

The Honorable Lawrence Webb “Larry” Kissell

Member of Congress North Carolina’s Eighth District

Testimony on: H.R. 1160 “*McKinney Lake National Fish Hatchery Conveyance Act.*”

May 6, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today in reference to H.R. 1160 the “McKinney Lake National Fish Hatchery Conveyance Act.”

Located in Hoffman, North Carolina the McKinney Lake Fish Hatchery is a warm water hatchery, and contains 23 ponds covering more than 18 acres of water. This primary use of the hatchery is growing fingerling-sized (3-4 inches) channel catfish to harvestable size (8-12 inches) for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's Community Fishing Program.

The Commission’s Community Fishing Program provides angling opportunities to thousands of citizens, including children and disabled individuals, throughout the year. These Community Fishing Program sites are intensively managed bodies of water that receive monthly stockings of catchable-sized channel catfish from April-September. The McKinney Lake hatchery in conjunction with the Watha State Fish Hatchery near Wilmington provides the channel catfish for these monthly stockings. Many of these Community Fishing Program sites feature handicap-accessible fishing piers and solar-powered fish feeders helping to provide an enjoyable angling experience for citizens of all ages.

The “McKinney Lake National Fish Hatchery Conveyance Act,” while first introduced in the 111th Congress as H.R. 6115 and this congress as H.R. 1160 actually has its beginnings in 1995. At that time the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offered to transfer ownership and operation of this hatchery to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission to help meet the state’s fisheries management objectives. However, due to the structural deficiencies of the lake's dam, the transfer was never completed. Since then, the dam issues have been corrected, and the NC

Wildlife Resources Commission has had full management of the hatchery under a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The State of North Carolina and the USFWS have entered into 5 subsequent MOA's since 1995, with the most current being signed on November 10, 2009 and continuing until September 30, 2012.

H.R. 1160 was drafted by my staff with the cooperation, and consultation, of both the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and the USFWS. The product of this cooperation is a bill that has garnered the support of 9 bi-partisan original co-sponsors from the North Carolina House delegation, as well as companion legislation (S. 651) in the Senate. The Senate version is the exact same legislative language and is co-sponsored by both North Carolina Senators.

In the letter of invitation to testify before you today, Chairman Fleming asked for me to explain the rationale for Section 2 (e). This language in H.R. 1160 allows the Fish and Wildlife Service to potentially utilize these conveyed facilities for the propagation of certain aquatic resources in the future. Section 2 (e) is the product of a request from the USFWS, who requested to have the opportunity in the future to enter into an agreement with the State to raise fish for them if needed. During the drafting of H.R. 1160 the USFWS wanted to insure that in case of future need they would have the ability to contract with the state for use of the facility. My office and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission were more than happy to grant this request to the USFWS and include Section 2 (e) in H.R. 1160.

In conclusion, H.R. 1160 would complete a land conveyance that by all accounts should have occurred in the late 1990's. In addition the state of North Carolina would be able to continue producing catfish for the popular and important Community Fishing Program, on land and facilities that they would have ownership of. The State ownership of this land would incentivize them to make long term improvements and investments in the property, keeping it a viable fish hatchery. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and look forward to H.R. 1160 moving through the legislative process. Thank you.