

TESTIMONY OF DR. MAMIE PARKER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR FISHERIES AND HABITAT CONSERVATION, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS, OVERSIGHT HEARING ON H.R. 4686, THE MULTI-STATE AND INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2006

February 16, 2006

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am Dr. Mamie Parker, Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). I thank you for the opportunity to present testimony for the Department of the Interior (Department) regarding H.R. 4686, the Multi-State and International Fisheries Conservation and Management Act of 2006. I will provide the Department's view on reauthorization of the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act of 1965 and I will defer to my colleague from the Department of Commerce for comments on the other Acts.

Anadromous Fish Conservation Act of 1965

The Department supports reauthorizing the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act, which we consider to be an important asset in our efforts to conserve and restore the Nation's anadromous fish resources. The Anadromous Fish Conservation Act provides authority for the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior to enter into cooperative agreements with States and other non-Federal interests for the conservation, development, and enhancement of anadromous fish, including those in the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain, and gives the Service certain authorities to raise fish for mitigation and restoration purposes. These authorities allow the Service to promote effective partnerships and restoration efforts to reverse the decline of anadromous fishery resources. State fishery agencies, colleges, universities, private companies, and other non-Federal interests in 31 States bordering the oceans or the Great Lakes may participate in these partnerships.

Enactment of the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act in 1965 teamed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the States and others to rebuild the Nation's anadromous fish resources, which were then at extremely low levels. Historically, river development activities, such as power, irrigation, and flood control, did not account for the migratory needs of anadromous fish. Federal, State and private water-development projects blocked fish passage both upstream and downstream; pollution made many streams uninhabitable; and logging and road building degraded or blocked once productive spawning and rearing areas. Today, some of these problems have been resolved, but our country's growth continues to place stress on coastal habitats and estuaries, which many coastal, migratory, and anadromous fish species use during one or more stages of their life histories.

Under the Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service have funded projects that benefit anadromous species. Our two agencies coordinate efforts to maximize potential benefits. For example, both agencies provided funds for the Grants to States Program and Emergency Striped Bass studies, which were instrumental in recovering striped bass populations along the Atlantic Coast. The funds were used to build hatcheries, stock striped bass, conduct research, and coordinate among States, which led to rebuilding Atlantic stocks of striped bass back to self-sustaining levels. For fiscal year 2007, the Service has requested \$10,341,000 for Anadromous Fish Management, a slight increase over its 2006 level of funding for this activity.

The Service continues to use the authority of the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act to partner with States, tribes, Fishery Management Councils and Interstate Fisheries Commissions to support fish passage and the operation of fish hatcheries. Examples of recent Service accomplishments in anadromous fish management include:

- Population assessments, habitat assessments, and recovery plan development for Atlantic salmon and shortnose sturgeon in the Northeast; bull trout, Pacific salmon, and Pacific lamprey in the Pacific; and Gulf sturgeon and pallid sturgeon in the Southeast.
- Completion of 16 cooperative management plans and revision of 20 management plans for recovery, restoration, and fishery management activities that benefit anadromous species.
- Completion of the Atlantic Striped Bass Studies 2005 Biennial Report to Congress, which found that striped bass stocks are at high levels of abundance.
- Completion of the Broodstock & Genetics Management Plan for the endangered Atlantic salmon at Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery.
- Stocking of Atlantic shad in the headwaters of the James River to accelerate restoration of the species to self-sustaining levels.
- Opening 176 miles of historical habitat to fish passage by removing or bypassing 16 barriers, some of which affected anadromous fish migration.

To further benefit anadromous fish and other aquatic species, the Service has taken a lead role with the International

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) in developing the National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI) Action Plan. The NFHI is a nationwide strategy that harnesses the energies, expertise, and partnerships of State and Federal agencies and partner organizations, to focus national attention and resources on common priorities to improve aquatic habitat health. Partners also include the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and many other agencies and conservation interests. The Service will use the NFHI to prioritize projects that will benefit anadromous species in coastal areas by protecting and restoring coastal habitats and supplementing State assessments of anadromous fish stocks. Examples of NFHI partnerships that support anadromous species conservation include:

- The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, an 18-state partnership that will identify habitat conservation actions for eastern brook trout, including anadromous run.
- Western Native Trout Initiative, a 12-state partnership that will help restore anadromous runs of cutthroat trout and bull trout.
- The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, a 12-state partnership that is developing GIS-based aquatic habitat plans for watersheds in Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, and North Carolina.
- The Matnauska-Susitna Salmon Conservation Partnership in Alaska, which will help protect habitat for anadromous Pacific salmon.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared testimony. I would like to extend the Service's and the Department's appreciation to you and the rest of the Subcommittee for your leadership and interest in fisheries management, conservation and restoration of these coastal fisheries issues, and would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.