

TESTIMONY OF ROWAN GOULD, ACTING DIRECTOR, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE, REGARDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2011 BUDGET OF THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

March 4, 2010

Good afternoon Chairwoman Bordallo, and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Rowan Gould, Acting Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). I appreciate this opportunity to testify before you today on the Service's Fiscal Year 2011 budget request. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Subcommittee for its continued support of our mission to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The President's FY 2011 budget request of \$1.6 billion for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will focus funding on the agency's highest priority conservation initiatives, while containing costs to address government fiscal realities. Among our top strategic investments are increases of \$18.8 million for Climate Change Adaptation, an additional \$16.2 million for ecosystem restoration including \$400,000 redirected from base program work, \$20.0 million for Federal land acquisition and \$4.0 million for work to review planned renewable energy development to ensure they do not threaten species.

The FY 2011 budget request recognizes the need to make difficult choices in challenging economic times, while providing substantial increases to address the unparalleled threat posed by climate change. The strategic investments this budget makes will allow the Service to continue our work with partners to build the capacity needed to tackle climate change and other future challenges. Our request also recognizes the need to protect significant ecosystems across the nation and to facilitate the responsible development of renewable energy resources.

The budget focuses on key ecosystems threatened by pollution, water shortages and habitat destruction through the Treasured Landscapes Initiative, and includes an additional \$2.5 million to fund conservation jobs for youth through the Youth in Natural Resources Initiative. An additional \$1.23 billion would be made available through permanent appropriations, most of which will go directly to states for fish and wildlife restoration and conservation efforts.

To provide the maximum funding possible for priority program needs, the 2011 President's Budget Request does not include an increase for anticipated increases in fixed costs. Programs will absorb fixed cost increases in 2011. Fixed costs include government-wide employee pay; employer contributions to health benefit plans; unemployment compensation; workers compensation; and GSA and non-GSA rent. .

Climate Change Adaptation

The FY 2011 budget request provides for an increase of \$18.8 million for climate change, including \$8.8 million for Climate Change Planning and Adaptive Science Capacity. The budget will build on the new Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), partner-based centers for biological planning and conservation design. By the end of FY 2010, nine LCCs will be established. In FY 2011, three additional LCCs will be established with \$3.8 million of the requested increase for climate change planning, thereby enabling the Service to cover more than half the country with 12 LCCs. To support pressing scientific needs, \$5.0 million dollars in additional funding is requested to provide climate models, species and habitat assessments, and other information needed to make required adaptive management decisions. The budget also provides \$8.0 million for continued development of our refuge system climate science inventory and monitoring effort, as well as \$2.0 million for conservation measures on private lands through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program.

The availability of additional scientific information and better risk and vulnerability analyses and decision support tools will improve biological planning and conservation design. Improvements in biological planning and conservation design will, in turn, make the Service more effective in delivering conservation on the ground by targeting the highest priority areas for conservation and tailoring actions to achieve population objectives. Similarly, additional science capacity will expand our ability to monitor and evaluate our success in sustaining fish and wildlife in the face of climate change, and will help us refine our biological plans and conservation designs.

New Energy Frontier

This initiative includes an additional \$4.0 million for consultation, conservation planning and technical assistance in project design and review of renewable energy projects. Energy development activities can have a major and direct impact on fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats, and have the potential to alter public recreational opportunities in the outdoors. The Service's ability to conduct consultations and planning activities is critical to ensuring that the Nation can expand the production of renewable energy while protecting environmental values.

Treasured Landscapes

An additional \$15.8 million and \$400,000 redirected from base program work will support ongoing restoration and conservation efforts in nationally significant ecosystems such as the Everglades, Gulf Coast, Chesapeake Bay, and the San Francisco Bay Delta. The budget also provides \$106.3 million, an increase of \$20.0 million, for land acquisition for the National Wildlife Refuge System, providing support for important ecosystems and vital wildlife habitat and lands for outdoor recreation. Additional funding requests include:

- \$1.8 million requested for Everglades to support landscape-scale conservation and restoration projects in the Florida Everglades.
- \$5.0 million requested for Chesapeake Bay to support implementation of Executive Order 13508 to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay. The Executive Order calls for Federal leadership "...to protect and restore the health, heritage, natural resources, and social and economic value of the Nation's largest estuarine ecosystem and the natural sustainability of its watershed." In addition, the Service plans to redirect \$400,000 from base program work toward Chesapeake Bay restoration.
- \$4.0 million requested for the California Bay Delta will support a variety of actions and investments the Administration is undertaking to address California's current water supply and ecological crisis. The Administration's efforts will support and complement the recently enacted state law that addresses water supply needs within California.
- \$5.0 million requested for the Service's Gulf Coast effort, part of a larger effort with state and Federal partners, to implement restoration projects on refuges and enable the Service to provide its expertise to multi-agency planning of projects. These projects are needed to mitigate, in part, effects of ongoing wetlands losses along the Central Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Mississippi.

