



Goal: Protecting and Restoring Wildlife
Sustaining Diversity

The National Wildlife Federation is committed to protecting and restoring habitats vital to sustaining diverse wildlife.

Wild Places

Big open wild places...we have so few left. Places that are untamed, breathtaking and home to an astonishing variety of wildlife are fast disappearing. These lands are the heart of our vast public landscapes. They belong to all Americans.

But increasingly, oil and gas drilling, urban sprawl, tree cutting, and now the better understood damages from global warming are throwing ecosystems out of balance. Energy development, in particular, brings with it environmental harm that is often permanent. Priceless wildlife habitat is being destroyed with roads, pipelines and drill pads to search out marginal supplies of petroleum.

The National Wildlife Federation is working hard to get permanent protection of these spectacular public lands. We believe we have an obligation to keep the “wild” in wild places.

Saving the Last Frontier—The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

No other place in America is wilder, more pristine or of greater value to wildlife than the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. At least 180 bird species use the refuge, which migrate from all 50 states and four continents. The very area targeted by oil companies for drilling—the coastal plain—is the central calving ground for the Porcupine caribou herd. It also contains the most important denning habitat for polar bears in the Alaskan Arctic. It hosts wolves and grizzly bear and is the home to musk oxen, Arctic foxes and wolverines.

Since 1991, drilling proponents have unsuccessfully tried to slip their ill-fated scheme to drill the Arctic Refuge into many pieces of national legislation ranging from the budget to a Pension Security Reform bill. Thanks to our vigilance, they again lost the fight to add a provision to allow drilling as part of the Energy Policy Act of 2003.

The battle continues, and despite recent setbacks, we will take every possible action to permanently protect the Arctic Refuge’s wildlife and habitat—and the rights of the native Gwich’in people who for thousands of years have relied on the caribou for their way of life—from oil and gas exploitation.

To bolster our case, in December we released an independent poll showing that a majority of Americans oppose drilling for oil in the Arctic Refuge. According to the survey, 55 percent of Americans are against opening the Refuge to drilling, while only 38 percent favor it. The poll was commissioned by several leading conservation groups, including the National Wildlife Federation, the Wilderness Society, the Alaska Wilderness League and the Sierra Club.



Photo by William J. Pohley © wpohley@earthlink.net

bull elk



This “undermines any contention that the election outcome represented a mandate to drill in the Refuge,” said Larry Schweiger, NWF president. “America needs a smart energy policy, not a drilling frenzy. There are cleaner, safer, cheaper ways of meeting America’s energy needs than sacrificing the Arctic Refuge, and the public knows it.”

Protecting the Vanishing Wild West

Montana’s Rocky Mountain Front, where the Rockies meet the Great Plains, is an American jewel. It is home to a wide array of wildlife, including grizzly bears, bighorn sheep and elk. And it was under assault.

The National Wildlife Federation and its state affiliates—particularly hunters and anglers—led the fight for environmentally-sensitive oil and gas development that wouldn’t ruin wildlife habitats. We stopped the Administration from putting energy development ahead of protecting the West’s wild places—and the Rocky Mountain Front has been saved.

In complimenting the Administration on its decision, we noted: “Let’s be clear: Environmentally sensitive oil and gas development can be an appropriate use of public lands. In fact, this year, some 6,000 drilling leases have already been approved on public lands. But drilling is an inappropriate use of America’s very best wildlife habitats.”

Unfortunately, other special wild places still face the prospect of being despoiled by oil and gas development.

The Otero Mesa and Valle Vidal in New Mexico, and Wyoming’s Red Desert, are incredible wildlife habitats that are on the fast track to drilling. The Otero Mesa, for example, encompasses more than 1.2 million acres, and is North America’s largest and wildest Chihuahuan Desert grassland remaining on public lands. Partnering with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, so far we have succeeded in protecting the Otero Mesa.

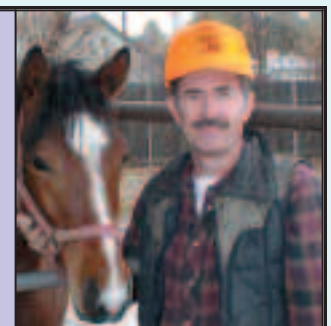
We are also working to prevent coalbed methane development in New Mexico’s treasured Valle Vidal—100,000 acres in the Carson National Forest that is full of Rocky Mountain wildlife, including mule deer, mountain lion, black bear, bald eagles and Rio Grande cutthroat trout.

