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MEMBER OF CONGRESS
MINNESOTA'S 7TH DISTRICT**

**TESTIMONY ON H.R.3074, THE CORMORANT
MANAGEMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION ACT
THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2012**

Chairman Fleming and Ranking Member Sablan, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for holding this hearing today and for inviting me to testify today on H.R. 3074, the Cormorant Management and Natural Resources Protection Act.

As a resident of northwestern Minnesota and an avid sportsman, the cormorant is unfortunately an issue that I have dealt with for a long time. This is not the first time I have introduced legislation or testified on this issue. I have sponsored and co-sponsored legislation to help manage excessive cormorant populations since my first term in office in 1991. I have been trying for years to work with people on both sides of the aisle to come up with a management solution that will solve this problem. I believe Representative Kline and I have a good bill here that makes a lot of sense.

Cormorants first received federal protection back in the 1970s, following a drastic reduction in population from DDT. Since then, the populations have exploded and recovered to even greater numbers than prior to the 1970s. Cormorants have no natural predators, so the increase in population has gone unchecked for 40 years. Flocks of thousands of cormorants will fly into an area and completely wipe out the fish in a lake or river, devastating open water game fish populations. Each bird consumes about 1-2 pounds of fish per day, so you can imagine the effects that a large cormorant population has on the fish in a lake. It is devastating.

In 2000, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services, held ten public scoping meetings across the United States to seek input about the issue of the cormorant for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) they were preparing. I requested an additional meeting in my district so that folks along Lake of the Woods could participate in the process. My constituents who spoke at that meeting voiced concern about the impact of double-crested cormorants on local walleye and perch populations, as well as the economic impact on area resorts, charter boats, and recreational fishing.

The problems double-crested cormorants are causing in Minnesota go beyond that. I have received detailed letters from folks such as the Meeker County Area Lakes Association. This association represents hundreds of lakeshore owners, fishers, and local businesses that are very concerned about the adverse effect the cormorant infestation on Pigeon Lake is having on nearby lakes. In their letter, they noted that it was critical to be able to limit the number of these birds for numerous reasons, including: the devastating effect on fisheries and aquaculture; damage to the wildlife and native vegetation on both public and private property; the potential to displace

species such as herons and gulls; and the risk to human health and safety from the vast amounts of guano produced by thousands of cormorants.

In recent years, I have also heard from tribal leaders who have expressed concern that the cormorants may be affecting fish populations in areas such as Leech Lake. They pointed to the negative implications this has for the tourism industry, which is increasingly important in their area of the state. A study conducted at Leech Lake in 2005 to analyze the cormorant issue also noted the risks of aircraft collisions with cormorants on or near local airports are cause for concern. I hear these same concerns and many more repeated by constituents across my district.

In 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a Final Rule that allowed for more flexibility in the control of double-crested cormorants. The aquaculture depredation order was expanded so that USDA Wildlife Services, as well as State wildlife agencies and Tribes, could conduct cormorant control in 24 states, including Minnesota. This finally allowed us to manage these birds in a logical way when they threatened our lakes and other public resources.

This legislation, H.R.3074, goes further than the 2003 rule. By putting this rule into statute, states will have better authority to implement cormorant management programs. I'm happy to work with Rep. Kline in addressing the concerns of those impacted by these birds.

To reemphasize my point -- this is not a new issue, but it is one that deserves our attention. The issue of the cormorant and the tremendous destruction it causes in lake communities in Minnesota has been ongoing, and my constituents want a solution. Mr. Chairman, I thank you once again for holding this hearing and for allowing me to testify on the issue. This is a bipartisan, common sense bill that is much needed. I hope we can all work together and get something productive done.