

TESTIMONY OF DAVID E. NOMSEN

BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES AND OCEANS
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON THE NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT (H.R. 5539)

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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, my name is Dave Nomsen. I am the Vice-president of Governmental Affairs for St. Paul, MN based Pheasants Forever and I reside in Garfield, MN. My primary duties involve supporting a strong framework of federal policies and programs supporting natural resource conservation that complement our habitat-focused mission at Pheasants Forever.

I am pleased to be here today to offer Pheasants Forever's strong support for the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). I have served as a member of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (NAWCC) since 1998.

Pheasants Forever's 650 chapters nationwide complete on average more than 20,000 individual projects annually with conservation minded farmers and ranchers. The vast majority of these projects is completed on private lands and involves grassland establishment and management. Projects involve the establishment of nesting, brood rearing, and winter cover for pheasants, quail, and a wide array of wildlife.

PF chapters also support targeted land acquisitions to improve wildlife habitat and provide public hunting opportunities. Many of these projects include wetland protection and restoration. NAWCA plays an important role in supporting and assisting our local chapter's ability to complete wetland-focused projects that are important for wildlife and the multiple benefits from healthy wetlands. These projects provide valuable permanent wetland protection, and public recreational opportunities including hunting.

Wetlands provide tremendous public benefit. Wetlands serve as natural filters to reduce soil erosion, filter runoff and improve water quality, and recharge groundwater. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita showed how healthy wetlands provide valuable hurricane damage relief, just as healthy wetland bases within inland watersheds can provide reduced damage from flooding.

Wetlands provide important habitat for hundreds of species of wildlife and we support NAWCA's targeting at migratory wetland-dependent species. I would be remiss if I didn't point out the importance of wetlands to resident wildlife. As wetlands go through periodic drying and reflooding periods they provide important nesting and overwintering habitat for resident wildlife including pheasants and deer.

The NAWCA track record on partnerships and NAWCA's ability to leverage additional funding is exemplary. Pheasants Forever has been involved NAWCA grants since 1992 when we undertook the Minnesota River Project. During the 14 years since that project, Pheasants Forever has partnered with 37 entities in 6 states to administer 9 standard and 12 small grants. We have also been involved as partners in other grants. Perhaps the best testament I can offer is this- I recall talking with one of our local volunteer chapter leaders recently while attending a NAWCA project dedication. He noted that because of NAWCA their local chapter could complete a project they could never have dreamed possible. Because of NAWCA, each locally raised dollar at a Pheasants Forever event can complete several dollars in habitat work. Clearly, NAWCA is a great example of federal fiscal responsibility and efficiency.

Created in 1989, NAWCA is now a proven example of a very successful federal program. NAWCA has received broad bi-partisan support here in the House of Representatives, and in the Senate and with the Administration. I am pleased to offer Pheasants Forever's full support for H.R. 5539 reauthorizing the North American Wetlands Conservation Act through 2011 and encourage appropriations up to \$75 million per year. Thank you.