation arrangements; and

WHEREAS, a voter-approved Monroe County Open Space Fund and a voter-approved Stroud Township municipal land conservation fund have contributed to many of these projects; and

WHEREAS, two federally owned parcels of land are contiguous to the area: The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and a 700-acre segment of the Appalachian Trail owned by the National Park Service; and

WHEREAS, National Wildlife Refuges are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and hunting, fishing and trapping are wildlife management tools supported and utilized by the agency;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana supports the establishment of a Greater Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Monroe County, Pennsylvania.

**Opposition to the Pebble Mine Project in the Bristol Bay Watershed of Southwestern
Alaska**

WHEREAS, the enormous Bristol Bay watershed in southwestern Alaska is one of the most productive ecosystems in the world; and

WHEREAS, the Bristol Bay sockeye salmon fishery, with nearly 33 million sockeye salmon projected to return to the region in 2006, is one of the largest in the world, generating millions of dollars of revenue, and producing high-quality fish for human consumption; and

WHEREAS, the region's lakes and rivers sustain trophy-class rainbow trout and a robust sports fishing industry that attracts anglers from around the world; and

WHEREAS, many Alaska Native residents of the Bristol Bay watershed live a traditional subsistence lifestyle, living off the land and harvesting moose, caribou, berries, and other natural foods; and

WHEREAS, Northern Dynasty Minerals, Inc. has proposed building North America's largest open-pit gold, copper, and molybdenum mine in the headwaters of the Koktuli, Kvichak, Mulchatna, and Nushagak Rivers near Lake Iliamna in the Bristol Bay watershed and to use cyanide to extract the minerals from the waste rock; and

WHEREAS, the operation would involve building a mill, an immense tailings pond to hold three billion tons of leftover waste, a 100-mile access road, and other facilities, as well as the damming and rerouting of rivers and the elimination of 15 square miles of tundra, wetlands, creeks, and lakes; and

WHEREAS, Northern Dynasty's proposal has spurred thousands of new mining claims in the area and created the possibility of a 1,000 square-mile mining district; and

WHEREAS, the Pebble Mine could have devastating impacts on the Bristol Bay watershed's environment and wildlife, its commercial and sports fisheries, and the quality of life of its rural residents;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, opposes the development of the Pebble Mine; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation opposes any other mining activity in the Bristol Bay watershed that does not ensure the full protection of its fish, wildlife, environmental and cultural values.

Privatization/Disposition of Public Lands

WHEREAS, public lands provide both seasonal and year-round habitat for a large number of wildlife species, including some of those listed as threatened or endangered; and

WHEREAS, public lands provide millions of recreation days for millions of people, including the activities of hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and camping; and

WHEREAS, these recreational activities on public lands greatly enhance the quality of life for local residents as well as for citizens around the country; and

WHEREAS, numerous people, businesses and communities rely on, or benefit from, the income generated, directly or indirectly, from such recreation on public lands; and

WHEREAS, public lands provide jobs from timbering, grazing leases and other economic benefits gained from the responsible use of the sustainable resources on those public lands; and

WHEREAS, public lands are irreplaceable public resources; and

WHEREAS, the privatization and/or the disposition of public lands would most likely preclude the public from garnering the above benefits of the public lands as well as have serious negative consequences for the wildlife using those public lands; and

WHEREAS, efforts have increased to privatize public lands either by direct legislation or by amending the 1872 Mining Law in a manner that would allow public lands to be sold to private individuals and entities for potential exploitation and development, without undergoing the necessary evaluations or required opportunities for public input as directed under the NEPA process;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, does hereby oppose the privatization and/or disposition of federal public lands by changes in existing laws governing the management or disposal of federal lands, including but not limited to lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the United States Forest Service; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation supports the goal of “no net loss” of federal public lands and opposes the privatization and/or disposition of lands through land exchanges unless the fish and wildlife and recreational values of the lands acquired clearly exceed those of the lands lost.

