

November 15, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman, Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas Carper
Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

It is with great enthusiasm that I provide this testimony on behalf of the more than one million members, supporters and volunteers of Ducks Unlimited. Founded in 1937, by a group of concerned waterfowl hunters, Ducks Unlimited is the world's leading wetlands and waterfowl conservation organization. With members and conservation projects in all 50 states, including sister organizations in Mexico and Canada, DU and its partners at the local, state, federal, non-governmental and corporate level have conserved an astounding 14 million acres of wetlands and wildlife habitat. DU habitat conservation projects provide critical habitat for the diverse array of our continent's migratory bird resources, supporting them on their key breeding, migratory and wintering grounds. Especially in the United States, where the majority of the landscape is in private ownership, DU takes great pride in working cooperatively with our nation's farmers and ranchers. Without their active help and participation it would not be possible for DU to successfully achieve its vision of wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever.

I personally thank Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper for having today's hearing entitled "Examining Funding Needs for Wildlife Conservation, Recovery and Management." Our nation's wildlife habitat resources are the backbone of a multi-billion dollar outdoor recreational industry that directly supports more than 6.1 million jobs. Americans spend approximately \$887 billion annually on hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing and photography. It's important to note that these dollars are often spent in our country's more rural communities, where these jobs provide a critical economic boost are needed the most.

One of the best ways to evaluate wildlife conservation funding efforts into the future is to take a look at those that have been effective in the past. From DU's perspective, none have been more impactful than the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). Since its enactment in 1989, NAWCA grants of roughly \$1.4 billion have generated an additional \$4.3 billion in partner contributions. Even though the law only requires a 1:1 match for projects, NAWCA partners like DU, Pheasants Forever, the Nature Conservancy, and our 50 state fish and wildlife agencies, routinely generate 2-3 times the grant request amount. All told more than 5600 partners have contributed more than \$4.3 billion in matched funds. For example, the state of Wyoming currently has 8 NAWCA projects underway that are conserving more than 45,000 acres of wildlife habitat. \$1.4 million in NAWCA funding encouraged partners to contribute an additional \$4 million to these on-the-ground habitat conservation projects. In Delaware, a little over \$6 million in NAWCA funds generated more than \$12 million in partner contributions to conserve almost 11,000 acres of wetlands and migratory bird habitat. I'm fortunate to truly see the conservation power and impact of NAWCA in my home state of South Carolina. In South Carolina over \$45 million in NAWCA grant money has generated more than \$358 million in partner contributions, where 66 projects have led to the conservation of almost 320,000 acres of critical, unique and in many cases ecologically fragile fish and wildlife habitat. More than 2700 habitat projects impacting approximately 34 million acres of waterfowl and wildlife habitat have been completed or are underway in all 50 states, Canada and Mexico. This fall and winter, when you are back home visiting your favorite slough, swamp or coastal marsh, there is a good chance that some of those birds, whether they are flying toward your decoys or into your binoculars, spent some time on a NAWCA funded project.

NAWCA's demonstrable success at restoring, enhancing and protecting critical migratory bird habitat is predicated on its non-regulatory, incentive based approach to conservation. This allows NAWCA partners to work collaboratively with willing private landowners, especially farmers, ranchers and foresters, who are the key to any wildlife conservation efforts. Plainly put, if you do not work cooperatively with private landowners you will not be able to successfully secure essential habitat for waterfowl, other wildlife and especially threatened and endangered species.

DU appreciates the Chairman and Ranking Member's support for the reauthorization of NAWCA at \$50 million a year for five years in the Hunting Heritage and Environmental Preservation for Wildlife Act (HELP Act). We strongly believe that NAWCA has proven to be a successful model for wildlife habitat conservation that prioritizes cooperation with private landowners and the generation of partner dollars not just federal money. The NAWCA grant is the "seed" money that generates a four times return in on-the-ground conservation investment. In these times of federal deficits, NAWCA maximizes a modest federal investment in habitat conservation and stretches it beyond the requirements of the law.

DU also strongly supports the reauthorization of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program as proposed in the Wildlife Innovation and Longevity Driver Act (WILD Act). The "Partners" program has a long track record of working cooperatively with ranchers and other private landowners to improve their lands for the benefit of fish and wildlife.

Additionally, DU supports the Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act of 2017. There is perhaps no single greater success story in the history of our nation's wildlife conservation journey than the creation of the "PR fund." Sportsmen and the hunting and shooting sports industry early on in our nation's history realized, but most importantly embraced their inherent responsibility in ensuring there was sufficient habitat to sustain the fish and wildlife resources that they prized. As a result, the excise tax that is imposed on the sales of firearms and ammunition (PR fund) has generated more than \$ 2 billion for wildlife habitat conservation in all 50 states. To ensure this success story continues for the next generation of sportsmen and sportswomen, the "Modernizing PR Act" will utilize critical funds to recruit and retain our next generation of hunters and recreational shooters, without whom our conservation future would look bleak.

As we consider the future of wildlife conservation funding it is critical for stakeholders, especially our partners at the state departments of fish, wildlife and natural resources, to have the adequate resources to address the problems associated with the listing of imperiled species. While these state agencies have the mandate, talent and drive to manage for a vast array of fish and wildlife management challenges they lack the necessary financial resources to keep pace with the complex and growing scope of critical work. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA—S. 3223) would authorize \$1.3 billion annually from existing royalty revenues generated by the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters for state fish and wildlife agencies to address a much broader array of challenges and implement proactive conservation programs. And while these resources would go to the restoration and recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, they would also help prevent future listings of potentially at risk species. In the long run, this approach will save limited dollars because managing a species after it has declined to the point of being listed, costs vastly more than managing it so that it avoids being listed. Furthermore, fewer listings will provide greater certainty to private landowners, hunters, anglers and other outdoor recreational businesses that make a living off of our nation's shared land and water resources. Since 1937, the investment of Pittman-Robertson dollars in the states has helped in the recovery of many of our nation's most celebrated game species, including wood ducks, elk and pronghorn antelope. Now it's time to take that same approach to addressing our nation's imperiled fish and wildlife populations. Efforts that strengthen the state's role in managing fish and wildlife populations, for game and non-game species alike, will invariably be key to the successful long-term management of our nation's diverse and inspiring natural resources.

In conclusion, DU will continue to support the Chairman and the Ranking Member as they work through important policy decisions that will have long-term impacts on the health of our country's fish and wildlife populations, both game and non-game species alike. Fortunately we have existing programs that already provide help for both. For example, reauthorizing NAWCA will ensure that it continues to deliver important wetland habitat that waterfowl need, while also providing critical habitat for approximately half of the nation's threatened and endangered species that depend on wetlands. Reauthorizing the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program will allow it to continue providing necessary habitat for grassland nesting birds in the prairies and critical habitat for sage grouse in the intermountain west states. Finally, passage of the

Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act of 2017, to recruit and retain more hunters and shooters and passage of RAWA will provide the state fish and wildlife agencies the essential resources they need to manage fish and wildlife populations and restore and recover imperiled species.

Thank you very much Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper and the esteemed members of the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works for providing me the opportunity to provide testimony and address the committee.