



**TESTIMONY OF D.A. (DON) YOUNG  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
DUCKS UNLIMITED**

**BEFORE THE:**

**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**CONCERNING:**

**H.R. 1494, ELECTRONIC DUCK STAMP ACT OF 2005 &  
H.R. 3179, THE JUNIOR DUCK STAMP REAUTHORIZATION AMENDMENTS ACT  
OF 2005**

**Thursday, July 21, 2005  
WASHINGTON, DC**

## Introduction

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Don Young. I am the Executive Vice President of Ducks Unlimited (DU). Ducks Unlimited is a non-profit international wetlands conservation organization, with affiliates in Canada and Mexico. In my role as the staff leader for Ducks Unlimited, I manage our employees and provide leadership as a board member to our volunteers and members in all 50 states.

Ducks Unlimited was founded in 1937 by concerned and farsighted sportsmen conservationists. It has grown from a handful of people to an organization of over 1,000,000 supporters who now make up the largest wetlands and waterfowl conservation organization in the world.

Since our inception DU has conserved more than 11.5 million acres of wildlife habitat in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. DU prides itself on our work with private landowners and our ability to assist and advise farmers, ranchers, and foresters in order to meet their economic goals while still providing high quality habitat for the wildlife.

Ducks Unlimited has a simple, and focused mission--"Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people." Given this mission, it is understandable that DU is a strong supporter of the Federal Duck Stamp program. There is a tremendous amount of overlap between DU's mission and the goals of the program.

Because of our support, DU recently partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) relative to the Federal Duck Stamp program. DU has assumed the role of master licensing agent for Duck Stamp related products. In this role, DU coordinates the selection, production and marketing of merchandise ranging from Duck Stamp coffee mugs to T-shirts and everything in between. Income from product sales flows back to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission for conservation purposes. This new partnership should save the federal government money and allow for a more entrepreneurial approach to the sale of Duck Stamp products.

Another aspect of our partnership was recently announced in May. This fall, DU will team-up with the FWS to co-host the annual Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest. For the first time in its 71-year history the Duck Stamp Art Contest will be held outside of Washington, D.C. The contest will be take place in Memphis, Tennessee, the location of Ducks Unlimited's national headquarters, during the week of September 12, and coincide with the Ducks Unlimited Outdoor Expo, which should draw over 50,000 outdoor enthusiasts. This partnership is designed to help to elevate the public profile of the Duck Stamp program and allow a much larger audience to enjoy the Duck Stamp competition and appreciate the artwork.

I am testifying today regarding H.R. 1494, The Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2005 (E-Stamp Act) and H.R. 3179, The Junior Duck Stamp Reauthorization Amendments Act of 2005 (Junior Duck Stamp Act). Ducks Unlimited applauds the Subcommittee for its commitment to wetlands conservation and support of conservation education.

## **H.R. 1494, The Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2005**

The Federal Duck Stamp program has been an enormously successful conservation program. Since its inception in 1934 the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp has been used to raise over \$700 million that has conserved over 5.2 million acres of land for our National Wildlife Refuge System. The vast majority of the funds raised have come from the waterfowl hunters of this country. Many people consider the Federal Duck Stamp program to be one of the most successful federal conservation programs ever created.

Waterfowl hunters can be proud of the great conservation work being accomplished based on their purchases of the Federal Duck Stamp. Critical habitat has been conserved that not only benefits waterfowl, but many other species of wildlife as well as people. A great example of the power of the Duck Stamp program can be found at the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Arkansas. 77% of this Refuge, over 43,800 acres were acquired using funds raised from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps. There was a recent documented sighting of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker on the Cache River Refuge, a bird that was long thought to be extinct. What a wonderful conservation success story to have waterfowl hunters being largely responsible for the survival of an endangered species of woodpecker.

The prospect of making it easier for people to get a field is desirable and exciting. In this time of the internet, hunters and others rightfully believe they should be able to buy all licenses and attendant stamps immediately on-line. DU agrees and we wish to offer some suggestions on the best way to do this.

First, we want to ensure that the funds raised by the Duck Stamp, which is used exclusively to conserve lands for national wildlife refuges, are not reduced as a result of this Act. We also feel it imperative that the Duck Stamp tradition of marrying conservation and art to attract popular attention and appreciation from the general public is maintained. Care needs to be taken to insure that the implementation of the E-stamp does not result in the discontinuation of the printed Duck Stamp or the heritage of artwork that goes with it.

Knowledgeable biologists agree that habitat is the most important element in maintaining long-term wildlife populations. The Duck Stamp program is focused on conserving habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. That makes it important that every dollar possible be raised by the sale of Duck Stamps. Language in H.R. 1494 states that additional costs associated with this new E-stamp shall be borne by the purchaser of a Duck Stamp and not be taken from the funds that are intended to flow to the National Wildlife Refuge System. We strongly support that. Experience has shown that additional charges have not dissuaded purchasers of state hunting licenses. We believe the same will be true with the electronic sales of federal Duck Stamps. DU requests that Congress ensure there be no reduction in funds that flow to the National Wildlife Refuge System for the conservation of additional habitat.

