

TESTIMONY OF RICK SCHULTZ, CHIEF OF THE DIVISION OF CONSERVATION, PLANNING, AND POLICY FOR THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM, UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES AND OCEANS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, REGARDING H. R. 2866, PROVIDING FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE JAMES CAMPBELL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, HONOLULU COUNTY, HAWAII, AND H.R. 3682, REDESIGNATING THE MASON NECK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IN VIRGINIA AS THE ELIZABETH HARTWELL MASON NECK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.

December 6, 2005

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Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Rick Schultz, Chief of the Division of Conservation, Planning, and Policy for the National Wildlife Refuge System, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

I appreciate this opportunity to provide the Administration's views on two bills before the Committee, H.R. 2866, the proposed expansion of the James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge, and H.R. 3682, the renaming of Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

H.R. 2866 – James Campbell NWR

H.R. 2866 authorizes expansion of the James Campbell NWR, which is one of three refuges managed by the Service as part of the O`ahu NWR Complex. As discussed more fully below, the Administration cannot support this legislation at this time.

I would like to begin by giving you a brief summary of the refuge, and Service involvement with this refuge. In 1976 the Kahuku Sugar Mill closed, resulting in the drying of settling ponds which previously were heavily used by waterbirds. The refuge was established shortly thereafter, specifically for the endangered Hawaiian stilt (ae`o), Hawaiian coot (`alae ke`oke`o), Hawaiian moorhen (`alae `ula), and Hawaiian duck (koloa maoli). Located at the northernmost tip of O`ahu, the refuge also serves as a strategic landfall for migratory birds coming from as far away as Alaska, New Zealand, and Asia. The Service has documented 117 bird species on the refuge, which consists of a mix of naturally occurring, spring-fed marsh and man-made ponds and water impoundments. Management goals include enhancement of the wetland area to provide maximum production and survival of endangered Hawaiian waterbird populations. The refuge is a bird watcher's delight, complete with a visitor kiosk, interpretive signs, and both guided and self-guided tours.

The Service is authorized to acquire 342 acres as part of the refuge. Of this total, the refuge currently consists of approximately 260 acres in two units (Kii Unit at 126 acres and Punamano Unit with 134 acres). In 1999, a Preliminary Project Proposal (PPP) to study an expansion of the refuge was approved. Consequently, the Service is conducting detailed planning for a proposed 388-acre expansion to:

- further recovery efforts for the four endangered Hawaiian waterbirds;
- provide high-quality, protected habitat for a diversity of Pacific migratory shorebirds, waterfowl, and seabirds;
- secure beach haul-out areas of endangered monk seals and nesting areas of threatened green sea turtles; and
- ensure the preservation of one of the most scenic coastal areas on O`ahu.

Two million dollars was appropriated in Fiscal Year 2005 for the Service to acquire the remaining acreage within the authorized boundary and to acquire other Estate lands outside the current refuge acquisition boundary upon conclusion of the planning process.

H.R. 2866 would expand the boundary of the refuge by approximately 370 acres beyond what is currently being studied by the Service in the PPP. The additional acreage would protect areas adjacent to the two existing refuge units and the study area, and could provide similar wildlife habitat benefits as lands considered in the PPP. These lands, consisting of wetland, coastal dune, and some upland habitat, are currently leased for aquaculture operations and for grazing, all of which could be restored for endangered species, migratory shorebirds, waterfowl, and seabirds.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 requires the Service to develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for each refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). The CCP describes

the desired future conditions of a refuge and provides long-range guidance and management direction to achieve refuge purposes. Development of a CCP provides a forum for meaningful public participation and improved coordination with the states and local communities. It also affords local citizens an opportunity to help shape future management of a refuge, recognizing the important role of refuges in nearby communities. It is typical during the CCP planning process that further expansion of the refuge will be considered and recommended if it is determined that increasing the size will help fulfill the purpose for which the refuge was established.

We will begin preparing a draft CCP in 2007 for the James Campbell NWR, which will include review of the proposed expansion outlined in H.R. 2866. The public will have the opportunity to comment on this draft once it becomes available for review.

In the meantime, the Service will continue working with the James Campbell Estate (Estate) to protect wetland habitats on O`ahu's North Shore. The Service is engaged in discussions with the Estate to acquire the remaining 66 acres in the approved boundary. The Estate, scheduled to be dissolved in early 2007, owns the majority of the property in the Kahuku area and is selling many of its assets, especially the lowlands surrounding the refuge. This will be the last opportunity to protect and conserve some of the best remaining undeveloped coastal dune and strand habitats on the island.

While the Service is considering a limited expansion under the PPP, it is also committed to taking better care of existing resources. The Service uses a consistent and logical approach when considering expanding existing refuge boundaries or establishing a new refuge that fully considers budget constraints and the strategic needs of the Refuge System. This strategy includes purchasing in-holdings within currently approved refuge boundaries.