Avid sportsman turned conservation activist, Oscar Simpson was tired of complaining about the rapid decline of wildlife and habitat in New Mexico and decided to spend his retirement protecting the state’s majestic landscapes. That decision launched a second career for Oscar, who is now in his third year as president of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation (NMWF).

“Like other native New Mexicans, I grew up hunting and fishing,” says Oscar. “I just couldn’t stand watching vast tracks of public land degraded and destroyed because of powerful special interests.”

A former geologist, Oscar now spends his time fighting for tougher regulation and control of the oil and gas industry and development in New Mexico. “Lawmakers aren’t looking at the long-term economic impact on New Mexico’s outdoor sporting and recreation industry—an industry that generates \$1.1 billion a year.”

Oscar says it’s the voice of sportsmen that’s been missing in the legislative and political process. That’s why he’s most proud of the work NWF has done to involve sportsmen’s groups in habitat-wildlife issues.



Oscar Simpson
President, NMWF



Growing Greener Forests in the Northeast

Within one day's travel for more than 75 million East Coast residents lies the Northern Forest, home to more than 85 species of forest-dependent mammals and birds. The forest covers more than 26 million acres—larger than Vermont and New Hampshire combined—and stretches from the northern woods of Maine into New York.

But unsustainable tree cutting threatens to devastate this unique forest. In response, the National Wildlife Federation is working in partnership with local landowners and others to protect and restore wildlife habitat, promote sound forestry and build economic opportunities.

For example, in partnership with the Vermont Family Forests Foundation and Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, we are developing community forestry organizations, promoting certified Vermont wood products and pioneering community-equity in forest ownership. We know that strong family forest conservation organizations can help improve forest management, and a market for local “green-certified” products can give landowners economic incentives to improve forest practices.

It's working. Corporate heavyweights that now buy sustainably grown and certified wood—when they can find it, that is—include not only The Home Depot but also furniture giants IKEA and Knoll, Inc., and the Andersen Corporation, maker of Andersen Windows.

A new non-native species is introduced to the Great Lakes every eight months. Our new report, Ecosystem Shock: the Devastating Impacts of Invasive Species on the Great Lakes Food Web, spotlights how serious the threat of non-native species is to the region's fish and wildlife.

Restoring America's Great Waters

Lakes, rivers, oceans, wetlands—America's well-being, quality of life and economic future depend on their health. But today, our fragile waters face an onslaught of threats. From global warming to urban sprawl, poisons from air pollution to dams, aging sewer systems to irrigation withdrawals—our water resources are in big trouble.

America's Inland Seas

The Great Lakes hold one-fifth of the fresh surface water on Earth. The wildest and grandest—Lake Superior—is bordered by wildlife habitat for wolves, moose, caribou and rivers that grow trout and salmon as long as your arm.

Year-in and year-out, the National Wildlife Federation leads the millions of people who want the Great Lakes protected and restored. It is not a battle for the faint of heart. The challenges are immense: filling of wetlands, pollution from airborne poisons like mercury, invasive species brought from foreign ships and urban sprawl.

We are winning this battle with clear victories and additional progress. The year ended with increased federal appropriations; a responsive Great Lakes restoration planning process that will likely last into 2006; additional supporters in Congress, the states, and the cities; and increased momentum for comprehensive action over the next several years.

Platte River—Home of Cranes

NWF's long history of working on Platte River and whooping crane conservation issues (starting in 1970) continued through 2004. NWF continues to work alongside its Nebraska affiliate, the Nebraska Wildlife Federation, and other groups to restore the Platte River. One of the most over-appropriated rivers in the country, the Platte River has 15 major dams,



When he was a young transport pilot in 1943, Peter Wege decided he was going to do what he could to protect the environment. "On a routine flight over Pittsburgh the smog was so thick that despite the blue skies around me, I couldn't see the city below," says Peter.

