

Chairman Opening Statement: James P. Moran

Fish and Wildlife Service

FY 2011 Budget Hearing

House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations

March 17, 2010

3:00 p.m.

I want to welcome Assistant Secretary Tom Strickland and Rowan Gould, Acting Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Thank you for appearing before the Subcommittee today.

On behalf of this Subcommittee, I want to express my condolences to Mr. Hamilton's family and colleagues. Our thoughts and prayers go out to them. His passing is a true loss to all of us. Sam represented the very best of our civil servants. I understand that he got his start building fences on wildlife refuges during the summers and transformed his love of the outdoors into an outstanding career.

As we consider the proposed Fiscal Year 2011 budget for the Fish and Wildlife Service, I am aware that it represents a transformation, led largely by Mr. Hamilton, to look beyond a particular project, place or species, and consider how ecological systems work to sustain themselves.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is steward to over 551 units in the National Wildlife Refuge System and consists of approximately 149 million acres, including 53 million acres for marine national monuments. I am proud to say that 14 of the refuges are in the Commonwealth of Virginia. All of these Refuges support resource conservation by providing species protection and recreational opportunities for the surrounding communities.

According to the Outdoor Industry Foundation, outdoor recreation activities contribute \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy, support nearly 6.5 million jobs across the U.S., generate \$49 billion in annual national tax revenue, and produce \$289 billion annually in retail sales and services across the U.S.

In addition to managing the National Refuge System, the Service is also responsible for implementing the Endangered Species Act. The Service does this either by working with partners to keep species off the threatened or endangered list; or by working to recover species that are on the federal threatened or endangered list. As a Nation we have over 1,320 endangered or threatened species and have recovered such icons as the bald eagle and peregrine falcon. As we look to the future, our management and stewardship of these species and resources becomes even more critical, particularly in light of the very real threat of climate change.

As John Muir said:

"When we tug at a single thing in nature, we find it attached to the rest of the world."

I am interested in hearing how you will continue to support your mission and transition to the “landscape scale” when you are proposing a \$4.6 million decrease in the Fish and Wildlife Service’s budget and absorbing over \$14 million in fixed costs.

I also have concerns about the \$4 million in proposed cuts for operations of the National Wildlife Refuges. As you know, this Subcommittee has worked hard over the past several years, to help the refuges receive adequate funding for their operations.

Finally, it cannot go without mentioning the \$20 million proposed increase for land acquisitions. This is a large increase when you are asking your agency to absorb \$14 million in fixed costs, and decrease your refuge operations and other important programs. I am interested in hearing your explanation of why we should provide this increase.

Before we get to your statement and our questions, Mr. Simpson, would you like to make an opening statement?