

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

Statement

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE JIM SAXTON, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS, AT THE SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP OF H.R. 3292, CAT ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ESTABLISHMENT ACT:

APRIL 6, 2000.

Today, we will mark up H.R. 3292. This legislation was the subject of a hearing last week and there was broad support for this idea. H.R. 3292 was introduced by our distinguished colleague from Louisiana, Richard Baker. This measure would establish the Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana.

Cat Island is a unique habitat of bottomland hardwoods that has never been leveed, and it is one of the few natural areas along the Mississippi River that still experiences seasonal overflows. It is an area that is teeming with wildlife, and it contains prime habitat for the Louisiana black bear, 1,000-year-old bald cypress trees, and millions of migratory birds.

Under the terms of H.R. 3292, the Secretary of the Interior would be directed to acquire by purchase or donation property that would form the basis of the proposed Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge.

At the appropriate time, I will offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute that expands the size of the Cat Island Refuge from 9,477 to 36,500 acres and clarifies the purposes for establishing the refuge. In the current fiscal year, the Fish and Wildlife Service has \$500,000 to acquire property within Cat Island, and the Administration has requested an additional \$4 million in FY'01.

I understand that the sponsor of the bill and the Administration support this amendment, and I compliment Congressman Richard Baker for his outstanding leadership in this matter. I know that he has spent an extraordinary amount of time working with both local, State and Federal officials to develop this refuge. This is how the process should work, and I remain convinced that local support for a proposed refuge is absolutely essential.

I urge an AYE vote on H.R. 3292!

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