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Member of Congress

Testimony on H.R. 1917, Joint Ventures for Bird Habitat Conservation Act of 2011

Thursday, March 29, 2012

Thank you Chairman Fleming and Ranking Member Sablan for inviting me to provide testimony on my bill, H.R. 1917, the Joint Ventures for Bird Habitat Conservation Act of 2011. This bill is identical to H.R. 2188 from the 111th Congress, which passed the House by a 400-0 vote on July 16, 2009. While that bill was subsequently reported out of the Senate Environment and Public Works without amendment by voice vote, it unfortunately failed to receive consideration on the floor of the Senate.

Joint ventures (JVs) were initially formed to implement the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) in 1986. They are regional partnerships involving federal, state, and local government agencies, corporations, tribes, individuals, and a wide range of non-governmental organizations which advance conservation efforts and help identify local land use priorities. JVs develop science-based goals and strategies, and utilize a non-regulatory approach for achieving conservation.

JVs are unique in that they provide their conservation partners with useful products such as population goals and quantitative habitat objectives, science-based strategies for achieving desired results, conservation alternatives prioritized by their likelihood of success, and evaluation measures to gauge results and improve performance. The collaborative approach used by JVs fosters consensus among individual agencies and organizations, and allows individual partners to integrate their programs and objectives into a broader effort. JVs promote efficient use of available resources and secure collective conservation impacts that exceed the sum of what partners could accomplish alone.

JVs began 25 years ago with a federal mandate to address declines in wetlands and waterfowl. JVs were initially focused exclusively on waterfowl conservation, but have since broadened their scope and partnerships to advance integrated conservation for all species of birds in all habitats. However, their influence is still among the most significant for duck conservation in the United States. Collaboration fostered by the NAWMP and JVs has been a key to the success of waterfowl conservation and that relationship continues today with JVs helping to identify acres that should be conserved as well as providing feedback and assistance with the development of North American Wetlands Conservation Act proposals.

JVs currently serve as the model for partner-based conservation. Today there are 18 habitat JVs and three species JVs which cover the entire country and are key to carrying out bird conservation by identify local land use priorities. JVs provide coordination for conservation planning, and implementing projects that benefits birds and other species. JVs have protected, restored, or enhanced more than 18.5 million acres of critical habitat leveraging every dollar of Congressional funds 35:1.

JVs are a program that Congress should be highlighting as a model of a successful government program and establishing the program in statutory law would do just that.

JVs were funded at \$14.025 million in FY 2012 and the President's FY 2013 budget request for JVs are \$14.092 million.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide further information about this important bill. I look forward to working with you in the remaining months of this Congress to see that this legislation is signed into law.