Youth in Natural Resources

Funding is requested to create jobs in natural resources for America's youth, particularly youth from underrepresented groups. The increase for this initiative includes \$2.0 million for the National Wildlife Refuge System to hire youth through programs such as the Youth Conservation Corps and \$1.0 million through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will leverage the \$1.0 million to attract private contributions and implement a competitive grant program to develop new or expand existing youth conservation job programs. Funds will be awarded to Refuges, Fish Hatcheries, Friends groups, Youth Conservation Corps, non-governmental organizations and others who seek to develop innovative conservation employment opportunities for youth. The primary focus of the program will be to support Refuges, Fish Hatcheries and priority species on both public and private lands.

With the changing cultural focus and demographics of America, increased urbanization, loss of family farms, and the expansion of indoor pursuits, America's youth have lost touch with traditional outdoor recreational activities, and the need for natural resource conservation. Compared to our needs for a future workforce, fewer young people are thinking of careers in natural resource conservation.

National Wildlife Refuge System

The 2011 budget for the Refuge System is roughly \$500 million, a net decrease of \$3.3 million, after adding funds for climate change and monitoring and eliminating the Challenge Cost Share program and unrequested increases provided in 2010. This is a year to focus on our highest priorities and the budget request for the Refuge System does just that. The budget represents the continuation of our commitment to help fish, wildlife, plants and their habitat adapt to a changing climate. The improved information that we will develop from our inventory and monitoring program, as well as the biological planning support from LCCs will provide us with much better information to enhance Service decisions, in the Refuge System and elsewhere through the Service.

Law Enforcement

For Law Enforcement, the budget provides \$63.3 million, a decrease of \$2.5 million from the FY 2010 enacted. The decrease reflects an emphasis on the Service's and Department's highest priorities in a tough fiscal climate. The decrease eliminates the unrequested funding provided in the 2010 budget.

Endangered Species

In Endangered Species, the budget includes a total of \$181.3 million, which is an increase of \$2.0 from the 2010 level. The budget includes funding to support the Department's New Energy Frontier initiative, providing consultations on renewable energy projects. The budget also provides additional funding for polar bear recovery and for an Attwater's prairie chicken captive breeding facility. Additionally, there is an increase in recovery to fund projects for species on the brink of extinction or within reach of recovery. The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is funded at \$85.0 million; level with the FY 2010 enacted level.

Habitat Conservation

For the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the President's FY 2011 budget includes an increase of \$2.0 million for Climate Change for conservation actions on private lands. Our request for Conservation Planning Assistance is increased by \$2.0 million in support of the Department's New Energy Frontier Initiative, for renewable energy project planning. In addition, Habitat Conservation has an increase of \$3.3 million for treasured landscapes ecosystem projects.

Fisheries

The Fisheries and Aquatic Resources program is funded at \$142.5 million in the request. The National Fish Habitat Action plan is funded at \$5.2 million, level with the FY 2010 enacted budget. The Fish Passage program is funded at \$10.8 million, level with FY 2010 enacted budget.

Migratory Birds

The Migratory Birds program is funded at \$52.7 million, a net decrease of \$1.7 million with increases for conservation and monitoring as part of the Chesapeake Bay Treasured Landscapes initiative and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's Joint Ventures for the Chesapeake Bay. The North American Wetlands Conservation Fund is funded at \$42.6 million, \$5 million below what was appropriated in FY 2010.

International Affairs

The budget provides International Affairs just over \$13 million, a net decrease of \$1.3 million from the FY 2010 Appropriations Act. The Multinational Species Conservation Fund is funded at \$10 million with decreases from earmarks in the FY 2010 Appropriations Act.

Construction

The Service was fortunate to be able to help with our Nation's financial recovery through the American Recovery and Restoration Act (ARRA). The Act provided the Services with \$115 million for construction projects, roughly three times the size of the Service's average annual construction budget. In 2011, the Service will be completing many of the ARRA funded projects and, therefore, the budget proposes a smaller than average construction program to be funded with annual appropriations. The 2011 construction request of \$23.7 million will fund the highest priority projects not funded with ARRA funds. The \$115 million in construction funding has enabled us to do 733 projects.

Land Acquisition

The budget proposes to increase Land Acquisition by \$20.0 million to a total of \$106.3 million. The FY 2011 project list includes several large landscape scale projects. The addition of 2,250 acres of grassland and riparian habitat to the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge along the Connecticut River and the addition of 6,667 acres of grassland conservation easements to the Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Management Area will benefit a multitude of species. One of the larger projects, the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Area, adjoins land acquired by other Federal government agencies and conservation partners. The Service would use funds requested in 2011 to acquire 17,545 conservation easement acres for this Conservation Area.

This year the Secretary of the Interior asked us, along with the other Interior agencies, to develop an updated ranking process related to an integrated effort to prioritize land acquisition among Department bureaus. We first used our own prioritization processes. Then, an overlay, based on the Secretary's criteria, was applied to the bureau ranked lists. The Department-wide project types were selected to target landscape level conservation, especially river and riparian conservation and restoration and conservation of wildlife and their habitat, urban parks and open spaces, and historical and cultural preservation. The bureaus worked cooperatively to develop their final lists, in order to optimize and leverage funds for conservation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. I would be happy to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have and look forward to working with you through the appropriations process.