

**STATEMENT OF Dr. GEORGE H. FENWICK, PRESIDENT
AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, SUBCOMMITTEE
ON FISHERIES, WILDLIFE, OCEANS, AND INSULAR AFFAIRS**

CONCERNING:

**H.R. 1960, THE NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION
EXTENSION ACT OF 2011**

**H.R. 1917, TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO
CONDUCT A JOINT VENTURE PROGRAM**

And

**H.R. 3074, THE CORMORANT MANAGEMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
PROTECTION ACT**

March 29, 2012

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Dr. George Fenwick and I am the President of American Bird Conservancy (ABC). ABC is a national 501 (c)(3) that I founded in 1994, the mission of which is the conservation of native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas.

ABC acts across the full spectrum of threats to birds to safeguard the rarest bird species, restore habitats, and reduce threats, while unifying and strengthening the bird conservation movement. ABC analyzes issues using the best available science; facilitating networks and partnerships; sharing information; developing and implementing collaborative strategies; and establishing measurable outputs.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of ABC regarding the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (H.R. 1960), the authorization of Joint Ventures (H.R. 1917), and the Cormorant Management and Natural Resources Protection Act (H.R. 3074). I would like to begin by saying that ABC supports the first two bills that are before the Subcommittee for consideration today, and urges their expedited markup and passage by Congress. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) and Joint Ventures (JVs) are two programs that have shaped the face of bird conservation in the United States. The focus of my testimony today will be the JV bill.

**H.R. 1960, THE NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION
EXTENSION ACT OF 2011**

Now, let me shift briefly to the other two bills under consideration. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) has helped conserve wetlands in the United States, Canada, and Mexico by providing grant money for projects that provide habitat conservation for wetlands-dependent migratory birds and other wildlife. Since its enactment in 1989, NAWCA has been essential in supporting the conservation activities called for by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP); it was unanimously reauthorized in 2006. Joint Ventures, which were established to implement NAWMP, as indicated, play a substantial role in fostering collaborative efforts to successfully implement NAWCA.

NAWCA is a non-regulatory, incentive-based program that works with private landowners to conserve wetlands and associated uplands across North America. Every dollar the federal government invests is matched on average by \$3.20; higher than the match required by law. As of March of 2011, over 4,400 separate partners have been involved in over 2,038 projects to conserve over 26 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands in North America. Partners include all 50 state wildlife agencies, private landowners, nonprofit conservation organizations as well as corporations, businesses, tribes, and local governments.

**H.R. 3074, THE CORMORANT MANAGEMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
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ABC opposes the delegation to states of authority under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act with respect to cormorants. The Act is unnecessary since states and private landowners can easily obtain depredation permits from the United States Fish and Wildlife Services for legal take of cormorants and can also request assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services program. States can also be granted authority to take cormorants under a depredation order. Current regulations allow state fish and wildlife agencies in 24 states which include Louisiana to take cormorants without a depredation permit under the terms of a public resource depredation order.

H.R. 1917, TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CONDUCT A JOINT VENTURE PROGRAM

JVs are diverse, regional partnerships involving federal, state, and local government agencies, corporations, tribes, and a wide range of non-government organizations, which together advance bird conservation efforts and help identify land use priorities.

JVs recently celebrated 25 years of delivering conservation planning and implementation that benefits birds and other species. JVs were initially formed to implement the North American Waterfowl Management Plan in the late 1980s, and, to date have affected 18.5 million acres of habitat across virtually every landscape of the United States.

Joint ventures were initially focused exclusively on waterfowl conservation, but have since broadened their scope and partnerships to advance integrated conservation for all species of birds in all habitats in the United States. Integrated bird conservation, which is sometimes referred to as "all-bird" conservation, is an approach that incorporates the species and habitat conservation priorities of several bird initiatives (including the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners in Flight, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan) at regional and local scales. These initiatives and other conservation interests now acknowledge that JVs serve as models of partner-based conservation, and advocate using JVs as delivery agents for bird habitat conservation in all areas of the United States.

JVs can either be habitat-centric (focused on all birds found within a specific habitat) or species-centric (focusing on more than one bird species) There are currently 21 JVs (18 habitat JVs and three species JVs), which, combined, cover the entire U.S. landscape. ABC leads the [Central Hardwoods](#), [Appalachian Mountains](#), [Oaks and Prairies](#), and [Rio Grande](#) Joint Ventures, and plays a significant role in several others. ABC supports JVs by providing expertise in the form of JV coordinators and science staff, and by leading in the design and delivery of specific projects across the country. For example, in one year alone, ABC worked with more than 100 partners, helping influence land protection on millions of acres to benefit Watchlist and declining bird species, and raised millions of dollars in funding for partnerships delivering bird conservation.

Through the Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture, ABC is improving conditions for the declining Cerulean Warbler and other mature forest species by restoring and protecting breeding habitat, reducing threats, and providing habitat management recommendations to landowners. ABC helped reforest abandoned minelands in Ohio and Virginia as part of the Appalachian Reforestation Initiative to improve the conditions for declining bird species such as the Wood Thrush, Blue-winged Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and the Cerulean Warbler. This project ultimately aims to restore 800,000 acres of former minelands in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Maryland.

Through the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture, ABC has been directing efforts to assess the distribution and population of bird species in that region. This detailed mapping project helps direct conservation efforts by identifying key areas for protection such as the 80 parcel of land in Shannon County, Missouri that linked the state-owned Angeline Conservation Area to national

Parks Service lands, filling a gap in forest protection in the heart of the Cerulean Warbler's breeding range.

JVs advance a science-based process of conservation planning and evaluation that addresses the needs of all priority bird species for a given region, facilitates participation by a broad array of stakeholders, and provides efficient and effective strategies for action. The work that JVs do is some of the most important and far reaching conservation being performed in the country today.

JVs are a program that Congress should be highlighting as a model of a successful government program that leverages every dollar the federal government invests by bringing an additional \$35 to the table.