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

**Opening Statement by**  
**The Honorable John Fleming**  
**Chairman, Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs**  
**At the Legislative Hearing on H.R. 910 and H.R. 1080**  
**Thursday, March 21, 2013**

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Good morning and welcome to the Subcommittee's first hearing of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. We will hear testimony today on the Sikes Act, a law first enacted in 1960 to conserve fish and wildlife species on our nation's military installations.

This law has been revised and improved a number of times over the years in cooperation with the House Armed Service Committee. It has now been ten years since the last comprehensive review of the Sikes Act and this hearing will offer members an opportunity to evaluate its effectiveness in conserving habitat for the thousands of species that reside on the 30 million acres of land under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense.

As we move forward to extend this landmark law, it is essential that we achieve the proper balance of not only conserving species but also provide the highest quality training to the young men and women who risk their lives for us by serving in the U. S. military.

In my invitation letter, witnesses were asked to describe how the Sikes Act is working, whether the current authorization is sufficient, if State owned National Guard facilities were able to complete an Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan and what additional changes the Congress should consider during the reauthorization process.

In addition, I am hoping to hear how and if the Department of Defense can better implement the provisions of the Disabled Sportsmen's Access Act. Under this 1998 modification to the Sikes Act, the Secretary of Defense was instructed to "ensure that outdoor recreational opportunities made available to the public also provide access" to disabled veterans and other disabled Americans who wish to hunt and fish.

While I was pleased to learn that both Barksdale Air Force Base and Fort Polk in my Congressional District have adaptive hunting equipment for disabled Americans, the news on a nationwide basis is not nearly as encouraging. In fact, it is my understanding that only about 25 of the 388 military installations in the United States have adaptive equipment that can be used by disabled Americans.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I understand that base commanders have an extremely tough job and that allowing additional guns on a military base has become more difficult as a result of 911 and the terrorist attack at Fort Hood, Texas. Nevertheless, as a nation we owe a huge debt of gratitude to those Americans injured in combat and every effort should be made to allow not only access but accessibility to those wounded heroes who lives may be enriched through hunting and fishing opportunities at our military bases. This is the least we can do for those who have sacrificed so much for this great country.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Mr. Tim Stamps, the head of the Natural Resources Section at Marine Corps Base Quantico and retired Marine Colonel Lew Deal. These two outstanding Americans have been largely responsible for making Quantico our nation's best facility for disabled Americans. Due to their efforts, there are now four hydraulic lifts, six accessible hunting stands, three wheelchair accessible duck blinds and docks modified to provide access for fishing for people in wheelchairs.

At this time, I would like to recognize the distinguished ranking member, Congressman Gregorio Sablan for any statement he would like to make.