

DOC HASTINGS, WA  
CHAIRMAN  
DON YOUNG, AK  
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TN  
LOUIE GOHMERT, TX  
ROB BISHOP, UT  
DOUG LAMBORN, CO  
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VA  
PAUL C. BROUN, GA  
JOHN FLEMING, LA  
MIKE COFFMAN, CO  
TOM McCLINTOCK, CA  
GLENN THOMPSON, PA  
JEFF DENHAM, CA  
DAN BENISHEK, MI  
DAVID RIVERA, FL  
JEFF DUNCAN, SC  
SCOTT R. TIPTON, CO  
PAUL A. GOSAR, AZ  
RAÚL R. LABRADOR, ID  
KRISTI L. NOEM, SD  
STEVE SOUTHERLAND II, FL  
BILL FLORES, TX  
ANDY HARRIS, MD  
JEFFREY M. LANDRY, LA  
JON RUNYAN, NJ  
BILL JOHNSON, OH  
MARK AMODEI, NV

TODD YOUNG  
CHIEF OF STAFF

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement By**  
**Chairman John Fleming**  
**Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs**  
**At the Legislative Hearing on**  
**H. R. 1917, H. R. 1960 and H. R. 3074**  
**March 29, 2012**

EDWARD J. MARKEY, MA  
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER  
DALE E. KILDEE, MI  
PETER A. DeFAZIO, OR  
ENI F.H. FALCOMAVAEGA, AS  
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NJ  
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CA  
RUSH D. HOLT, NJ  
RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, AZ  
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, GU  
JIM COSTA, CA  
DAN BOREN, OK  
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN, CNMI  
MARTIN HEINRICH, NM  
BEN RAY LUJÁN, NM  
JOHN P. SARBANES, MD  
BETTY SUTTON, OH  
NIKI TSONGAS, MA  
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, PR  
JOHN GARAMENDI, CA  
COLLEEN W. HANABUSA, HI  
PAUL TONKO, NY

JEFFREY DUNCAN  
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

Good morning, today, the Subcommittee will hold a legislative hearing on three bills affecting programs that are administered by the Division of Migratory Bird Management at the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The first bill, H. R. 1917, has been introduced by our former Committee colleague, Congressman Ron Kind of Wisconsin, to statutorily establish the Joint Venture Program. This is not a new federal program. In fact, it has been funded as a line-item within the Service's annual budget for the past twenty five years.

Like most federal programs, it has grown from a single Joint Venture to 25 today including four in Canada and the amount of federal taxpayer support has more than quadrupled from less than \$3 million to more than \$14 million dollars. While I am sure there have been some beneficial results, before I can support this legislation, I am going to need a justification on the essential need for these Joint Ventures, how they complement or duplicate other federal programs, what happens to our migratory bird populations if the amount of federal appropriations is reduced or eliminated and what is the proper annual authorization level for this program?

The second bill, H. R. 1960, was introduced by our distinguished Subcommittee colleague from Virginia, Congressman Rob Wittman. It would extend the North American Wetlands Conservation Act for an additional five years at existing authorization levels.

As a Representative from Louisiana, I understand the importance of wetlands to not only migratory waterfowl but to the millions of Americans who live along our coasts. The U. S. Geological Survey has calculated that for every 2.7 miles a hurricane travels across wetlands, the storm surge is reduced by one foot. It is, therefore, likely that wetlands were directly responsible for saving human lives and property in Gulf Coast States that were devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Since the North American Wetlands Conservation Act was first signed into law in 1989, Congress has appropriated over \$500 million which has leveraged over \$3.4 billion in private matching funds. The net results of this investment has been the acquisition, creation and restoration of nearly 27 million acres of wetlands and associated habitat in the United States, Canada and Mexico. In addition, these expenditures have, according to Ducks Unlimited, annually created nearly 3,800 new jobs in the United States and nearly \$840 million in employee earnings.

While this program has been successful in establishing and maintaining wetland habitat, I am hoping that our witnesses will address the ongoing importance of conserving wetlands, how it creates nearly 4,000 private sector jobs each year and what is the appropriate annual authorization level for this program.

Finally, we will hear testimony on H. R. 3074, a bill introduced by the distinguished Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, Congressman John Kline of Minnesota. While we frequently hear stories about species that are teetering on the verge of extinction, in this case, the population of Double-crested cormorants, particularly in the Great Lakes, has reached historic highs. To their credit, the Fish and Wildlife Service has pro-actively tried to mitigate the damages caused by these birds which are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Sadly, we will hear today that those efforts have not always been effective in protecting ecosystems, fishery resources and private property in certain regions of the country and that it is time to try a different approach.

Under H. R. 3074, the authority to manage cormorants would be shifted to the affected states that would develop a comprehensive management plan that would be submitted for approval to the Secretary of the Interior. Ironically, even the Service has stated that "Since cormorant conflicts with public resources tend to be highly localized, it makes sense to give more cormorant management authority to the agencies that are best-suited to address local problems." This is exactly what the Cormorant Management and Natural Resources Protection Act proposed to do.

I am now pleased to recognize the Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee for any statement he would like to make at this time.