

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2021

The Honorable Martha Williams
Principal Deputy Director
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Principal Deputy Director Williams:

We write to ask that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) include the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) Multi-Purpose Building and Public Recreational Facilities construction project in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2026 five-year line-item construction plan contained in this years' FY 2022 budget request.

As you are aware, the USFWS FY 2020 budget request included funding for the construction phase of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Multi-Purpose Building and Public Recreational Facilities in the line-item construction five-year plan. However, USFWS removed the project from its five-year plan in the FY 2021 budget request reversing the FY2020 decision on recommended projects. In the agency's response to our March 2020 letter, your agency indicated that Region 9 would include the \$5.2 million in the region's FY 2022-2026 five-year plan. We ask that USFWS make the necessary change and reinclude this funding in the FY 2022 budget request.

The facilities on site at the Refuge need vital upgrades to replace the small trailer that currently serves as the administrative office and visitor facilities with buildings that properly welcome the visiting public and enhance the visitor experience. While we are appreciative of USFWS efforts to begin work on the Refuge's Multi-Purpose Building for administrative offices and other facilities, it is important that improvements for the Community and Nature Center facility are not unnecessarily delayed for the thousands of visitors who frequently visit the Refuge.

The Refuge receives nearly 300,000 visitors each year and engages 20,000 annual community members through programming on-site and in local neighborhoods. The Refuge also factors into economic activity in the region; the tens of thousands of visitors provide a real benefit to the restaurants and other retail businesses in the Ridgefield area. Many small communities like Ridgefield have endured a prolonged economic downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding business restrictions to protect public health. The addition of a community center at the Refuge would provide an attraction for visitors to the Refuge and help provide a needed boost to businesses in the region.

The residents we serve cherish what this Refuge represents: unique access to the natural beauty and native culture that are part of the identity of this region. We strongly encourage you to consider the critical importance of this project to the local community and ask you to provide

funding for the Community and Nature Center facility in FY 2022-2026 five-year plan in the FY 2022 budget request.

Sincerely,



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Rob Fairweather, Acting Director, U.S. Office of Management and Budget