Establishing new refuges or significantly expanding existing ones compromises our ability to address existing needs. There must be a balance between acquiring new lands and meeting the operational, maintenance and restoration requirements for the resources already in public ownership. Any additional operational and maintenance costs associated with expanding the refuge's land base and lease management program must be offset or accounted for, such as the use of lease revenues for management purposes.

In addition to the national priorities and funding constraints discussed above, we have already evaluated a proposal similar to H.R. 2866, adding this portion of the land to the approved PPP. On September 14, 2004, after a careful review, the Service concluded that a 388-acre expansion of the refuge is all that is feasible and can be accomplished at this time. The Service determined that the costs associated with the acquisition and management of the additional lands, in addition to expanded operational requirements, would compromise our ability to properly manage and address the needs of this refuge, as well as existing refuges throughout the Refuge System.

We appreciate that Representative Abercrombie, Representative Case, and their constituents seek to expand James Campbell NWR. Given that just over one year ago we concluded that the proposed expansion in this area was not feasible, we cannot support it at this time.

We note, however, that other opportunities and tools exist for protecting resources on O`ahu's north shore besides including lands in the Refuge System. Service programs such as Partners for Fish and Wildlife, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the Landowner Incentive Program, and Private Stewardship Grants can be used in cooperation with State, local and private partners to restore and protect natural resources. The State of Hawaii also receives funds through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration, Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration, state wildlife grants, and Section 6 endangered species grants. We will be happy to work with our State and private partners to protect these important resources through these other programs.

#### H.R. 3682 - Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge

Before addressing the substance of the bill pending before you, I would like to offer some background on the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge.

Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge is located in Fairfax County, approximately 18 miles from Washington D.C. The refuge headquarters is in Woodbridge, Virginia, and the area is managed as part of the Potomac River NWR complex which also includes Occoquan Bay and Featherstone refuges in Prince William County. Established in 1969, the refuge includes 2,277 acres of mature oak-hickory forest, freshwater marshes, and almost 4.5 miles of shoreline along the Potomac River and Occoquan Bay. The Refuge was the first federal refuge established specifically for the protection of nesting, feeding, and roosting habitat for the then-endangered bald eagle. The Mason Neck peninsula currently has seven eagle nest sites (including 3 on the refuge), an eagle roost site, and a wintering population of 50-60 eagles. One of the largest blue heron rookeries in the Mid-Atlantic area, averaging 1,500 nests, is on the refuge along with the largest freshwater marsh

in northern Virginia.

While there are no facilities on the refuge, with the exception of interpretive kiosks and a maintenance shop, almost 4 miles of hiking trails provide visitors the opportunity to view and enjoy the refuge's wildlife which includes over 200 species of birds, 31 species of mammals, and 44 species of reptiles and amphibians. One of the trails is fully handicapped accessible. The refuge is listed as one of the 10 best eagle viewing areas in the nation. Annual visitation is between 25 and 30 thousand people.

Mason Neck NWR is part of the Mason Neck management area which includes the five land management agencies on the peninsula. The agencies are the refuge, Mason Neck State Park, Pohick Bay Regional Park, Gunston Hall Plantation, and the Bureau of Land Management's Meadowood recreation area. Managers of the agencies work together to provide recreational and educational opportunities, coordinate planning of trail systems and management activities, and resolve resource issues. The five agencies have approximately 6,500 acres in public ownership on the peninsula.

H.R. 3682 would rename Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge as the Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge.

There is no doubt that Elizabeth Hartwell's contributions to the conservation of the Mason Neck peninsula were substantial. Ms. Hartwell, a resident of Mason Neck and a conservation activist, spearheaded the movement to protect habitat on the Mason Neck peninsula. Through her efforts, the Nature Conservancy ultimately purchased the land for later resale to local, State, and Federal Governments. Ms. Hartwell also petitioned Congress for the initial \$3 million appropriation to purchase land for the refuge. While part of the broader preservation movement, she is often given virtually sole credit for the creation of the refuge and the Mason Neck State Park.

The Hartwell Foundation was started by her son, Rob Hartwell, to support projects on the park and the refuge. Each year on Earth Day, in partnership with the refuge and the Hartwell Foundation, the State park hosts the annual Elizabeth Hartwell Eagle Festival. In 2001, the State Park visitor center was dedicated as The Hartwell Center.

While it is generally the policy of the Service not to name refuges after individuals, the Service does not oppose H.R.3682, in recognition of Ms. Hartwell's contributions. The refuge also plans to make improvements to its Woodmarsh Trail and rename it after Ms. Hartwell. The Service will continue to work with Congress, the Hartwell Foundation, and our other partners to find appropriate ways to recognize Elizabeth Hartwell's tremendous contributions to the preservation of these important wildlife resources.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I will be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.