Avian Influenza

WHEREAS, there is growing concern about a possible pandemic of a virulent avian influenza virus in humans; and

WHEREAS, there are numerous strains of avian influenza which occur in wild birds at low levels and most are of no significant risk to birds or humans; and

WHEREAS, virulent forms of avian influenza most likely originated in poultry (domesticated chickens, ducks, turkey, quail and geese) from mutations of the influenza virus; and

WHEREAS, human infection with avian influenza occurs in areas where poultry and humans live in close proximity, providing opportunity for transmission from birds to humans; and

WHEREAS, wild birds can potentially be infected with virulent forms of avian influenza by exposure to infected poultry; and

WHEREAS, there are many potential vectors for the spread of avian influenza, such as the legal and illegal trade in birds, migration of wild birds, and the movement of poultry and other avian livestock and caged birds; and

WHEREAS, potential transmission of virulent forms of avian influenza to wild birds can be minimized through proper management of poultry to prevent contact with wild birds; and

WHEREAS, there are no recorded cases of transmission of avian influenza from wild birds directly to humans; and

WHEREAS, attempts to control the spread of avian influenza through efforts to reduce or control wild native bird populations would be ineffective and potentially devastating, especially to less common native species;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, hereby urges the development, funding, and implementation of an international strategy for managing avian influenza. The strategy shall include:

- (1) a framework for wildlife, agricultural and human health agencies and organizations to work cooperatively on this disease; and
- (2) the identification of additional research and monitoring needs; and
- (3) recommendations for improving the dissemination of information about avian influenza with emphasis on providing information in rural areas; and

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- (4) the development of standards and guidelines for the management of poultry that include measures to control contact between domestic birds and wild birds and calls for the depopulation of infected poultry in the event of an outbreak; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation also urges that the developed strategy contain assurances that management of wildlife remains in the control of professional wildlife management agencies and not agricultural or human health agencies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation supports increased research funding to enhance the understanding of the biology of avian flu, means of transmission, methods of controlling outbreaks in poultry, and prevention of transmission of virulent strains to wild birds from poultry.

Global Warming and Regional Emission Reduction Plans

WHEREAS, the scientific evidence for and dangers of global warming have been documented by the National Academy of Sciences which has stated “increasing greenhouse gases are causing temperatures to rise” and it is “likely that most of the warming in recent decades can be attributed to human activities” and “it is vital that all nations identify cost-effective steps that they can take now”; and

WHEREAS, global warming is already affecting wildlife in the United States and around the world, examples of which include: a trend toward earlier arrival of spring with the frost-free season starting an average of 11 days earlier in the northeastern U.S. compared with the 1950s; the northerly extension of the range of some species of birds, including the summer tanager, Bell’s vireo, and Carolina chickadee, in recent decades; and the reduction in places polar bears can feed and seals can raise their young due to thinning ice in the Arctic region; and

WHEREAS, left unabated, global warming is going to continue to cause severe problems for wildlife in the decades to come. Potential impacts include: the loss of breeding grounds, wintering areas, and migratory stopover sites for birds due to increasing sea levels; a loss of habitat for aquatic species as streams and wetlands dry up due to reduced water levels in some regions, including the Great Lakes; a 9-69% reduction by the end of the century in the abundance of ducks in the prairie pothole region, the single most important breeding habitat for duck populations in the U.S.; and the loss of 40% of the coastal wetlands in the contiguous U.S. because of sea level rise by 2100; and

WHEREAS, global warming is having immediate and long term impacts on people, their homes, cities and ability to maintain their livelihood and enjoyment of the outdoors. For instance, over 50% of the U.S. population lives within 50 miles of the coastline where the loss of coastal wetlands and the increase in strong storms linked to warmer ocean temperatures increases storm damage and the subsequent costs of replacing homes and entire towns; and

WHEREAS, while the threat of global warming and associated climate change is serious, there are solutions; and scientists have determined that the severity of adverse impacts can be significantly reduced by reducing global greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, the burning of fossil fuels for electricity generation is the single largest source of carbon dioxide (accounting for 39% of the nation’s total emissions) in the U.S. and, without significant action to limit the emissions from this sector, the share from electricity generation is expected to continue to grow; and

WHEREAS, seven states in the northeastern U.S. are leading the nation in addressing emissions from the electricity sector with a mandatory cap-and-trade program known as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which will cut emissions of carbon dioxide from power plants in the region 10% by 2019; and

