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STATEMENT BY
THE HONORABLE HENRY E. BROWN, JR.
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER
AT THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INSULAR AFFAIRS, OCEANS AND WILDLIFE
HEARING ON H. R. 3850, H. R. 3910, H. R. 4914, H. R. 5180,
H. R. 5331, H. R. 5380 AND H. R. 5482
JULY 27, 2010

Madam Chairwoman, today we will receive testimony on seven different legislative proposals, three of which were introduced by members of this Subcommittee.

Let me briefly comment on these measures and I will start with those of interest to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. H. R. 3850 introduced by our colleague Congressman Frank Kratovil and Charles Boustany would authorize \$60 million to control and eradicate non-native nutria from wetland habitats in Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, Oregon, Virginia and Washington.

H. R. 5331 was proposed by Congressman Patrick Kennedy and it would adjust the boundaries of four units of the Coastal Barrier Resource System within the State of Rhode Island. It appears this measure will correct certain honest mapping errors and will incorporate additional undeveloped barrier lands that qualify for inclusion in the system.

The third bill, H. R. 5482, was filed by our former Committee colleague, Congressman Walter B. Jones, Jr. to direct the Secretary of the Interior to enter into a new agreement to ensure the future viability of the Corolla Wild Horses. These horses are the direct decedents of Spanish mustangs that arrived on North Carolina's Outer Banks some 500 years ago and I agree with the Humane Society of the United States that it would be a tragedy if we allowed these horses to disappear or decline below a healthy population level.

The fourth bill was introduced by Representative Mazie Hirono of Hawaii to dramatically increase the size of the Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge. While I am pleased that this legislation includes the stipulation that "All acquisitions of land shall be made in a voluntary manner and shall not be the result of forced takings", I am interested in learning how the Service intends to obtain the 13,000 acres of property which was recently the subject of a bankruptcy auction.

Madam Chairwoman, we will also hear testimony on three fisheries related bills - H.R. 3910, a bill to allow for a cooperative fishing arrangement for the Bering Sea longline cod

fishery; H.R. 5180, to create 9 new Ombudsman positions within NOAA; and H.R. 4914, to authorize new money for a number of existing programs within NOAA.

Let me talk about the last bill first. While I understand the interest of the bill's sponsor to create new jobs for fishermen, I am concerned that authorizing \$400 million in new funding over five years for programs that already exist is not the way to address the problems with out-of-work fishermen. The biggest problem we have is that the National Marine Fisheries Service does not have adequate data on the fisheries it manages and shuts down fisheries without any concern about the effect the closures will have on fishermen and coastal communities.

The price tag alone for the legislation gives me concern, but the fact that the bill merely authorizes new funding for already existing programs further concerns me. I want to help fishermen, but I don't think this legislation will help. I do not think NOAA needs the authorities contained in the bill to hire out-of-work fishermen for the programs cited in the bill so other than authorizing new funding, I'm not sure what the bill will accomplish. Having said that, I am interested to hear the views of today's witnesses to see if any new information will change my mind.

On the issue of creating 9 new Ombudsman positions around the country, I am again concerned about the potential price tag and whether the proposed legislation will solve the problem we have. Clearly, faith in the ability of the National Marine Fisheries Service to not only manage but also enforce fishery management laws is in question - especially in light of the recent Inspector General's report on fisheries law enforcement. This lack of trust is especially apparent in New England, but also in my area of the country.

I agree that fishermen's concerns about management and enforcement need to be heard within the agency, but I am not sure that requiring a new position at headquarters and in all eight fishery regions will help. The position seems to be somewhere between what the Inspector General already has the authority to do, and a community liaison position that will listen to the complaints and concerns of fishermen. Again, while I think there is a need for better input from fishermen, I am not sure the requirement that nine new positions created around the country will resolve the problem.

Lastly, I am interested in hearing about the Bering Sea longline fishery and the proposal for a cooperative fishing arrangement that will potentially make this fishery even safer and more economically efficient.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.