

Committee on Resources

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STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE WAYNE T. GILCHREST

CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS AT THE SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON H. R. 3433, H. R. 3479, H. R. 4027 AND H. R. 4158: MAY 13, 2004.

Good morning, today, the Subcommittee will conduct a hearing on four pieces of legislation. Several of the bill sponsors will testify today but unfortunately a representative from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is unable to attend.

The first measure, H.R. 3433, introduced by Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson would transfer the management of the Mingo Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture. This center is located within the boundaries of the Mingo National Wildlife Refuge and it provides basic training and educational skills to hundreds of at-risk students between the ages of 16 and 24. The U.S. Forest Service operates 18 job corps centers throughout the United States and the two agencies have signed a Memorandum of Understanding which transfers responsibility for the center.

The second bill, H.R. 3479, has been introduced by our Subcommittee Colleague, Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo. This comprehensive proposal, the Brown Tree Snake Control and Eradication Act, is designed to address the serious ongoing problems caused by this invasive venomous reptile known as the brown tree snake. Since its unfortunate arrival in Guam as a hitchhiker on a U.S. naval vessel, this snake has single handedly wiped out almost all of the island's native bird and lizard species. If there is any hope of saving this ecosystem, this unwanted invader must be eradicated. This bill offers a number of approaches. At the appropriate time, we will hear from the distinguished Governor of Guam, the Speaker of the Guam Legislature and the Resident Representative of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.

The third bill, introduced by Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen would allow the University of Miami to use certain adjacent property owned by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Virginia Key, Florida. The University is interested in building a new marine life science center for its growing student population. I look forward to obtaining further details on this proposal.

Finally, our Colleague Solomon Ortiz has proposed, H.R. 4158, to authorize the conveyance of the decommissioned NOAA Hydrographic Survey Vessel The Whiting to the government of Mexico. I am interested in hearing the particulars of this transaction, how the vessel will be used and what is the liability, if any, of the U.S. government in the future.

I am now pleased to recognize the Subcommittee ranking Democratic Member, Congressman Frank Pallone.