

**Statement of Congressman Walter B. Jones**  
**H.R. 306 – Corolla Wild Horses Protection Act**  
**House Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs**  
**1334 Longworth House Office Building – April 7, 2011 – 10:00am**

Chairman Fleming and Ranking Member Sablan, thank you for this hearing on H.R. 306, the Corolla Wild Horses Protection Act. The bill would provide for a new management plan for the free-roaming Corolla wild horses in and around the Currituck National Wildlife Refuge on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The lineage of the Corolla horses can be traced back to the arrival of Spanish explorers on the Outer Banks in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These beautiful creatures have survived in the wild for over four centuries. They currently roam across over 7,500 acres of public and private land in coastal Currituck County, North Carolina.

Unfortunately, under the existing management agreement between the U.S. Department of the Interior, the State of North Carolina, the County of Currituck and the non-profit Corolla Wild Horse Fund, the maximum number of horses allowed in the herd is 60. Leading equine geneticists believe that the number 60 poses an immediate threat to the herd's existence due to high levels of inbreeding and low levels of genetic diversity in the herd. To address this issue, the bill would require the parties to the agreement to craft a new herd management plan that would allow for a herd of no less than 110 horses, with a target population of between 120 and 130 horses. That is the minimum number of horses that renowned equine geneticist Dr. Gus Cothran of Texas A&M University has found to be necessary to maintain the herd's genetic viability. It's important to note that these numbers are well within the carrying capacity of the land these horses call home. And to increase the herd's genetic diversity, the bill would also under limited circumstances allow for introduction of a small number of free-roaming wild horses from the related herd at Cape Lookout National Seashore.

This bill is similar to one I authored to protect the wild horses of Shackleford Banks in the Cape Lookout National Seashore. That legislation – H.R. 765 – which was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1998, has provided a successful statutory framework for a public-private partnership to manage the Shackleford horses. I am grateful to President Clinton's Chief of Staff at that time – Erskine Bowles – for his assistance in moving that legislation. Mr. Bowles, who just stepped down as President of the University of North Carolina System and co-Chaired President Obama's Debt Commission, is also a strong supporter of this bill, H.R. 306.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to read from a letter to the Committee supporting H.R. 306 from North Carolina State Senator Stan White, who represents Currituck County in the State Senate. He states: "In 2010, the North Carolina General Assembly designated the Colonial Spanish Mustang as the North Carolina State Horse. It was done to show how important these horses are to our culture, their value to our economy, and our commitment to their welfare. However, this designation cannot do its job without a solid management plan that clarifies what is necessary for these horses to thrive. H.R. 306 would allow for the best management of the herd according to what has been scientifically determined to be necessary for their health and long-term survival."

Joining Senator White in supporting H.R. 306 are the Humane Society, North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue, Currituck County, the Animal Welfare Institute, The Foundation for Shackleford Horses, Saving America's Mustangs, American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign, and Equus Survival Trust. I would like to ask unanimous consent for letters of support from these individuals and organizations to be included for the record.

Mr. Chairman, again thank you for holding this hearing on H.R. 306. It is a legislative fix based on sound science, and I urge the Subcommittee to support it.