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WHEREAS, in September 2003, the governors of Washington and Oregon joined California, in the establishment of the West Coast Governors' Global Warming Initiative, and the Governors of Arizona and New Mexico have also joined in a Southwest State Global Warming Initiative, committing to the development of a region-wide strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, hereby supports regional efforts, including the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, to establish mandatory programs which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity sector; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation urges the seven states participating in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to swiftly implement the agreement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation urges the states of Maryland, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island to join Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation calls on all states to pursue mandatory aggressive strategies to curb and stabilize the growth in electricity consumption and to further reduce emissions of greenhouse gases; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation calls on the U.S. government to institute mandatory policies to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from the electricity sector and other sectors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that National Wildlife Federation urges all states to join together in cooperative initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a regional scale; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation urges the implementation of other global warming policies consistent with its previous resolutions.

Floods, Floodplains, and Disaster Recovery Issues

WHEREAS, flooding remains the most costly, most deadly, and most common form of natural disaster; and

WHEREAS, it is generally associated with human encroachment on natural floodplains and sometimes with alteration of hydrologic regimes; and

WHEREAS, flooding is a natural hydrologic process; and

WHEREAS, floodplain ecosystems serve critical natural resource functions, including providing important habitat for wildlife, absorption and attenuation of floodwater protection, and maintenance of water quality and quantity; and

WHEREAS floodplains provide transportation, retention, and deposition of sediments and nutrients, and areas for groundwater recharge; and

WHEREAS, for many decades, much development in the nation's floodplains has been accompanied with little recognition of substantial losses or degradation of floodplain ecological functions and alarming increases in flood-related damages; and

WHEREAS, despite enormous national investments in flood reduction project and structures, including more than \$123 billion by the nation's largest water resources agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, average national flood damages have continued to rise alarmingly, especially where floods exceed the capacities of flood protection systems; and

WHEREAS, the nation's floodplain experts are increasingly recognizing that traditional approaches to flood protection, which have emphasized projects for the physical control of floods rather than often less costly nonstructural measures, may be contributing to the exacerbation of flood-related costs and human suffering, particularly through the inducement of development into natural floodplain areas; and

WHEREAS, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) was originally established in 1968 as an alternative to traditional flood reduction approaches with the intention of providing affordable flood insurance for flood prone properties, while working with local communities and states to guide new development out of the floodplain; and

WHEREAS, while the NFIP has provided some incentive for communities to consider and better manage flood-related risk, it is not actuarially sound, and it has often failed to guide new development out of harm's way and in many instances it has worked to support and underwrite unwise floodplain development, with resultant increases in flood risk and damages and continued loss of natural floodplain functions and their associated benefits to people and wildlife, and it has not adequately strengthened community standards over time; and

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WHEREAS, in the wake of the 1993 Great Midwest Flood, the Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force (“Galloway Report”) proposed four broad goals to improve the status of our nation’s floodplains, yet, these broad goals along with nearly 100 other practical proposed actions, largely remain unimplemented; and

WHEREAS, the federal flood reduction programs encourage floodplain development and wetland drainage with strong bias favoring structural over non-structural approaches, and the key guidance documents for these programs have not been updated to remove such bias in more than 20 years; and

WHEREAS, hazard mitigation—the notion of building or rebuilding to reduce risks and vulnerabilities—is a well-recognized modern principle of disaster recovery (and avoidance), yet national flood programs have recently seen major reductions in mitigation funding after disasters; and

