Resolution No. 4, 2025

**SUBJECT: Addressing Staff Reductions on Wildlife Conservation and Public Engagement
 Throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System**

WHEREAS, the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is the world's most successful system of policies and laws to restore and safeguard fish and wildlife and their habitats through sound science and active management, and within that model, wildlife resources are conserved and held in trust for all citizens and wildlife is allocated according to democratic rule of law; and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 and the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 provided guidelines and directives for administration and management of all areas in National Wildlife Refuge system; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) manages an unparalleled network of public lands and waters called the National Wildlife Refuge System, which protects iconic species and provides some of the best wildlife viewing opportunities on Earth; and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Refuge System includes 95 million land acres, 760 million marine acres, 50 states, and 5 U.S. territories; and

WHEREAS, there are more than 570 national wildlife refuges, 38 wetland management districts, 5 marine national monuments, 63 refuges with wilderness areas, and more than 1,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers; and

WHEREAS, the number of visits to wildlife refuges continue to increase an average of 3.8 percent a year, from 45.7 million visitors in FY 2011 to more than 67 million as recently as FY 2022; and

WHEREAS, in addition to managing millions of acres of public lands and waters, the USFWS works with other government land managers and private landowners to restore habitat and to manage lands for the benefit of species; and

WHEREAS, there are 23 National Wildlife Refuges located within Louisiana, occurring in 29 parishes and encompassing over 550,000 acres; and

WHEREAS, visitors services staff have left the USFWS and have not been replaced, leaving the public less connected to the wildlife in their community, and the National Wildlife Refuges in Louisiana currently have only 3 federal game wardens operating in Louisiana on a full-time basis; and

WHEREAS, each unit of the Refuge System — whether it is a wildlife refuge, a marine national monument, a conservation area or a waterfowl production area — is established to serve a statutory purpose that targets the conservation of native species dependent on its lands and water, and all activities on those acres are reviewed for compatibility with this statutory purpose; and

WHEREAS, to address biological challenges, the Refuge System deploys a host of scientifically sound management tools that range from active water management to wilderness character monitoring, and all are aimed at ensuring a balanced conservation approach that enables wildlife and people to thrive; and

WHEREAS, the number of National Wildlife Refuge System staff as of FY 2011 was 3,244 but staffing has dropped to 2103, which is a more than a 30% reduction, and these reductions have strained the agency's capacity to manage wildlife refuges and protect threatened and endangered species; and

WHEREAS, static budgets and staff reductions for more than a decade have affected species monitoring, which is impacting the conservation of species and habitats in the United States, North America, the Western Hemisphere, and across the globe; and

WHEREAS, static budget and staff reductions have reduced public access to hunting and fishing opportunities, citizen science, conservation education, recreation, and habitat restoration programs that have been improving the quality and quantity of wildlife habitat; and

WHEREAS, providing the appropriate level of staffing is integral to the success of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Refuge System, and all the land and waters managed by the service.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Louisiana Wildlife Federation calls for a US Congressional review and analysis of the wildlife and habitat impacts and the reduced public educational opportunities about wildlife habitat caused by staff reductions since 2011 within the National Wildlife Refuges System.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation urges National Wildlife Federation and other conservation organizations to work with Congress to identify funding opportunities to support the mission of the National Wildlife Refuges System.

*Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation in Convention Assembled on March 15, 2025 in Woodworth, Louisiana.*