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CHIEF OF STAFF

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement by
Chairman John Fleming
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
At the Legislative Hearing on
H. R. 50, H. R. 1760 and H. R. 1761
July 28, 2011

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JEFFREY DUNCAN
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

Good morning. Today, the Subcommittee will receive testimony on three bills, H. R. 50, H. R. 1760 and H. R. 1761 which would extend five conservation programs to assist African and Asian Elephants, Rhinoceros and Tigers, Great Apes and Marine Turtles.

Since the establishment of the first of these funds in 1988, Congress has appropriated some \$90 million which has attracted over \$185 million in private matching funds. Together, these monies have been used by the Fish and Wildlife Service to finance some 1805 conservation grants to various range states throughout the world.

In my invitation letter, I have asked each of our invited witnesses to respond to a fundamental question as to why Congress should continue to appropriate taxpayer money to these funds at a time when our national debt now exceeds \$14 trillion dollars. This was not a rhetorical question and I am hoping to get a good answer. In addition, based on the numbers provided to me by the Fish and Wildlife Service, it is clear that private donations exceeded federal appropriated funds by more than a 2 to 1 ratio. Why then is any federal investment necessary?

If these bills are to proceed through the legislative process, we must be able to adequately justify, especially to our new members and myself, why they should vote to allocate scarce federal dollars to assist in the conservation of these international species. I understand that we are not talking about a huge sum of money but, nevertheless, in our current fiscal condition we must account for every dollar of taxpayer money.

I would now like to recognize the Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee for any statement he would like to make at this time.