WHEREAS, the recent experience of natural disasters in the Gulf region and across the nation raise even greater concerns about the need to plan for, mitigate vulnerabilities to, and aggressively work to combat the causes of human-induced global climate change that threaten the safety and ecological health of people and wildlife on Earth;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, calls upon Congress and the Administration to undertake efforts to modernize the nation’s flood-related and other water policies and programs to emphasize ecologically sustainable and economically sound management of the nation’s floodplains, with full commitment to promoting public safety and sustainable human development in the context of the natural physical and ecological processes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation calls upon Congress and the Administration to reduce and eliminate subsidies and biases in federal programs that promote unwise, high-risk floodplain development, including unwise subsidies in water development, transportation, agriculture, flood insurance and disaster programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation urges Congress and the Administration to establish among the highest priorities to consider and implement recommendations made by the 1994 Galloway Report and other similar and related recommendations by the National Research Council, Government Accountability Office and others to improve the nation’s floodplain management and to update key guidance such as the 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines (P&G) and the 1979 Floodplain Management Executive Order 11988 to incorporate lessons learned, including the lessons of recent coastal disasters; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that pending the updating of national floodplain policies, the National Wildlife Federation urges Congress and the Administration to adopt a general policy to avoid the promotion of new levee projects that separate existing natural floodplains from adjacent rivers and that encourage substantial new at-risk development; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation urges Congress and the Administration to provide adequate funding for hazard mitigation, to require the identification and mapping of the 500-year (.2 percent annual chance) floodplain through the current NFIP Map Modernization program, and to establish higher standards for existing urban area flood protection, including standards to provide (where practicable) at least standard project flood level of protection and to locate critical facilities such as schools, hospitals, eldercare, police, fire, and other public facilities, important roads, bridges, and transportation facilities outside the 500-year floodplains, concurrent with stronger policies to avoid placing future development in high-risk floodplain areas.

Funding for the Restoration of Coastal Louisiana as Part of the Federal Response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

WHEREAS, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita brought an unprecedented natural disaster to Louisiana, Mississippi and other Gulf States; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's coastal wetlands constitute a natural defense against the destructive force of hurricanes, absorbing wave action and significantly reducing storm surges; and

WHEREAS, prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Louisiana was already losing coastal wetlands at a rate of 24 square miles per year and has lost more than 1,900 square miles over the past 75 years; and

WHEREAS, based on imagery recorded soon after the storms passed, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are estimated to have caused the loss of an additional 100 square miles of coastal wetlands; and

WHEREAS, President Bush has pledged federal aid to help rebuild New Orleans and other coastal communities following the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; and

WHEREAS, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita may be part of a pattern of increasingly powerful storms fueled by global climate change; and

WHEREAS, coastal restoration is an integral part of the plan for hurricane protection that is necessary for rebuilding and revitalizing coastal Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, a long-term plan for the restoration of Louisiana's coastal wetland ecosystem has already been developed by the Army Corps of Engineers and independently reviewed by nationally renowned scientists and engineers and has the support of the State of Louisiana as well as many community organizations; and

WHEREAS, additional measures may be added to the restoration plan in the near future to further emphasize hurricane protection benefits; and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Federation and the Louisiana Wildlife Federation have been strong advocates for Louisiana coastal restoration;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, calls upon Congress and the President to authorize and appropriate \$5.5 billion for near-term coastal Louisiana restoration and protection projects and studies, and to identify and approve a dedicated source of funds, such as revenue from outer continental shelf oil and gas production, to support the continued restoration and rebuilding of Louisiana's coastal wetland ecosystem, for the benefit of the nation and the communities, industries, and wildlife of southern Louisiana; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation calls for an improved system for protecting homes, lives, and jobs along the Louisiana coast against flooding and storm surges in a manner that also recognizes the critical role played by a healthy wetlands system in helping to provide such protection and to support wildlife resources of major ecological and economic importance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation calls upon federal, state, and local governments to take prompt and decisive action to address the threats of global climate change to which coastal Louisiana and coastlines throughout the world are exceedingly vulnerable.

Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands Coastal and Wetland Habitats of Concern

WHEREAS, coastal and wetland habitats on the islands of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John) provide critical nesting, breeding and foraging sites for threatened and endangered species such as the leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and green (*Chelonia mydas*) sea turtles, West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), roseate tern (*Sterna dougallii*), snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), the West Indian whistling duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*) and other species of concern; and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Ecological Corridor (“NEC”) is 3,149 acres of coastal fringe land unique in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean and includes coral communities, mangroves and a bioluminescent lagoon and is home to over 40 critical marine mammal, bird, snake, sea turtle and plant species; and