Since then, Peter has dedicated his time, energy and financial resources to safeguarding nature and, over the years, has been a generous contributor to NWF. He helped to bring NWF's Schoolyard Habitats® program to more than fifty Diocese and public schools in Greater Grand Rapids and has contributed more than 1.5 million to NWF to expand the program across the country. "The earlier we can get young people thinking about the environment, the healthier they and the world will be."

The only child of Steelcase founder Peter Martin Wege, Peter started the Center for Environmental Study in his hometown of Grand Rapids, MI. He also wrote the book *Economicology*, which draws the connection between economics and ecology.

This year, Peter pledged \$5 million to NWF and the National Parks Conservation Association to mobilize the broad-based Great Lakes Restoration campaign. "No single foundation, organization, or person will restore the Great Lakes by working alone. It will take close partnerships among all who care for the Lakes."



Peter Wege

hundreds of small reservoirs and thousands of irrigation wells that provide municipal and industrial water supplies for about 3.5 million people, as well as irrigation water for millions of acres of farmland.

Less than half of the Platte's open, braided river channel habitat remains. Cranes have now completely abandoned more than 100 miles of the river's habitat—crowding into and competing for space in the few remaining open areas of this bottleneck on the Central Flyway.

To be actively involved in recovery efforts, NWF continues to support Whooper Watch, which is a volunteer based whooping crane monitoring and habitat improvement program. More than 60 volunteers participate in monitoring designated routes along the central Platte River for whooping cranes and/or participate in habitat improvement projects in and along the river.

Swamping Louisiana

Along the Gulf of Mexico, the once-endless marshes of coastal Louisiana are vanishing. An area of wetlands the size of a football field disappears every 30 minutes. National Wildlife Federation is working to ensure that this morbid destruction of a sportsman's paradise is stopped and reversed.

The National Wildlife Federation is poised to engage in an historic restoration of the Louisiana coast—a collaborative effort to reconstruct marshland and shoreline habitat to protect waterfowl habitat that is of global significance. Local conservationists and many businesses and agencies already are working to save America's wetlands. NWF's national network is needed to help elevate this critical conservation challenge. Our goal: to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop an ecologically sound restoration plan. Over the next year we will push Congress to provide sufficient funding for the plan and craft a comprehensive funding plan. And we will mobilize conservationists across the country to support this urgent restoration effort.



Restoring our River of Grass

Florida's Everglades are among our nation's most imperiled resources. Once a seemingly endless and healthy "river of grass," the Everglades have been reduced to half their original size by agriculture, urban sprawl and unwise water management. This year, we continued efforts in the Western Everglades to get the Corps to make restoration—not development—a priority and to monitor all wetland development permit applications. Two U.S. senators relied on our work to initiate an investigation by the General Accounting Office into wetland permitting practices of the Corps. Also, NWF led the fight to neutralize industry lobbyists and compel Florida's legislature to fund projects that will safely return sheet flows of water to the Everglades.

Puget Sound

NWF's Western Natural Resource Center increased its commitment to restoring the health of Puget Sound in the Northwestern United States. In 2004, the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Program's executive committee selected NWF to be a member of the program's steering committee, paving the way for NWF to be an effective voice in the protection of one of the most productive, diverse, and beautiful ecosystems in the world.

NWF's recently released *State of the Sound 2004* reports on the health of Puget Sound, focusing on 15 environmental indicators that provide insight into the condition of the Sound's water and submerged lands, habitats, and species, and the threats to these resources. This report clearly outlines the challenges facing the region's inhabitants in the years ahead.

Alaska's Princely Sound

Working in partnership with a number of groups, NWF is committed to protecting the land and waters of Alaska's Prince William Sound from poorly conceived development proposals, pollution sources and other harmful activities. This 10,000 square mile home to sea lions and humpback whales is still recovering from the devastating Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989.

The shared vision for the Sound includes a place that is pristine, healthy, biologically and economically vibrant. To do this, NWF has worked with scientists to better understand the Sound and report to those who live near or visit it the findings and conclusions of investigations related to its health.

In 2004, NWF identified the conservation and management actions needed to protect the Sound's most important areas. This region lends hope to the prospect that good conservation measures go hand-in-hand with a prosperous economy.

