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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Statement by the Honorable Bill Cassidy
At the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife
Hearing on the FY'11 Budget Request for the
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
March 4, 2010

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Madam Chairwoman, I am pleased that we are having this budget hearing on the priorities of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the upcoming fiscal year.

In terms of the Fish and Wildlife Service, I would describe my attitude towards their budget request as being perplexed and disappointed. I am perplexed as to why the request for the Land Acquisition account is \$106 million and disappointed that important programs like Fisheries, Multinational Species Conservation Funds, North American Wetlands Conservation, the National Wildlife Refuge Fund and refuge operations are being cut to offset this huge land transfer.

Just two years ago, at our last budget hearing, the Fish and Wildlife Service testified in support of a budget request of \$42 million for land acquisition and indicated a commitment to reduce the then \$2 billion dollar operations and maintenance backlog. Today, the backlog deficit has grown to \$3.7 billion and this Obama Administration budget reduces operations by \$4 million and increases refuge maintenance by a paltry \$300,000. We have before us a budget asking our taxpayers to acquire an additional 106,000 acres of private property.

You don't need a PhD in accounting to understand that if you can't maintain what you currently own, you stop buying and not exacerbate the problem. If successful, the Service's backlog will grow, private sector jobs will be lost, tax revenues to all levels of government will be reduced and this year's request for the National Wildlife Refuge Fund is an embarrassing 31 percent of entitlement.

Madam Chairwoman, again, thank you for schedule this hearing and I look forward to hearing the details of their budget request.