



January 27, 2010

The Honorable Brad Ellsworth
U. S. House of Representatives
P. O. Box 62
Evansville, IN 47701

Dear Congressman Ellsworth:

Subject: Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge Funding – FY11

We at Evansville Audubon thank you again for your successful efforts on behalf of Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge (PRNWR) and look forward to your continued efforts to obtain Interior Appropriations funding for expansion of the property through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

In January, 2010, an offer will be made using FY09 Omnibus and FY10 LWCF appropriations to purchase 1,150 acres of critically-important wildlife habitat adjacent to existing refuge lands and containing the eastern edge of the Snakey Point Marsh complex. With the presumed success of this acquisition, a new appropriation of approximately \$1.6 million is needed to allow the Refuge to pursue acquiring an additional 1,070 acres towards the goal of 22,472 acres approved for acquisition.

The lands proposed in this project request for addition to the refuge are on six tracts that contain seven lakes, a half-mile of the historic Wabash & Erie Canal, rolling grasslands, natural unmined palustrine forested bottomlands, and reclaimed mineland—the reclaimed portion received the U.S. Interior Department 2008 National Award for Excellence in Surface Mining Reclamation. Short-eared Owls were recently documented in the reclaimed grassland.

We are aware that the President's budget contained \$1 million for Patoka River NWR but have received information that this may have been removed or is being considered for removal. We hope, with your leadership, this amount may be retained or increased. As noted above, the \$1.6 million is based on a realistic evaluation of the cost to obtain the targeted property. The \$1 million would allow purchase of some of the most critical tracts but would likely result in private inholdings being created within the refuge.

We at the Evansville Audubon Society are very appreciative of your past efforts on behalf of the refuge and see a brighter future for southwestern Indiana's environment, quality of life and economy.

Sincerely,

Richard Vernier, President
Evansville Audubon Society, Inc.