

**Testimony of Marc Smith
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**U.S. House of Representatives
Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular
Affairs
Legislative Hearing**

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Chairman Fleming, Ranking Member Sablan, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. National Wildlife Federation is a non-partisan, non-profit organization. Our mission is to inspire Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future. National Wildlife Federation is supported by 48 state and territorial affiliates and more than 4 million members and supporters. Our members include hunters, anglers, backyard gardeners, birdwatchers and many other outdoor enthusiasts from throughout the nation.

Wildlife conservation has been the focus of our efforts from our inception more than 75 years ago. Time and again, threats to wildlife have unified diverse people from across our nation to take action in the interest of conserving the nation's rich wildlife heritage. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today on several pieces of proposed legislation to protect fish, wildlife and our natural resources. These bills will further advance conservation of our nation's fish and wildlife for the benefit of all citizens

The Strategic Response to Asian Carp Invasion Act (H.R. 358)

As you know, the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River basins are facing one of the greatest invasive species threats in decades: Asian carp. Known to batter boaters and even knock them into the water at the sound of a passing motor, Asian carp are voracious filter feeders that can grow to more than 4 feet long, weigh up to 100 pounds and quickly dominate a body of water by gobbling up the same food that sustains native fish populations. As these jumping, jumbo-sized fish travel up the Mississippi and further along the Ohio River, we are in an emergency situation that is in desperate need of an enhanced and coordinated federal response.

H.R. 358 responds to this crisis by creating a national strategy to address Asian carp in two of the nation's most significant watersheds, the Mississippi and Ohio River basins. Several federal agencies are working to address the threat of Asian Carp in these regions, but their efforts should be more coordinated and focused. H.R. 358 places the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the lead of a new multi-agency effort that includes the Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. Moreover, this legislation directs these agencies to

develop a coordinated strategy for supporting state and regional efforts with high-level technical assistance, best practices, coordination and other resources.

The National Wildlife Federation is strongly encouraged by the collaboration and establishment of the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee that is working to prevent Asian carp from invading the Great Lakes. However, no federal strategy currently exists to protect the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River basins and tributaries from Asian Carp. Now is the time to address this challenge by passing H.R. 358.

The Upper Mississippi CARP Act (H.R. 709)

Minnesota is at the front lines in terms of fighting the upstream march of Asian carp in the Mississippi River. While several Asian carp have been caught in Minnesota already, with the most recent catch just south of the Twin Cities last month, there is still time to protect Minnesota's natural resources, economy and quality of life. Minnesota has proud outdoor recreation traditions, native fish populations, and national parks, all tied to its water resources, and supporting its \$11.6 billion tourism industry and thousands of jobs and businesses. These economic resources are at risk unless we can stop the movement of Asian carp upstream in the state.

Given the urgent need for action, the National Wildlife Federation supports closing the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock in Minneapolis in order to form an effective barrier to Asian carp passage. This lock is upstream from the latest live Asian carp catch, and if closed, would protect thousands of miles of rivers and streams and thousands of lakes upstream, thereby protecting the multi-billion economy these resources support.

Building upon our support for this legislation, National Wildlife Federation and our partners in the Stop Carp Coalition in Minnesota will release the results of a survey of registered voters in Minnesota that show overwhelming support for closing locks in Minneapolis to stop the northern advance of Asian carp into Minnesota waters. Our preliminary findings, to be released in the next two weeks, overwhelmingly support the intent of H.R. 709.

In summary, H.R. 709 will enable us to effectively address this serious threat to Minnesota's economy and quality of life. We urge Congress to move swiftly and pass this important legislation.

Preventing Introductions of Invasive Species

As important as it is to manage, treat, control and stop the continued spread of invasive species already established in the United States, such as the Asian carp, the most effective way to stop invasions is to prevent introductions of harmful non-native species in the first place. National Wildlife Federation supports **The Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act, H.R. 996** introduced by Representative Louise Slaughter. This legislation will close the loopholes that

allowed harmful invasive species like Asian carp, Burmese pythons, and nutria to enter the country. H.R. 996 would advance our nation's laws on non-native animals from the 19th century to the 21st century by dramatically strengthening the ability of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to make rapid, science-based decisions on whether a non-native species is harmful or not. The total U.S. cost attributed to invasive species and associated animal diseases is estimated to be as much as \$35 billion per year. We can save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in damages and control costs if we can identify potential risks of new non-native species before deciding whether to allow or prohibit import or trade.

The Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act (H.R. 2463)

NWF represents hundreds of thousands of sportsmen and women and advocates for access and opportunity to hunt and fish. Many sportsmen and women enjoy shooting and marksmanship and proper training and practice is essential for the development of a new generation of hunters and outdoor enthusiasts. For that reason NWF supports H.R. 2463 and encourages its passage.

However, shooting ranges can at times have negative impacts on wildlife due to lead toxicity from target shooting ranges. The safest and most cost-effective way to mitigate any potential negative impacts to wildlife due to heavy lead deposition at shooting ranges is to prevent lead deposition from spent ammunition from occurring in the first place, by the use of non-toxic alternatives to lead, such as steel shot and copper bullets. We recommend Congress include provisions in this legislation to improve on-site (at the shooting ranges) education about the dangers to wildlife of lead in ammunition and encourage conversion by shooters to non-toxic ammunition on shooting ranges and in their outdoor hunting activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we appreciate the committee's effort to address the important wildlife issues discussed in today's hearing, and look forward to working with you to further develop the proposed bills. Addressing these wildlife issues is important to conserve wildlife for our children's future and to help protect our nation's waters including the Great Lakes, the Mississippi and Ohio River watersheds. We commend the committee for moving this important legislation and hope to continue to work with you to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat.