

**TESTIMONY OF ROWAN GOULD, ACTING DIRECTOR,
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WILDLIFE, OCEANS AND INSULAR AFFAIRS
REGARDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2012 BUDGET OF THE
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

March 2, 2011

Good morning Chairman Fleming, and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Rowan Gould, Acting Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today on the Service's Fiscal Year 2012 budget request. I would also like to thank the Subcommittee for its continued support of our mission to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The President's FY 2012 budget request of \$1.7 billion for the Service will focus funding on the agency's highest priority conservation initiatives, such as the America's Great Outdoors initiative, while containing costs through management efficiencies and other savings. The requested \$1.7 billion is a net increase of \$47.9 million compared to the FY 2010 enacted budget. The budget also includes approximately \$1 billion available under permanent appropriations, most of which will be provided directly to States for fish and wildlife restoration and conservation.

The budget principally focuses on large-scale, conservation efforts by supporting the President's America's Great Outdoors initiative. Additionally, an increase in Cooperative Landscape Conservation will enable the Service to continue working with partners to conduct collaborative landscape-scale biological planning and information gathering by completing a national network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) initiated in FY 2010.

The President's America's Great Outdoors initiative provides the Service with \$140 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for Federal land acquisitions the Service has identified as having the greatest conservation benefits, and \$15.7 million, an increase of \$2.5 million to support Youth in the Great Outdoors by providing a platform and programs to orient children and young adults to the importance of fish and wildlife conservation and encourage careers in natural science.

The budget proposes an increase of \$4 million for activities associated with renewable energy development, including \$2.0 million for the Endangered Species Consultation program to support development of renewable energy projects and \$2.0 million for Conservation Planning Assistance (CPA). The increase for the CPA program will enable the Service to participate more fully in priority landscape level planning to assist industry and State fish and wildlife agencies' siting of renewable energy projects and transmission corridor infrastructure, aiding in the President's mission for increased renewable energy development.

The budget will also support large-scale ecosystem restoration projects as examples of the Service's commitment to a landscape-scale, science-driven, partner-engaged approach to conservation. Some of these projects include efforts in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the California Bay-Delta region, where water supply, healthy watershed and sustainable populations of fish and wildlife are being addressed.

The Service recognizes the need to make difficult choices during challenging economic times. In support of the President's commitment to fiscal discipline and spending restraint, the Service is participating in an aggressive Department-wide effort to curb non-essential administrative spending. In accordance with this initiative, the Service's FY 2012 budget assumes \$26.5 million in savings, built upon management efficiencies the Service began implementing in FY 2011. Savings will be realized in several areas, including travel, employee relocation, and supplies.

Cooperative Landscape Conservation

The requested funding increase of \$10.2 million will enable the Service to continue working with partners to conduct collaborative landscape-scale biological planning and information gathering by completing the network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives initiated in FY 2010.

LCCs will continue to act as a focal point for collaborative work with partners to disseminate applied science products and tools for resource management decisions across landscapes. This collaboration provides partners the scientific information to target resources on activities that will produce the greatest benefits for fish and wildlife for the American people. Within the Service, LCCs help support and augment many ongoing programs, including Endangered Species Recovery Plans, Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans, fish passage programs and habitat restoration.

Adaptive Science

With an additional \$7.2 million in funding, the Service will be able to acquire the necessary science to make better conservation decisions. The funding will be used to acquire risk and vulnerability assessments, conduct inventory and monitoring, develop population and habitat assessments and models, design conservation measures, evaluate management options for LCC partners, and increase our understanding of conservation genetics.

National Wildlife Refuge System

Funding for the operation and maintenance of the national wildlife refuge system is requested at \$502.9 million. The request includes an increase of \$6.5 million, for National Wildlife Refuges (Refuges) operations, enabling Refuges to complete additional habitat improvement projects. An additional \$2.0 million will be used for the Service's youth program to engage young Americans in conservation by offering public service opportunities, science-based education, and outdoor learning laboratories. The request includes an increase of \$1.5 million for Chesapeake Bay restoration and \$750,000 for Gulf Coast restoration activities at Refuges. With 10 National

Wildlife Refuges along the Gulf coast line, protecting more than 300,000 acres, the Service is committed to working towards repairing the damage caused by the unprecedented Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill. Additionally, an increase of \$2.0 million is also requested for deferred maintenance at Refuges.

In support of LCC development and adaptive science management, the requested increase of \$8.0 million within the Refuge program will be used to continue building the landscape scale, long-term inventory and monitoring network the Service began in FY 2010.

