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**Testimony Before the House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife on
H.R. 3805, The Electronic Duck Stamp Extension Act of 2009.**

**By Len Singel, Chief Customer Service Officer
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
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Thank you, Madam Chair. I am Len Singel, Chief Customer Service Officer of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and I am here today representing the State of Maryland and the States participating in the three-year pilot to issue Federal Duck Stamps electronically. The MD DNR and our sister fish and wildlife agencies are pleased to provide testimony in strong support of the Electronic Duck Stamp Extension Act to increase the length of the e-Duck Stamp Program pilot from three years to five. The MD DNR thanks Chairwoman Bordallo and Representative Wittman for their interest and support reflected by the introduction of this bill and the scheduling of today's hearing.

I am very pleased to be here today as before I worked for the State of Maryland, I was with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. At the Association, I was the point of contact for electronic or automated licensing and the electronic Federal Duck Stamp. I brought all the states together and we drafted the primer language for what would be introduced by Representative Kind and become the Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2005. I thought when e-Duck Stamps came into existence for the states; I would be able to move on to another pursuit, but here I am today in 2010 to speak on how important e-Duck Stamps are to the states and their customers. The only difference is, I have moved from the theory of an electronic duck stamp to the practice of their issuance. A practice that has been extremely successful in Maryland.

Maryland has operated an electronic licensing, registration and customer service system for more than 10 years, but has been unable to fulfill one of the most requested items from our hunters. This requested was the ability to purchase the Federal Duck Stamp with our Maryland Hunting License and to have the Duck Stamp print on the same license. By participating in the e-Duck Stamp Program pilot we have fulfilled this request and our customers have responded favorably. For the past three years, our customers have been visiting any of our more than 250 Sports License Agents, our seven Regional Service Centers, clicking to our website, or speaking with one of our telephone agents to purchase their Federal Duck Stamp when they purchase their Maryland Hunting License electronically. For the past three years, our supply of e-Duck Stamps are limitless and are guaranteed available, 24x7, at any DNR licensing sales channel they choose to visit. And, no matter where they purchase their e-Duck Stamp, the artistic paper stamp is mailed to their homes.

During the first year of the e-Duck Stamp Program, Maryland sold 21,132 Federal Duck Stamps through our system. Maryland residents accounted for 18,159 stamps, with the 2,973 stamps sold to hunters residing in every State of our Nation. In the same period, we sold 52,099 Maryland e-Duck Stamps. The second year of the program saw Maryland migratory bird hunters purchasing 25,805 Federal e-Duck Stamps and 50,319 Maryland e-Duck Stamps. Maryland residents accounted for 22,262 of our total with non-resident hunters accounting for the remainder of sales. MD DNR looks forward to increasing our e-Duck Stamp sales in the third year and the additional two if H.R. 3805 is passed, of the Federal e-Duck Stamp pilot.

Maryland migratory bird hunters have been extremely appreciative and supportive of this pilot program and desire to see it extended if not made permanent. MD DNR's sister agencies have experienced similar support and appreciation from their customers, and all would like to see the continuation of this program. Wisconsin DNR, in particular, very strongly supports this bill and values the customer service tools it extends to the states that they have not had with only offering the artistic paper stamps for sale. The agencies participating in the pilot agree that by creating an electronic version of the Federal Duck Stamp migratory bird hunters can secure all needed authorizations at the same time and location, thereby making licensure as easy as possible is a major win for wildlife conservation.

The success of this short pilot is not only being felt in those participating, but by those States waiting to offer e-Duck Stamps through their respective systems. Their customers are asking when it will be available in their home states, and how they would appreciate the ability to purchase all migratory bird licenses at the same time from the same place; even in their homes. California DFG and Missouri DOC have noted the benefits of offering e-Duck Stamps to customers by watching Maryland and the pilot States increase customer service levels and make licensure easier and want to be included as soon as possible. Extending the pilot for two additional years may give these two fish and wildlife agencies the chance to meet their customer needs and boost wetland conservation.

In conclusion, the state fish and wildlife agencies have been on the forefront of electronic or automated licensing. Most agencies have 10 to 15 years experience licensing and delivering services to their customers with this technology and the customer expect all wildlife licenses to be available through these channels. The most important success of the original legislation was to build upon the proven backbone of existing systems the States have already built and placed into production to deliver e-Duck Stamps instead of creating a separate, Federal stand-alone system for this purpose. This method allowed customers to take advantage of this new offering as soon as it was available and utilize venues they are already familiar. Thus there was not a need to change buying habits or use another sales channel to acquire all hunting authorizations.

The second success was to keep the integrity of the artist paper stamp and its conservation message. Because the Federal Duck Stamp is not only a hunting license, but a ticket to be part of wetland conservation on a continental scale it is important for hunters to be reminded of how the proceeds are being spent. By continuing this program for two more years, more states should be able to participate in the program and more migratory bird hunters will be better served by having the ability to receive all migratory bird hunting authorizations at the same time and location, with the added bonus of being on the same license document.

Hunters are modernizing by using the Internet to purchase their licenses, communicate with fellow hunters and plan their days afield. The licenses, stamps, permits and authorizations needed for them to legally partake in their sporting activity and that bestows upon them the mantle of hunter should modernize as well. This is why MD DNR and our sister agencies strongly support H.R. 3805 to extend this program for two additional years. Thank you very much for your time in considering my testimony today.