Texas Living Waters

Texas is developing plans for meeting the state's water needs for the next 50 years. Unfortunately, the planning process doesn't ensure that water will be used efficiently or that fish and wildlife—and the economic activities that depend on them—will be protected. The National Wildlife Federation is working to change that. Through NWF's Gulf States Natural Resource Center, NWF is in the midst of a campaign to engage Texans in the water-planning and water-management decisions that will shape the Texas landscape for their children and grandchildren.

Photo by Robert B. Haman © 319-848-2303



grizzly bear



Greening the Corps of Engineers

To restore America's Great Waters, we need an army—literally. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—an extraordinary agency when it comes to water development projects—needs a new mandate.

Since America's founding, the Corps has built 8,500 miles of levees and floodwalls, some 500 dams and 11,000 miles of inland navigation channels. Unfortunately, despite heartening signals at the top, the Corps is largely stuck in an era when there was no wetland that could not be drained, no river or harbor that could not be dredged and no flood that could not be controlled by more and higher levees, all at taxpayer expense.

Thanks to funding from The McKnight Foundation, the National Wildlife Federation is leading a coalition to reform outdated policies that drive the Corps' work. Today, the Corps alters more environmentally sensitive landscapes and waters every year than does any other branch of the national government. Its annual budget now tops \$4 billion, with \$1.5 billion spent on nearly 500 new construction projects and \$1.7 billion devoted to operating and maintaining the vast network of completed jobs.

Imagine the possibilities if a significant portion of the Corps' funding and talent was directed to restoring our Great Waters—cleaning up polluted harbors, restoring Coastal Louisiana marshes, and redirecting ill-conceived water projects toward economically and environmentally sustainable solutions. With your help, NWF is working hard to make that vision a reality.

Fixing the Leaky Clean Water Act

The federal Clean Water Act is the foundation for much of America's improvements in waters and wetlands protection. In 2004, NWF issued a call to arms to extend Clean Water Act protections to millions of acres of wetlands and untold numbers of streams, lakes and ponds. For 32 years, the Clean Water Act has served as one of the nation's most effective environmental laws, regulating pollution entering our rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands. But in 2003, the Administration issued new guidelines that removed federal protections from certain water bodies, giving the green light to developers to destroy these resources on a massive scale.

NWF devoted extensive resources to mobilizing our members to urge the Administration to rescind these guidelines. We also requested that all federal regulators extend protections to the full extent of the law and be fully accountable and prepared to explain decisions to act otherwise. Finally, we traveled the halls of Congress to encourage passage of the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act which would reaffirm Congress's original intent to protect all waters of the United States.

After 133,000 comments, including half the U.S. House of Representatives, the Administration dropped efforts to weaken the Clean Water Act. But confusing and dangerous administrative guidelines remain in place, which we intend to fix.

An NWF investigation this year exposed gaping holes in enforcement of the Clean Water Act. As a result, incidents of dumping, polluting and filling are rising steadily, exposing as much as 20% of this country's wetlands—millions of acres—to pollution and development. Waters ranging from an 86-acre lake to a 150-mile-long river are now vulnerable, according to a report released by NWF and three other environmental groups.

*Says Gale Dupree,
President of the Nevada
Wildlife Federation,
the policy could harm
hunting and fishing:
"The waters affected
include some of the
most important habitats
for sage grouse, ducks
and other waterfowl
and wildlife, as well
as the headwaters of
many of our favorite
fishing spots."*

Attempts to Weaken the Endangered Species Act

The federal government has used flawed data to cut in half the number of habitat designations for wildlife at risk. NWF exposed this in our report, *Unsound Economics The Administration's New Strategy for Undermining the Endangered Species Act*. The Administration used faulty cost-benefit analysis, suppressed information, exaggerated costs and ignored recommendations by federal agency biologists to benefit developers at the expense of imperiled wildlife. The results of this report, once again motivates NWF to work tirelessly to protect "critical habitat" which is essential to the recovery of listed species.



Wildlife

Wolves can cover up to 16 feet in a single bound. They can go for two weeks without food but can also gorge on 10 pounds of food per day.

Whooping cranes migrate 2,700 miles—from Canada to Arkansas—flying up to 40 miles an hour. When they mate, they leap, bow, run around and throw sticks in the air.

