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STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE HENRY E. BROWN, JR.,
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS, OCEANS AND WILDLIFE
HEARING ON H. R. 2864, H. R. 3805 AND
H. R. 4973: MAY 6, 2010.

Good morning Madam Chairwoman, today, we will hear testimony on three pieces of legislation introduced by distinguished members of this Subcommittee. Let me briefly express my support for these measures and my hope that they will be enacted this year.

The first bill, H. R. 2864, was introduced by the distinguished former Chairman of this Committee, Congressman Don Young of Alaska. This legislation will amend the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act, a landmark measure he sponsored more than a decade ago.

Sadly, we still have a long way to go before we finish the job of nautically charting critical navigation regions throughout this country. H. R. 2864 is an effort to move this process forward by directing NOAA to acquire additional hydrographic data and provide hydrographic services in the Arctic Region.

H. R. 3805 was introduced by our distinguished colleague from Virginia, Congressman Rob Wittman, who also serves as one of the two House members on the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.

Four years ago, the Congress enacted the Electronic Duck Stamp Act. This law established a three-year pilot program allowing Americans to obtain their Federal duck stamps online through the convenience of their own computer. By any objective standard, this program has been a success with nearly 500,000 stamps sold online and without undermining the integrity of the printed Federal duck stamp.

The fundamental goal of H. R. 3805 is to extend this program for two years to allow the Fish and Wildlife Service the necessary time to complete the evaluation and report required by Public Law 109-266.

At a time when the U. S Postal Service is significantly increasing the fees it charges to sell Federal duck stamps and is threatening to close dozens of Post Offices, consumers must have the option of buying their Federal duck stamps electronically. I, therefore, compliment the author

of this bill for his leadership in trying to ensure that this modern delivery system will be available in the future.

The final bill, H. R. 4973, was introduced by our distinguished colleague from the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Congressman Frank Kratovil. This legislation builds upon the success of the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 which was sponsored by the former Chairman of this Subcommittee, Congressman Jim Saxton of New Jersey.

Since its enactment, the number of volunteers working within the National Wildlife Refuge System has grown to 39,765 individuals and the value of their labors has skyrocketed to \$30.3 million dollars. It is no exaggeration to say that these volunteers are playing an increasing important role in the operation and maintenance of the refuge system. Without volunteers, there would be more unstaffed visitor centers, fewer fish and wildlife population surveys, more overgrown trails, an increasing amount of unsightly debris and even more refuge lands infested with invasive species. We should extend this important law and encourage additional refuges to establish their own "Friends of the Refuge" organization. In fact, the SEWEE Association, which is a Friends Group, does a superb job of helping to manage the Cape Romain, Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin, and Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuges within my Congressional District.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses on these important legislative proposals.