

THE HONORABLE GREGG HARPER

MEMBER OF CONGRESS (MS-03)

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON
FISHERIES, WILDLIFE, OCEANS, AND INSULAR AFFAIRS
LEGISLATIVE HEARING**

APRIL 7, 2011

Chairman Fleming, Ranking Member Sablan, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding H.R. 588, legislation I introduced to redesignate the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge as the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. This bill is a companion piece to S. 266, introduced by Senator Thad Cochran, which passed the Senate on February 17, 2011. H.R. 588 honors Mr. Sam D. Hamilton, a lifetime conservationist and a great man who spent 30 years at the Fish and Wildlife Service, ultimately rising to Director in 2009.

As this panel is aware, The Refuge System was created in 1903 and has 548 national wildlife refuges and 37 wetland management districts that are home to some 700 species of birds, 220 mammals, and 280 threatened or endangered species.

The Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge is located in east-central Mississippi. It was established in 1940 and consists of 48,000 acres inhabited by a variety of game and non-game fish and wildlife including quail, deer, turkey, the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, wood stork, American alligator, bald eagle and wintering waterfowl. Approximately 170,000 people visit the Refuge annually and enjoy hunting, fishing, hiking and other outdoor and educational activities.

Mr. Hamilton has a long and personal history with the Refuge. A native of Starkville, Mississippi, he recalled during his confirmation hearing testimony -- he caught his first fish at the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge at age 5 and began his conservation career there as an employee at age 15. Sam called the Refuge System the "finest collection of public lands and waters dedicated to fish and wildlife conservation in the world."

Upon graduation from Mississippi State University, Sam started a 30-year career at the Fish and Wildlife Service. He worked in Service field offices and Washington, D.C. headquarters, served extended details to the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and was a special assistant in the Director's office. He was selected to be the Fish and Wildlife Service's first state administrator in Austin, Texas to work with state and local governments and private landowners on statewide conservation issues and he served as the Fish and Wildlife Service's Regional Director for the Southeast Region. On September 1, 2009, Sam D. Hamilton was sworn-in as the 15th Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sam passed away on February 20, 2010. Honoring Sam by renaming the Refuge would be a tribute to his remarkable career and commitment to conservation. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation recently provided a \$100,000 grant to the Friends of Noxubee Refuge that will fund new signs and capital improvements for the Refuge, as well as scholarship and education funding in honor of Sam. This grant will allow the name change to occur without the federal government incurring these costs. I would like to submit a letter for the record from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Executive Director, Jeff Trandahl, which outlines this grant.

Chairman Fleming, Ranking Member Sablan, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding H.R. 588. I look forward to working with you to ensure this legislation is signed into law to remember a man who devoted his life and career to the ideals formed during his early days at the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. Thank you, and I welcome any questions the committee may have.



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March 21, 2011

The Honorable Gregg Harper
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Harper:

This letter is in reference to your legislation, H.R. 588, which seeks to rename the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge after the late Sam D. Hamilton. Mr. Hamilton served on the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Board of Directors during his tenure as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He was an invaluable asset to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and it was an honor to have him serve on the Foundation's Board.

The Foundation has awarded a grant of \$100,000 to the Friends of the Noxubee Refuge that will provide funding for the new signs and capital improvements that will be necessary to rename the Refuge. In addition, the grant will partially fund a scholarship and education program at the Refuge in honor of Mr. Hamilton. This grant will allow for the name change of the Refuge without the federal government incurring these costs.

We appreciate your leadership on behalf of Sam Hamilton and his family and we look forward to working with you as the legislation moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeff".

Jeff Trandahl
Executive Director

Thank you for your
assistance.
JT

Cc:
The Honorable Doc Hastings
The Honorable John Fleming
The Honorable Ed Markey
The Honorable Gregorio "Kilili" Sablan