

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY BY
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON H.R. 1428, THE “NATIONAL FISH AND
WILDLIFE FOUNDATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT”
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES AND OCEANS
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

APRIL 26, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on H.R. 1428, reauthorizing the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Act. My name is Tim Keeney, and I am NOAA’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere.

The mission of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (Foundation) is to conserve fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats by building and implementing public and private partnerships and funding stewardship of natural resources. NOAA has worked successfully with the Foundation since 1997. In the last decade, NOAA and the Foundation have implemented 862 projects. The Foundation funds high priority species, habitats, and conservation projects through competitive grants. NOAA’s contribution of over \$34 million in the last decade has grown to roughly \$94 million for on-the-ground restoration and conservation, through the Foundation’s leveraging capability.

NOAA and the Foundation have developed several unique programs that address NOAA priorities. These include the *International Sea Turtle Conservation Fund*, the *Coral Reef Conservation Fund*, the *National Whale Conservation Fund*, the *Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program*, the *Pacific Grassroots Salmon Fund*, the *Delaware Estuary Grants Program*, the *Pinellas County Environmental Fund*, the *North Gulf Coast Initiative*, and others.

Today, I will focus my testimony on three themes including the value of partnerships through cooperative conservation, the Foundation’s leveraging abilities, and NOAA’s work with the Foundation this year.

Cooperative Conservation

The Foundation has the ability to attract a wide array of partners to cooperative conservation projects across the country. The Foundation is one program that allows federal agencies with different missions to work together at an ecosystem management level. For example, through the Foundation, NOAA coordinates stream restoration at a

watershed level for endangered salmon with the U.S. Forest Service. NOAA also works with the Environmental Protection Agency implementing estuary restoration in the Chesapeake Bay.

By assembling dedicated managers from NOAA and other agencies, the Foundation has helped us identify and implement solutions to shared problems, while avoiding duplicative efforts and maximizing conservation funds. One example of this partnership model is the Coral Reef Conservation Fund, which is a partnership including NOAA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and private entities including the Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation and the Castle Foundation.

In the first four years, the Coral Reef Conservation Fund has resulted in collaboration on 112 projects and provided \$9.6 million for coral conservation, including \$1.95 million contributed by NOAA. These projects include installing mooring buoys to prevent damage from boat anchors in sensitive coral areas, educating boaters and coastal residents on how to avoid harming reefs, and working with farmers to reduce agricultural runoff in coral reef watersheds. This year the Foundation received a record number of proposals with nearly \$4 million in requests. These proposals all undergo a rigorous review by technical experts in order to assure that the research objectives and methods are appropriate.

In addition to interagency and issue-specific coordination, the Foundation also provides NOAA the opportunity to partner with the private sector. Corporate partners provide new ideas, expertise, financial resources, and environmental education opportunities that expand NOAA's capabilities. These relationships also allow NOAA to gain a better understanding of industry concerns, as well as improving our knowledge of how to foster and implement these partnerships.

Leveraging NOAA Funding with Other Financial Resources

Through competitive grants, the Foundation is able to leverage NOAA's funds to obtain additional federal and non-federal dollars. Last fall, for example, NOAA invested \$100,000 in a new Foundation program to support community stewardship and habitat restoration in the Long Island Sound Watershed. Next month, the Foundation is announcing \$1,000,000 in awards under this program. We are now working with the Foundation to explore other areas for strategic investment in the Great Lakes Region and Puget Sound.

NOAA's species recovery programs also benefit from the Foundation's leveraging model. To date, the NOAA contribution to these programs has generally been leveraged beyond the 1:1 matching commitment, and has attracted sponsors from a wide range of private corporations and foundations across the country. This has supplemented funding for NOAA mandated programs to manage and recover these endangered species.

In FY 2004, the Foundation was able to leverage the \$2.5 million appropriated to NOAA into \$8.8 million for conservation. These dollars are being used effectively to restore habitats important to the nation's fish and wildlife, recover endangered species and foster community stewardship across the nation.

NOAA's Future with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

In FY 2005, NOAA and the Foundation will continue to focus on collaborative conservation and to build education and outreach efforts. Education is a major priority within NOAA. In discussing marine issues, the term "landowner" does not immediately come to mind, but individual and community landowners are critical to the management of our oceans. Non-point source pollution is one example of a management problem that will not be solved unless NOAA works with communities and individual landowners that impact the ocean environment through their everyday land use practices. The Foundation is known for its work in conservation education, and NOAA is now strategizing with the Foundation on ways to expand NOAA marine education and outreach.

Another project we are working on is roughly two thousand yards from this room. The Foundation and NOAA are working together to strategize and leverage resources to clean up and restore our capital's forgotten river, the Anacostia. As renewal and development opportunities are realized, NOAA and the Foundation will continue to work with local and regional organizations to ensure economic development and watershed restoration occur hand-in-hand. The Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program is helping build local capacity to improve water quality, restore shad and herring runs, and ultimately ensure this urban watershed becomes a tourist destination.

Comments on H.R. 1428 – National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Reauthorization Act of 2005

NOAA supports reauthorization of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. NOAA does not have any concerns with the changes to the congressional notice nor the matching funds requirements. At this time, we do not believe any additional modifications are needed.

Conclusion

NOAA will continue to achieve on-the-ground restoration and conservation results, and appreciates the Foundation's assistance. Thank you again for this opportunity to discuss the benefits of our partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.