

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Dr. Douglas Austen, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. I want to thank you for this opportunity to discuss the transfer of the Tylersville Hatchery from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission as provided for in HR 4957 – the Tylersville Fish Hatchery Conveyance Act. The Commission supports this bill and its provisions to convey to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, without reimbursement and within 180 days after enactment, all right, title and interest of the United States in the federal fish hatchery located in Tylersville, Pennsylvania.

The Tylersville Fish Hatchery is located seven miles east of Lamar in Clinton County, Pennsylvania, along Big Fishing Creek. It was originally constructed in 1963 by the Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to support the federal lands trout stocking program.

The Commission began leasing the hatchery from the Service in 1983. Tylersville is now an integral part of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's trout hatchery program. For more than 20 years it has had a tremendous impact on the fishing opportunities the Commission has been able to provide.

Pennsylvania is known for its trout fishing. In 2006, Tylersville stocked nearly 600,000 adult trout in 12 counties. Based on these latest stocking numbers, Tylersville produces approximately 14% of the total adult trout stocked in the Commonwealth. These plantings of trout generate a substantial economic benefit to Pennsylvania.

- The total economic impact of fishing in PA is estimated at \$1.6 billion annually. The Commission is in the process of updating the economic impact numbers for our hatcheries, but at this time we estimate that the facility generates \$ 63 million in economic impact in the Commonwealth. The facility has a current operating budget of \$950,000 and a workforce of 12 permanent employees and 1 seasonal employee. The employment and the operation of this facility in this rural area of PA unquestionably has a significant impact on the local economy.

The Commission has made and continues to make substantial investments in maintaining the infrastructure of Tylersville Fish Hatchery. From 1991 through 2005, the Commission has invested more than \$2 million in infrastructure improvements and upgrades. These improvements have included the development of new fish rearing units, improvements to the effluent treatment system through the construction of a clarifier unit and polishing pond upgrades, and improvements to influent water through the addition of control and monitoring equipment and enhancement with oxygen injection into the incoming water.

Currently under construction is a \$1.72 million wastewater treatment upgrade to meet revised Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit limits. This upgrade will ensure that the hatchery will play an important role in the Commission's trout stocking and trout fishing program for many years to come.

Tylersville Fish Hatchery is a key component supporting Pennsylvania's recreational trout fishing opportunities and the economic activity that trout fishing provides. We support, and hope you will support, the transfer of the Tylersville Hatchery to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. The transfer is supported by our Commissioners so that the Commission can have long-term security in continuing to invest in the facility and making improvements. The Commission has and will continue to invest in this facility. The security that this facility will continue to be a part of the Commonwealth's fish hatchery system is critical. While a lease arrangement has worked over the years, ownership of the facility is the preferred alternative.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I want to emphasize that the parties involved agree that the conveyance of Tylersville Hatchery is reasonable, will provide benefits to both the state and federal partners, and will not have negative impacts on any of the parties. This conveyance is important to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is essential to enable the Commission to continue to sustain trout fishing opportunities and the economic impacts that they generate. We have been working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Congressman Peterson's office and Senator Santorum's office on this matter and wish to thank them and their staff for their ongoing assistance in the transfer of this facility. I want to express that Commission staff at all levels have enjoyed a wonderful working relationship with the Service over the past 20 years in regard to the operation of this hatchery and sharing of facility space and expertise. This partnership will continue to be a real strength as we move into the future.

I would be happy to answer any questions from you or other committee members.