These are just a few of the amazing creatures saved and now protected by the Endangered Species Act. After being persecuted nearly to extinction, today, wolves are slowly making a comeback in 3% of their historic range—the Northern Rockies and the Great Lakes. Whooping cranes almost vanished; in the 1950's, there were fewer than 20 whooping cranes left. Today, the population exceeds 200 birds. NWF is guiding efforts to protect their home habitats.

For more than thirty years, the Endangered Species Act has been the primary tool for conserving endangered and threatened species and their habitats. But the federal government is now trying to whittle away some of these protections. The National Wildlife Federation is not going to let that happen.

Wolves

In the lower 48 states, wolves are thriving in the Northern Rockies and in the northern Great Lakes region. This success stems from reintroduction of wolves ten years ago to the Yellowstone Ecosystem, from protection of habitat and most of all, from public support for keeping wolves in our world. The National Wildlife Federation has played a major role at each step in the wolf's recovery.

We're now focused on restoring wolves to the Northern Forest in the northeastern U.S. We have conducted educational outreach efforts with landowners and Native American tribes in Maine to ready them to receive wolves in the area. Our biologists and volunteers are combing the forests for signs that the wolf has returned and started to breed.

In recent years there have been several reports of wolves crossing the frozen St. Lawrence River into the northeastern U.S. This area provides excellent wolf habitat and plenty of prey. But a lack of federal and state protection or management plans means wolves dispersing from Canada may be unable to establish a viable population in this region.

Meanwhile, the Administration wants to abandon wolf recovery in the Northeast by removing wolves from the endangered species list in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York. We are fighting that action. We went to the courts charging that the Administration's wolf rule violates the Endangered Species Act and is contrary to what scientists recommend for wolf recovery. Our lawsuit is pending.

Salmon

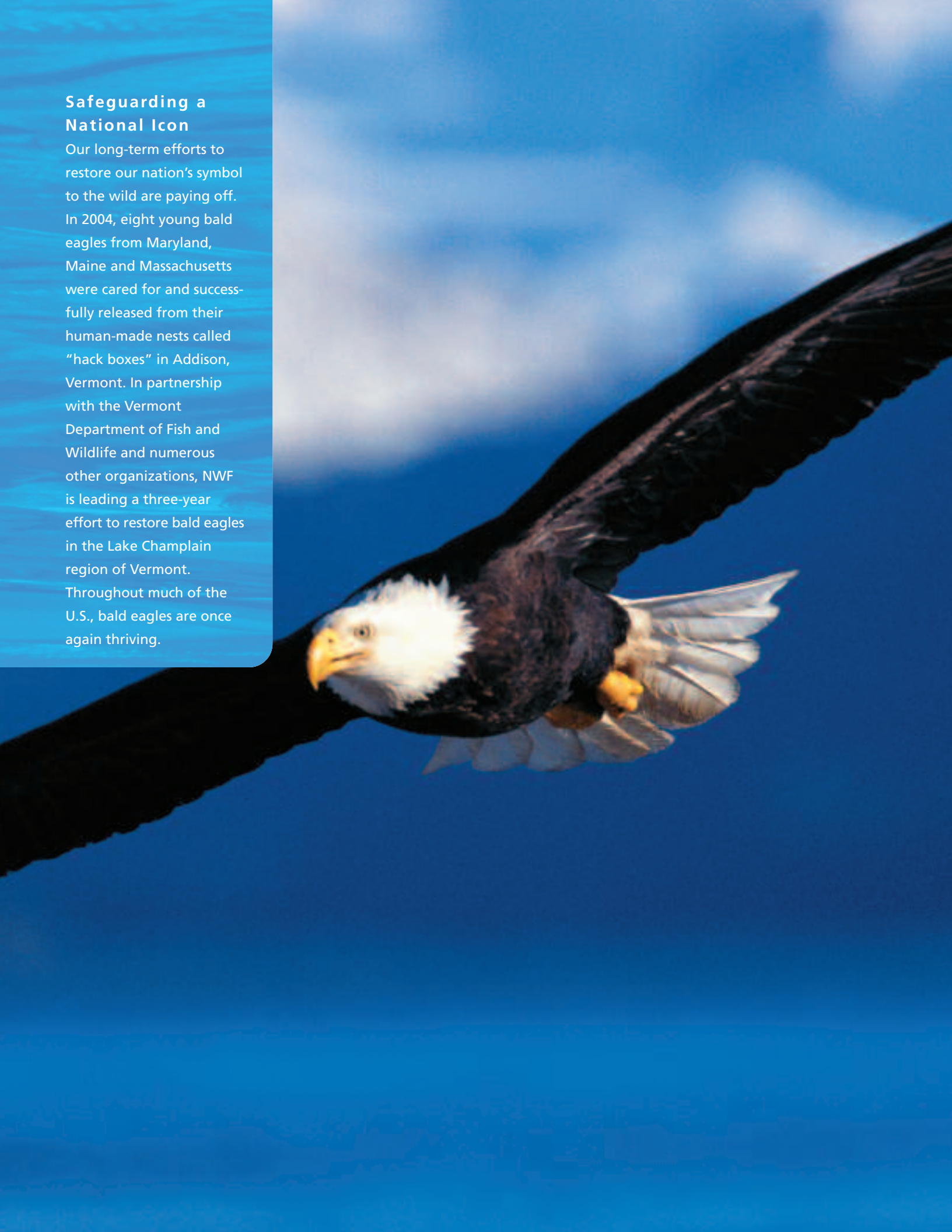
In a victory for clean water, salmon and taxpayers, a federal court in November ordered the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the second time in as many years to delay a risky \$2.7 million project to dredge the lower Snake River. The court concludes that the Corps' planned dredging during the winter of 2004–05 was illegal because it would harm imperiled salmon and steelhead trout.