DU also is concerned that the paper Duck Stamp and the rich conservation art tradition that surrounds it be maintained. For over 71 years the Duck Stamp has been a collectable stamp. For

over 55 years the federal government has held an annual art competition to select an image for the next years stamp. This contest is the only federal art competition in existence and as a result it is very prestigious within the wildlife art community. I understand that many wildlife artists consider winning the Federal Duck Stamp competition as the “gold medal” of the wildlife art world, as the annual contest is very competitive. As an example of the importance of the art and contest in the art world, the winner of the 2003 art competition was Ron Louque, an accomplished wildlife artist from Virginia. Ron had entered the contest for 30 years before finally winning. Prior to his victory the closest he came was third place.

Ducks Unlimited members are active purchasers of Duck Stamp art. As one method of raising funds for habitat conservation, DU sells Duck Stamp paintings at fundraising dinners across the country. The loss of the paper Duck Stamp and hence the accompanying art work would have a very negative impact not only on tradition and public involvement, but on the wildlife art industry, and the ability to raise private funds for wetlands conservation.

The Federal Duck Stamp is purchased by all waterfowl hunters, stamp collectors, and by many who will use it as an entrance pass for many National Wildlife Refuges. If the paper stamp were ever to be discontinued, these other sources of federal revenue would be lost.

As wonderful as technology is, it has its downsides. Ducks Unlimited is very concerned that once an E-stamp is made available, many of the retail stores that currently sell paper Duck Stamps will likely discontinue sales. The reason for this is that retail outlets don't add any mark-up for selling the stamp. They only carry it as a convenience for their customers. Therefore it is imperative that the FWS make extra efforts to ensure that the retail availability of the Duck Stamp will not suffer as a result of the introduction of the E-Stamp. Stamps by mail will be one option, but hopefully the stamp will also still be available to consumers that want to purchase it in person. One possible solution to this distribution challenge might be to expand the number of U.S. Post Offices that sell the Duck Stamp and require sales of the stamp at every National Wildlife Refuge that has a visitor center.

Ducks Unlimited is already working with the FWS to explore options to expand the sales of Duck Stamps to our supporters.

This legislation will likely make it more convenient for those duck hunters who demand the convenience to purchase their stamps electronically and DU is supportive of making things more convenient. We also value the wonderful conservation tradition of the Duck Stamp and know that many Americans enjoy collecting these beautiful stamps. Most importantly we strongly support the use of Duck Stamp funds to acquire critical wetland habitat for our National Wildlife Refuge System.

### **H.R. 3179, The Junior Duck Stamp Reauthorization Amendments Act of 2005**

Educating our children about the value of conservation is critical to the future of our natural environment and the places we love as outdoor enthusiasts. Ducks Unlimited has been aware of the importance of youth education since our inception in 1937. Under the guidance of our

volunteer Youth and Education Committee we have strengthened our youth education programs, which include Greenwing (youth) memberships and Project Webfoot, an elementary school science program. We have always made efforts to instill a conservation ethic in our children and share with them a love of and respect for the outdoors. With our Greenwing program, local DU chapters host a variety of events for youth, such as building Wood Duck boxes and learning basic wetlands ecology. An additional benefit of the Greenwing program is "Puddler" magazine, which is for children.

Ducks Unlimited strongly supports the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Junior Duck Stamp program. The Junior Duck program has been a tremendous success since its inception over 10 years ago. The program teaches youth the basic concepts of conservation and uses art as the pathway. The Junior Duck Stamp program is available in all 50 states and two U.S. Territories. According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service data, since 1994 nearly 175,000 students have entered the annual Junior Duck Stamp national art contest. This number does not include the thousands of children that participate in the Junior Duck conservation curriculum but choose not to enter the art contest. These are young people who may never have been exposed to the concept of conservation and will now have a better understanding of the natural world and how we all need to work to conserve it.

We live in an ever more urbanized world. We are facing development pressures and environmental damage from many sources including invasive species (both animal and plant). In order for all of us all to make informed decisions about how we wish to develop our natural resources and land we all must have a working knowledge of ecosystems and conservation. Educational opportunities like the Junior Duck Stamp program and DU's Greenwing program go a long way towards providing that solid conservation background.

DU strongly supports the reauthorization of the Junior Duck Stamp program. We respectfully request that this Subcommittee support H.R. 3179 and that if enacted, the FWS include an appropriations request for the Junior Duck Stamp program in their Fiscal 2007 budget. Given the conservation challenges that we face today, providing natural resources education for our youth may be one of the wisest investments we can make in our future.

## **Conclusion**

Ducks Unlimited is honored to be here representing our supporters and to speak to the importance of the Federal Duck Stamp program and the Junior Duck Stamp program. These programs are both extremely popular and effective programs in conserving America's wetlands and waterfowl habitat. The long tradition of the paper Duck stamp and the positive influence of the Junior Ducks stamp have benefits that go far beyond what can be measured in dollars and cents.

Ducks Unlimited strongly suggests that all efforts be made to maximize the flow of funds to the National Wildlife Refuge System as this E-stamp legislation is implemented and that the traditional paper Duck Stamp be maintained.

Ducks Unlimited supports the Junior Duck Stamp reauthorization. DU has long seen the benefits of conservation education, and the Junior Duck Stamp program has proven to be an extremely successful way to blend art with conservation.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to present our view of the importance of conservation programs like the Federal Duck Stamp and Junior Duck Stamp. We look forward to continued partnerships with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service relative to the Adult and Junior Duck Stamp programs.

Please do not hesitate to call upon us for any reason regarding these important issues. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.