National Wildlife Refuge Fund

The Service proposes the elimination of the entire appropriated portion (\$14.5 million) of the National Wildlife Refuge Fund. The Fund was originally conceived to assist communities in lieu of taxes for lands acquired and managed by the Service. Over time, Refuges have been found to generate tax revenue for communities far in excess of tax losses from Federal land ownership. Refuge lands provide many public services, such as watershed protection, and place few demands on local infrastructure when compared to development that is more intensive. Importantly, Refuges bring a multitude of visitors to nearby communities, providing substantial economic benefits. Recreational spending on Refuges generates millions of dollars in tax revenue at the local, county, State and Federal levels. The mandatory receipts collected and allocated to States under the program would remain.

Law Enforcement

The Service budget request provides \$62.6 million for the law enforcement program to investigate wildlife crimes and enforce the laws that govern the Nation's wildlife trade. The request is \$3.1 million below the 2010 enacted level, which reflects the elimination of funding for a new class of agents who were hired in 2010.

Endangered Species

The FY 2012 budget includes \$182.7 million to administer the Endangered Species Act (ESA), a net increase of \$3.3 million over the 2010 enacted level. This includes a \$2.0 million increase for renewable energy consultation and \$3.4 million for ecosystem-specific consultation and recovery.

The Service also is requesting an increase in funding for the Endangered Species Listing Program, to reflect the increasingly large number of ESA petitions being received. Between 1994 and 2006, the Service received an average of 17 petitions annually, covering an average of 20 species per year. In contrast, since 2007, the Service has been petitioned to add more than 1,230 species to the list of threatened and endangered species, more species than the Service listed during the previous 30 years of administering the Act. With additional funding, the Service projects to complete 39 additional 90-day and 12-month petition findings, while also initiating proposed listing determinations for 93 species.

Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Conservation

The budget request includes a total of \$136.0 million for the Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Conservation program, a decrease of \$12.2 million from the 2010 enacted level. Facilitating the Service's role and responsibility in promoting ecosystem health, fisheries, and aquatic resource conservation, the budget includes increases for the Chesapeake Bay and California Bay-Delta program as well as an additional \$2.9 million for Asian carp activities in the Great Lakes. Moreover, the budget proposes an increase of \$380,000 to protect polar bears in compliance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

National Fish Hatchery Operations – Mitigation

The FY 2012 request contains a reduction of funding for National Fish Hatchery general program activities of nearly \$6.8 million. At several of its hatcheries, the Service produces fish to mitigate the adverse effects of Federal water development projects constructed by other Federal agencies. States depend on these activities to stock fisheries which provide economic benefit to local communities. At the direction of Congress, the Service is working to recover costs from the Federal agencies that built and operate these water infrastructure projects. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), is the largest customer for these mitigation fish, and it has \$3.8 million in its 2012 request to fund mitigation fish production. The Service will continue ongoing discussions with the Corps as well as the Tennessee Valley Authority, Central Utah Project Completion Act, and the Bonneville Power Administration to seek reimbursement and negotiate reimbursable agreements for the operation of mitigation fish hatcheries.

Migratory Birds

The Migratory Birds program is funded at \$54.4 million, just slightly below FY 2010 enacted level. The North American Wetlands Conservation Fund is funded at \$50 million, \$2.4 million over the FY 2010 enacted level. The North American Wetlands Conservation grant program plays a vital role addressing wetland habitat loss, with every grant dollar matched 1:1, and in some programs as much as 4:1.

International Affairs

The budget request provides the International Affairs program with just under \$13.0 million, a net decrease of \$1.4 million from the 2010 enacted level. The Multinational Species Conservation Fund is funded at \$9.8 million, a decrease of \$1.8 million.

Coastal Impact Assistance Program

Under the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to distribute \$250 million for each of the fiscal years 2007 through 2010 to states and their coastal political subdivisions (CPS) with oil production in the OCS off their shores. This money is available to Alabama, Alaska, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas by formula for ecosystem restoration projects.

This program has been implemented from its inception by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE), formally the Minerals Management Service (MMS). However, in FY 2012, the Coastal Impact Assistance Program will be transferred to the Service as the purpose of the CIAP aligns more directly with the mission of the Service. The two bureaus are working together to implement the transfer as quickly and smoothly as possible. The transfer will allow BOEMRE to focus on programs more directly aligned with its regulatory and enforcement mission.

Recovery Act Funds

The President signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) on February 17, 2009. Of the \$280 million the Service received in Recovery Act funding for 839 projects, \$115 million was for construction projects and \$165 million was for resource management projects. The Service awarded 1,072 contracts and 371 grants or cooperative agreements that led to the creation or retention of 4,020 jobs, according to award recipient reports as of December 31, 2010.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. I am happy to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have and look forward to working with you through the appropriations process.