WHEREAS, the NEC is one of the most important nesting grounds for leatherback sea turtles in U.S. jurisdiction and was recognized by international experts on April 6, 2002, when participants of the 22nd Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation petitioned the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to designate the NEC as a nature reserve; and

WHEREAS, Great Pond, Coakley Pond, the Annaly Bay watershed of St. Croix, and Botany Bay of St. Thomas and associated coastal areas provide critical mangrove, wetland and mature forest habitat for endangered and threatened species and species of concern; and

WHEREAS, coastal and wetland habitats such as the NEC, Vieques and Culebra in Puerto Rico and Great Pond, Coakley Pond, Annaly Bay, Wills Bay, and Botany Bay in the Virgin Islands are currently threatened by development that would damage or destroy their value to wildlife; and

WHEREAS, coastal habitats in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are increasingly at risk from pollution and destructive human activities as well as rising sea levels and stronger hurricanes exacerbated by global warming from release of greenhouse gases;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, fully endorses designating the Northeastern Ecological Corridor of Puerto Rico and Annaly Bay watershed of St. Croix as nature reserves; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation endorses protecting critical coastal and wetland habitats in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands from development incompatible with sustainable uses by wildlife species of concern; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation urges Congress and the Administration to support efforts to address climate change to minimize its potential impacts on coastal environments.

Central Valley Project (CA) Water Contracts

WHEREAS, the Central Valley Project (CVP) is a huge federal and state water diversion system that delivers water to farmers and cities in central California; and

WHEREAS, the Project is a network of dams, reservoirs and canals in the Sacramento and San Joaquin River basins providing water in an area 400 miles long and 100 miles wide; and

WHEREAS, the delta at the confluence of the rivers which drains into San Francisco Bay, which once consisted of millions of acres of marshlands, seasonally-flooded wetlands and vernal pools, is critical habitat for over half of the birds in the Pacific Flyway; and

WHEREAS, there are 11 national wildlife refuges in the region; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Reclamation is proposing new long-term water contracts that will increase the amount of water being withdrawn by millions of acre-feet per year; and

WHEREAS, this habitat is provided by fewer than 300,000 acres of wetlands which remain today--down more than 90 percent from over 4,000,000 acres of wetlands that historically existed in the Central Valley; and

WHEREAS, some species dependent on the California wetlands, including the Pacific white-fronted goose and cackling Canada goose, have suffered aggravated population losses from disease, lead poisoning, and habitat destruction and degradation; and

WHEREAS, the United States has signed the North American Waterfowl Management Plan with Canada whereby both countries agree to take actions to assure the continued survival of abundant populations of ducks, geese, and swans; and

WHEREAS, the stocks of many anadromous fish species, such as chinook salmon, steelhead, and striped bass, and wildlife populations have suffered severe depletion from water resources development and associated agricultural activity resulting in economic losses of several hundred million dollars annually; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Reclamation has provided little mitigation for the fish and wildlife losses from its Central Valley Water projects; and

WHEREAS, the process followed and conditions agreed to for renewal of the contracts for water from the CVP in 2005-06 will set a precedent for reallocating millions of acre-feet of Reclamation water and the terms and conditions for all of the remaining contracts that will expire between now and the year 2012; and

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WHEREAS, in addition to water committed in the CVP's original contracts, the Bureau is proposing to implement the new long-term contracts to deliver approximately 1.0 million acre-feet per year of additional water, placing additional strains on the Bay-Delta estuary and the Central Valley environment; and

WHEREAS, most of the initial contracts for delivery of Reclamation water were agreed to before the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act; basic conditions used to allocate subsidized water have changed; and the public's knowledge of and concern for the environmental attributes and values of water resources have increased during the past 40 years; and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Interior has justified the renewal of most of these long term water contracts for the CVP based on abbreviated and defective environmental reviews; and

