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## LI wildlife refuge gets \$9.7M in stimulus funding

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The Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge in Shirley will be getting a new, \$9.7-million visitor center and regional headquarters building courtesy of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Rep. Tim Bishop announced this week.

"Building the visitor center will immediately put people to work and help enhance one of our community's greatest natural resources," Bishop said, predicting it would "raise the profile of the Wertheim Refuge and make it a destination for students and for residents of both the city and Long Islanders."

The Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex, nine refuges in all, protects some of the last significant natural areas for wildlife in the New York metropolitan area.

The Wertheim Refuge comprises 2,550 acres along the Carmans River and is one of the last undeveloped estuary systems remaining on Long Island, protecting migratory waterfowl and other birds.

The facility will enable year-round educational programs, workshops, and interpretive exhibits, along with providing offices for Fish and Wildlife Service staff.

It is among 91 projects totaling \$34.7 million for the agency in the Northeast.

"We have been working on funding for this project since 1997," said Claire Goad, president of Friends of Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge. "Having a place where visitors, school groups, senior citizens, Scout troops, and the general public can come to learn about the environment and wildlife is very important."