

# Committee on Resources

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## Witness Testimony

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**STATEMENT OF GARY EDWARDS,  
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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE,  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE, AND OCEANS  
ON H.R. 374, A BILL AMENDING AND REAUTHORIZING THE SIKES ACT.**

MAY 22, 1997

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on H.R. 374, legislation which amends and reauthorizes the act popularly known as the "Sikes Act." The Fish and Wildlife Service appreciates the Subcommittee's interest in fish and wildlife resources on military installations. We support enactment of H.R. 374, which would enhance fish and wildlife conservation and natural resource management programs on military installations.

The Service began working with the Department of Defense many years prior to enactment of the Sikes Act in 1960. Primarily, this work related to fisheries management programs on military installations by responding to requests from base commanders interested in developing recreational fishing opportunities on their installations. Over the years, we have provided technical assistance, conducted baseline inventories, developed management plans, and provided fish from National Fish Hatcheries to support recreational fishing.

Passage of the Sikes Act formalized the cooperative efforts of the two agencies and, most importantly, gave Congressional recognition to the significant potential for fish and wildlife management and recreation on Department of Defense lands. The Act has played an important role to ensure that fish and wildlife and other natural resources on military lands are conserved in ways that are compatible with the mission of the installation. Subsequent amendments have expanded the authority of the Act to include improving fish and wildlife habitats, protecting threatened or endangered species, and developing multi-use natural resource management plans. Under the current Sikes Act, the Service provides technical assistance on a cost reimbursable basis to over 250 military installations and conducts reviews of updated cooperative plans at no cost to the military.

H.R. 374 further strengthens the authority for these and additional activities supporting natural resource conservation on military lands by requiring that integrated natural resource management plans be developed for appropriate military installations. The requirement to develop these plans will ensure that fish and wildlife needs are fully integrated in an installation's natural resources planning process.

Integrated natural resource management plans will lead to expansion of conservation activities, such as the recently completed cooperative effort between DoD and the Service that has been successful in enhancing, protecting, restoring, and developing waterfowl and associated wetland species habitat. Concentrating on Joint Venture areas associated with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the Service prepared and/or updated management plans on 13 military installations. These plans are currently being implemented on installations in the states of New York, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Texas, Indiana, and Ohio. For every Service dollar spent developing these plans, the military has invested four dollars for implementation. As a result, over 8,000 acres of wetland habitat has been enhanced, protected, developed, or restored.

Other joint projects on military installations include wetland inventories at Milan Army Ammunition Plant, Tennessee; Pine Bluff Arsenal, Arkansas; Fort Monroe and Fort Story, Virginia; and White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico. Also, studies of the effects of contaminants on waterfowl and other migratory birds continue at Fort Richardson, Adak Naval Air Station, and Shemya Air Force Base in Alaska.

The technical expertise of Service employees combined with the State's responsibility for resident species, and DoD's knowledge of training requirements and their installation's natural resources, allows for an unprecedented opportunity

to manage natural resources. For example, the Service, DoD, and State agencies continue to make progress on threatened and endangered species on military installations, such as Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming. Listing of the Colorado butterfly plant was avoided because of joint efforts among DoD, the Service, and the States of Colorado and Wyoming to protect the plant's habitat while preserving space for military needs. In addition, the tripartite partnership has expended efforts at Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; Elgin Air Force Base, Florida; and adjoining lands to improve and protect habitat for the red-cockaded woodpecker. Special efforts at Fort Bragg and the Army Environmental Center are resulting in innovative approaches toward threatened and endangered species habitat management on private lands in the Sandhills area of North Carolina. The new reporting and implementation requirements in H.R. 374 will further enhance coordination among DoD, the Service, and appropriate State agencies.

H.R. 374 also provides for public comment during the development of integrated natural resource management plans and changes to cooperative plans. This will allow for better understanding and support of these plans by the public. For instance, the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, involved the public in development and review of its integrated natural resource management plan, resulting in a more effective and acceptable outcome.

Input and involvement of many people are required for the development and implementation of integrated natural resource management plans. We applaud the language in H.R. 374 that would provide for additional personnel, including law enforcement and natural resource managers, to enhance compliance with the Act. It is the Administration's understanding that new authority in section 6 of the bill does not apply to federal laws relating to protection of the environment and public health.

The Service looks forward to continued participation and cooperation with Department of Defense natural resource managers and State agencies in maximizing fish and wildlife management potential on military lands and integrating this potential into broader resource protection, restoration, and management efforts.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to share with the Subcommittee this information on the significant opportunities provided under the authority of the Sikes Act. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

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