

TESTIMONY OF MATT HOGAN, ACTING DIRECTOR, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES AND OCEANS REGARDING H.R. 1428, THE NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT

April 26, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I am Matt Hogan, Acting Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Service). I want to thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior (the Department) on H.R. 1428, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Reauthorization Act of 2005. I would like to thank you, Chairman Pombo, and Representatives Gilchrest and Dicks, for taking the lead with your sponsorship of this legislation. As the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (the Foundation) primary federal agency partner, the Service is pleased to offer its full support for the passage of H.R. 1428.

Established by Congress in 1984, the Foundation is a private, non-profit organization devoted to creating partnerships between public and private sectors in order to strategically invest in voluntary projects that aid in the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, as well as the habitats upon which they depend. The Foundation receives federally appropriated funds; however, none of these funds are used for operating expenses. As an entity outside normal bureaucratic requirements, the Foundation uses their federal funding to forge effective partnerships for on-the-ground, locally-driven natural resource solutions and to leverage limited federal dollars towards these endeavors.

The heart of the Foundation is its ability to establish partnerships among a diversity of federal, state, and local governments, corporations, private foundations, individuals and nonprofit organizations. The success of the Foundation is due, in part, to their support of innovative and sustainable conservation activities that recover and sustain healthy ecosystems, while enhancing personal and community livelihoods and respecting private property rights. Through these efforts, they are fulfilling the goals behind Secretary Norton's 4 C's: Conservation through Cooperation, Communication, and Consultation.

Just as the Foundation succeeds in pooling together the expertise of diverse partners, it, likewise, possesses an impressive record in leveraging federal funds with private money. Although the Foundation's authorizing statute requires a one-to-one match, the Foundation currently averages better than a 2-to-1 match ratio. With federal appropriation dollars from the Service, the Foundation has supported approximately 2,746 grants among 1,340 conservation partners, leveraging over \$129 million in Service funds into \$412 million for on-the-ground projects that benefit conservation in all 50 states. Based on this excellent rate of return, the Service is pleased to report that its FY 2006 budget request for the Foundation includes \$7.5 million. This proposed level of funding will provide a healthy level of support to the Foundation's important efforts.

With this funding, the Foundation will continue to use sound fiscal and programmatic practices to achieve a maximum return. The Service believes that the accuracy of the Foundation's financial information and adequacy of financial controls in place is evidenced by the clean financial opinions and A-133 audit received by the Foundation, including the most recent fiscal year, ending on September 30, 2004. In addition, programmatic audits have also been free of major issues that needed to be addressed.

The relationship between the Foundation and Service remains strong. From the Washington and Regional offices down to our field offices, we work closely together with the Foundation to develop projects, review project submissions by outside parties, and to evaluate project results. More importantly, we work together to ensure the priorities of the Foundation are closely aligned with those of the Service. In 2003, the Foundation worked with its partners, including the Service, to develop a Conservation Plan. The Plan identifies four areas that will help guide the Foundation's attention and resources over the next three years. The areas identified include: Working Ecosystems and Healthy Habitats, Conservation of Critical Species, Education and Stewardship, and Evaluation and Innovation. The Service looks forward to working with the Foundation to support projects that address the priorities and approaches encompassed by these four focus areas. Additionally, the Service looks forward to helping the Foundation forge a closer direct link to Department level, Service level, and program level performance goals that focus on achieving specific and measurable outcomes.

Rather than detail all of the contributions the Foundation is making to help the Service fulfill its mission, I will highlight several examples in which the Foundation provides invaluable support, both through various "funds" and programs, and specific projects.

Foundation Funds and Programs

In 2003, the National Wildlife Refuge System celebrated its Centennial Anniversary, and the Foundation was there to help. For example, the Foundation created a "Refuge Centennial Legacy Program," in which it dedicated over \$1.5 million to 52 projects that improve refuges through education efforts, habitat restoration, and trail improvements. One project funded through this program included the 15-acre demonstration wetland at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, which was developed as an educational tool to illustrate the importance of wetlands for fish and wildlife.

Another Foundation program developed to support the Centennial is the "National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Scholarship Program." With support from the Walt Disney Company, the Service, and the Foundation, this competitive scholarship is awarded to students whose research will contribute toward improved understanding of the fish, wildlife, and plants found on National Wildlife Refuges. Under this program, a minimum of ten scholarships will be awarded to support students' research expenses, tuition, books, and room and board.

The Foundation and the Service jointly administer the newly-established "Columbia River Estuarine Coastal Fund" for the benefit of salmon, eagles, the Columbian white-tailed deer, and other species in and along the Columbia River below the Bonneville Dam and the adjacent coasts of Oregon. The Columbia River Estuarine Coastal Fund was established with community service payments stemming from the successful prosecution of three foreign shipping companies charged with violating federal pollution laws. As testament to the Foundation's fiscal responsibility and extensive grant making experience, the courts ordered \$1,300,000 of settlement payments to go to the Foundation for investment in conservation projects in the area of environmental impact. This funding will be used to restore prime estuarine habitat and will directly benefit the natural resources impacted by the pollution.

Specific Foundation Projects

In 2004, the Foundation used funding appropriated through the Service to award a grant to the National Wild Turkey Federation to restore and enhance wildlife habitat along natural gas pipeline rights-of-way in southwest Pennsylvania. With support from a host of partners, the Federation will establish corridors and a long-term food source for numerous game and non-game species. Implementation of this project will promote cooperation and collaboration among industry, federal and state government, and local organizations, all for the benefit of plants and wildlife.

In 2003, using funding appropriated through NOAA and the Service, the Foundation provided a grant to the University of Delaware to develop an innovative approach for horseshoe crab conservation. Horseshoe crabs are harvested for use in eel and conch fisheries. The University, along with its partners, will use biotechnology to synthesize fish attractant chemicals found in horseshoe crabs, thereby eliminating the need to harvest the crabs for this purpose. Horseshoe crab eggs are a critical component in the diet of numerous shorebirds during their annual migrations. Reducing the harvest of crabs, while at the same time providing an artificial bait attractant needed by the eel and conch fisheries industry, will ensure shorebirds have an essential food supply during their Arctic-bound migration.

In conclusion, the Service has received many benefits from working the Foundation, and we look forward to our continued partnership in the conservation of fish and wildlife resources. The Service has no concerns with the language or intent of H.R. 1428, and therefore strongly supports reauthorization of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The success of the Foundation truly exemplifies how conservation can be achieved through cooperation, communication, and consultation.