

# Committee on Resources,

## Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife & Oceans

[fisheries](#) - - Rep. Wayne Gilchrest, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6232 - - (202) 226-0200

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### Witness Statement

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Statement of W. Ladd Johnson, President, Resource Management, Inc.

Thank you for asking me to participate in this hearing. Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge has always been a favorite area for me. Its history is of particular interest since my uncle; Mr. Peter VanHussian was its first manager. Since then, I do not think there has not been a manager that I have not had as a friend.

We are excited about the possibility of Blackwater expanding its recreational use by the public. We understand that presently, the refuge offers deer hunting -- archery, black powder, shotgun and youth hunting. So far every applicant has been accommodated. One statistic that is interesting is that of the approximately 3000 people who participated were non-resident hunters. This is exciting since it meant hard currency to our local economy for room rents, restaurants, sporting goods stores, etc. Also, exciting is the potential of expanding hunting activities to turkey hunting. This sport is the fastest growing hunting sport in North America and is certainly going to be paramount to sport hunting to Maryland.

Secondly, I see a future for waterfowl hunting on Blackwater. One fine opportunity is a resident Canada goose hunting. The problems created not only on the refuge but other agricultural areas by resident Canada geese are profound; any way to control their numbers and depredation should certainly be encouraged. Perhaps the expansion of the refuge to the Nanticoke River Watershed could allow the hunting of ducks and migratory geese in those areas. On the refuge proper, those areas around the agricultural fields, marshland, and woodlands, migratory waterfowl should be prohibited. The habitat in these areas is critical to sustain those migratory populations.

Other areas that could be expanded for refuge recreational use are those of "Non-Consumption Uses". Certainly, the continued use of observation/photography should be encouraged. Presently, over 500,000 plus persons use the refuge for this entertainment. One important element that could increase this type of activity is an educational center; educational classes featuring lectures on endangered species, invasive plants, etc. on a scheduled basis would create public awareness. Hunter educational classes for the youth describing how hunting is an American and a Maryland heritage along with the prescribed hunter safety courses could all be designed within the educational center.

Lastly, there are a few comments that we would like to make concerning the operations of refuge and most national refuges. We are greatly concerned with the new direction of land management on the national refuges. The present movement of land management that we have labeled as "passive management" is the virtual act of doing nothing and letting nature take its course. The USFWS has another grandiose name for it; but the definition is the same (The act of doing nothing). This type of land management is not wise as a practice of sustaining waterfowl and wildlife populations. The only benefit it has is that it cost the government nothing; it cost wildlife a great deal.

Today's agricultural practices and equipment leave very little as a nutritional food source for wildlife.

Combines leave little grain residue for wildlife consumption. Corn and soybean fields that would remain after harvest are now being plowed and converted to wheat or barley. These crops do offer green browse but in harsh winter months they don't supply the necessary carbohydrates and energy sources needed to sustain wildlife.

We encourage you to please review this policy and plan budgetary funding for what we call "Intensive Wildlife Management". Presently, we provide seeds through our "Conservation Seed Program" for food plots for wildlife. Over one million acres are planted under this program annually. Ninety percent is performed on private lands; the rest is in state wildlife management areas. The private and state sectors know the importance of "Intensive Wildlife Management". Why does the USFWS look the other way? This year, we are donating the seed to Blackwater in order that they can plant their lands. We do not object to donating this seed, we do object to the policies of the service of "Passive Wildlife Management".

Civilization has claimed much of the habitat of our nations wildlife. The habitat that was present when the colonies were established is now gone. Therefore, we must sustain our nations wildlife on much fewer acres; the reason for active wildlife management. The service should be demonstrating by action the activities of conservation tillage, irradiation of invasive plant species, reclamation of lost wetlands, and maximization of food sources for our nations wildlife.

Thank you for allowing us to participate.

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