WHEREAS, the expiration of contracts for the delivery of Federal water presents an opportunity to obtain more timely repayment of the Federal investment, to tighten eligibility requirements, and to undertake other reforms to make water available for fisheries, wetlands, water quality, and other high-valued uses; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of the Interior has broad discretion to alter the allocation, pricing, and other requirements and conditions of expiring contracts, and each of these options could result in different environmental impacts;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, urges the Secretary of the Interior to defer renewal of any other contracts, including the pending Westlands Water District contract for over one million acre feet, until after preparation of a revised Environmental Impact Statement to evaluate the cumulative impacts of all reasonable alternatives, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, and revised Biological Opinions under the Endangered Species Act on the long term operating plan for the entire CVP, including all of the new contracts based on that operating plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation urges the Congress of the United States to schedule oversight hearings to ascertain the impacts to California's fisheries and fish habitat that have resulted, or could result, from the construction, operation, and further expansion of the Central Valley Project through these new contracts and to direct the Secretary of the Interior to prepare a new Environmental Impact Statement and new Biological Assessments and Biological Opinions on such impacts including the long term operating plan for the CVP.

Cougar Management Guidelines

WHEREAS, cougars (*Puma concolor*), despite being eliminated from roughly two-thirds of their North American range, are presently the only large, obligate carnivore in self-sustaining populations across western North America; and

WHEREAS, cougars have existed in western North America along with their major prey—mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), white-tailed deer (*O. virginianus*), elk (*Cervus elaphus*), moose (*Alces alces*), and bighorn sheep (*Ovis Canadensis*)—for at least 10,000 years; and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Federation recognizes in its report, *Endangered Cats of North America*, that cougars “are among the wildest and most powerful creatures that inhabit our landscape...Cats are powerful icons for pristine, wild space in the United States...and, for many, they conjure up ethical, spiritual, and aesthetic reasons for preserving their place in the American landscape”; and

WHEREAS, The World Conservation Union Species/Survival Commission’s 2002 Red List recently reclassified *Puma concolor* as “Near Threatened” because of a declining effective population size “due to persecution and degradation of its habitat and prey base, and may possibly qualify as Vulnerable if these trends persist, or if better information on its status were available”; and

WHEREAS, the Cougar Management Guidelines Working Group, a group of 13 wildlife managers, biologists, and scientists, with more than 200 years of cumulative experience in cougar management, policy, and research, after a three-year deliberative process published “The Cougar Management Guidelines” in 2005, which are built on four basic principles:

- (1) A large-landscape approach, on the order of thousands of square kilometers of well-connected habitat with thriving natural prey populations, is necessary for healthy, self-sustaining cougar populations;
- (2) Cougar management should adopt an adaptive management process;
- (3) Cougar management should reflect the full array of human values and input from all stakeholders; and
- (4) In light of the diversity of stakeholders and human values, funding for cougar research, management, and conservation should not be derived solely from hunting-related programs; and

WHEREAS, The Cougar Management Guidelines include discussion of each of the following aspects of cougar management:

- (1) Cougar-prey relations;
- (2) Cougar habitat;
- (3) Assessing cougar populations;
- (4) Depredation;
- (5) Sport hunting;

- (6) Strategies to manage cougar-human conflicts; and
- (7) Cougar research and management information; and

WHEREAS, the Cougar Management Guidelines Working Group has stated that future editions of the Cougar Management Guidelines will be published as needed to reflect best available science as the body of knowledge expands;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, hereby finds that “The Cougar Management Guidelines” published in 2005 by the Cougar Management Guidelines Working Group are consistent with and will implement the key conservation recommendations for cougars in NWF’s report, Endangered Cats of North America; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation urges all state and federal wildlife agencies to incorporate the Cougar Management Guidelines in any cougar management plan, policy, or regulation.

Diminishing the Impact of Feral and Free-ranging Domestic Cats on Wildlife Populations

WHEREAS, of the more than 77 million domestic cats in the United States approximately 65% or 50 million are allowed outside and are largely the source of the increasing number of feral cats; and

WHEREAS, current feral cat population estimates range from 60 to 100 million in the United States; and

WHEREAS, scientific studies indicate that free-ranging domestic cats and feral cats kill hundreds of millions of birds, and more than a billion other small vertebrates such as rabbits, squirrels, frogs, snakes, shrews, voles and chipmunks each year; and

WHEREAS, free-ranging domestic cats and feral cats kill many songbird species such as Northern Cardinals, Black-Capped Chickadees, Gray Catbirds, bluebirds, wrens, warblers and vireos as well as many rare and endangered species such as Piping Plovers, Florida Scrub-jays, and California Least Terns; and