NWF is committed to maintaining the Endangered Species Act's focus on restoring populations of wildlife species so that they no longer need protection—not simply managing species on the brink of extinction. To achieve this goal, we work through education, activism, advocacy and litigation.

“Wolves don't stand much of a chance in the Northeast if the Administration has its way in removing endangered status from the species in this region. We should be building on our successes in the Northern Rockies and the Midwest—not undercutting the Endangered Species Act, our best tool for safeguarding wildlife,” says Peggy Struhsacker, Wolf Recovery Team Leader in NWF's Montpelier, Vermont office.

Safeguarding a National Icon

Our long-term efforts to restore our nation's symbol to the wild are paying off. In 2004, eight young bald eagles from Maryland, Maine and Massachusetts were cared for and successfully released from their human-made nests called "hack boxes" in Addison, Vermont. In partnership with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and numerous other organizations, NWF is leading a three-year effort to restore bald eagles in the Lake Champlain region of Vermont. Throughout much of the U.S., bald eagles are once again thriving.



“Dredging in the lower Snake River is environmentally risky and economically unsound,” says Jan Hasselman, Seattle counsel for the National Wildlife Federation, the lead plaintiff in the case. “There are better ways to manage this river that would save money and give salmon and steelhead a fighting chance to recover.”

Saving the Florida Panther

The Florida panther pictured on the cover of this annual report precariously survives despite rampant development and loss of panther habitat in Florida. The big cat also suffers from mercury pollution in its environment and food and too-frequent encounters with too-fast drivers on Florida’s highways.

This year NWF won a legal victory for the Florida panther that forced the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to consider the impacts of a rock mining project on panther survival. The Florida panther, one of the most critically endangered large mammals in the world, and a well-known symbol of the natural heritage of the southeastern United States, is on the verge of extinction. NWF is dedicated to protecting the panther population in South Florida and eventually returning it to the wild in other parts of its historic range, such as Georgia.

International Agreements and America’s Wildlife

What do international trade agreements have to do with saving America’s wildlife. Plenty! The rich biodiversity of North and South America is unparalleled and is home to 51% of the world’s forests, 40% of the world’s plant species, and 44% of the world’s bird species.

NWF’s Globalization and the Environment Program expands grassroots awareness of the important link between international trade and investment issues and the environment, and promotes the reform of policies and institutions to ensure that the protection of wildlife and wild places becomes an integral part of international economic development. In 2004, for example, NWF worked to improve the United States-Central America Free Trade Agreement.



