

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 13, 2026

The Honorable Brian Nesvik  
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Nesvik,

Every year, thousands of Iowans from across my state visit the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge to enjoy its 6,000 acres of wildlife habitat. The Wildlife Refuge has been a staple of the Prairie City, Iowa, community since its creation in 1990. It provides educational and recreational opportunities to Iowans of all ages. I have been a supporter of the Wildlife Refuge since its inception and was glad to see the Draft Compatibility Determination outlined \$7 million in renovations for the Prairie Learning Center after a 2024 hailstorm left it severely damaged and closed to the public.

While Iowans are excited for these renovations, they have voiced concerns to me regarding staffing shortages and the proposed shrinking of the Prairie Learning Center as outlined in the Draft Compatibility Determination. Jasper County residents have shared how over the years the Wildlife Refuge staff has continued to shrink to its current total of three full-time employees. I share their concern that this is not a sufficient amount of staff to fulfill the Wildlife Refuge's mission.

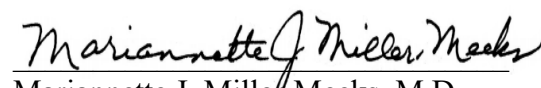
To better understand your agency's management of the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge and the Prairie Learning Center, I ask that you respond to the following questions:

1. What is the number of staff needed to meet the "sufficient staffing" standard outlined in the Draft Compatibility Determination, and what steps are being taken to meet that standard?
2. What is the current timeline for the completion of the renovation and reopening of the Prairie Learning Center?

Iowans look forward to returning to the Wildlife Refuge to learn and enjoy Iowa's native tallgrass prairie heritage. I appreciate your prompt review and response.

Sincerely,

  
Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator

  
Mariannette J. Miller-Meeks, M.D.  
Member of Congress