WHEREAS, free-ranging domestic cats and feral cats are not part of American natural ecosystems and their predation on a vast number of mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian and arthropod species compromises biological diversity; and

WHEREAS, free-ranging domestic cats and feral cats compete with native predators such as owls, snakes, weasels, bobcats and foxes, and unlike most predators, are not strictly territorial; this allows them to exist in high densities and outcompete native predators; and

WHEREAS, domestic cats are prolific breeders with females capable of producing 3 litters per year, with 4–6 kittens per litter; and

WHEREAS, unvaccinated domestic cats can transmit diseases, such as rabies, toxoplasmosis and feline distemper to other domestic cats, native wildlife, and sometimes humans as well as being suspected of spreading fatal feline diseases to native wild cats such as mountain lion, the endangered Florida panther, and bobcat;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, hereby urges the passage and enforcement of local and state ordinances providing for the humane control of feral free-ranging domestic cat populations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that National Wildlife Federation supports programs such as the American Bird Conservancy's Cats Indoors Program and similar state agency-based efforts to **educate** and encourage domestic cat owners to neuter, vaccinate and take measures to physically control outdoor activities.

Protection of the Endangered Ivory-Billed Woodpecker

WHEREAS, the rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) in the forests of eastern Arkansas was one of the most important conservation stories of the past decade and has led to one of the highest profile endangered species recovery efforts ever undertaken in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the presence of the Ivory-bill in eastern Arkansas is of historical and ecological significance and is the result of hard-fought battles by Arkansas Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Federation and many others over the past 30 years, and should be considered a conservation victory of international significance; and

WHEREAS, the majority of the old-growth forest habitat needed to support the Ivory-bill has been altered or destroyed by agricultural development and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' flood-control and water-development projects; and

WHEREAS, the habitat where the Ivory-bill was discovered is recognized by the Ramsar Convention as a Wetland of International Importance; and

WHEREAS, the ecology of the Ivory-bill is still poorly understood; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to promote water development projects in the Lower White River Basin that are expensive, wasteful and threaten to degrade or destroy the wetland forests critical to the Ivory-bill's recovery; and

WHEREAS, the Ivory-bill and the habitat it relies on is in imminent danger of being impacted by the construction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Grand Prairie Area Demonstration Project; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has ignored their responsibilities outlined in the Endangered Species Act by refusing to conduct an in-depth investigation of the impacts of the Grand Prairie Area Demonstration Project on the ivory-bill and its habitat; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers based their findings that the Grand Prairie Area Demonstration project would cause "no significant impact" to the Ivory-bill on inadequate science completed many years before the bird's rediscovery; and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Federation has worked for more than five decades to protect endangered species through habitat protection and restoration, species reintroductions, and public education; and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Federation promotes a vision that the nation should protect existing ecological treasures, restore damaged ecosystems and re-establish and maintain populations of key species in order to promote an ecologically diverse and economically sustainable Lower Mississippi River Basin; and

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WHEREAS, the presence of the Ivory-bill will provide the opportunity for alternative economic development and the diversification of local economies that are now largely dependent on agriculture; and

WHEREAS, the Endangered Species Act, the nation's strongest wildlife conservation law, is again under assault by special interest groups that want to weaken its key provisions;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled March 17-18, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, calls upon the federal government to implement policies and funding mechanisms that will help protect Ivory-bill habitat and promote the reestablishment of the species throughout the forested wetlands of the Lower Mississippi Basin; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation calls on federal agencies to re-evaluate projects and proposals in the vicinity of the Ivory-bill, including those of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to fully assess potential impacts on habitat and recovery needs for the Ivory-bill; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation calls on federal agencies and Congress to cease funding for and oppose projects, plans and policies that threaten to degrade habitat for the Ivory-bill, including the Grand Prairie Area Demonstration project and the White River Navigation project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation calls on Congress to reaffirm the nation's commitment to conserving endangered species and their essential habitats, to uphold and strengthen the Endangered Species Act, and to oppose efforts to weaken the Act.