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Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Sessions, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. National Wildlife Federation is a non-partisan, non-profit organization. Our mission is to inspire Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future. National Wildlife Federation is supported by 48 state and territorial affiliates and more than 4 million members and supporters. Our members include hunters, anglers, backyard gardeners, birdwatchers and many other outdoor enthusiasts from throughout the nation.

Wildlife conservation has been the focus of our efforts from inception. Time and again, threats to wildlife have unified diverse people from across our nation to take action in the interest of conserving the nation's rich wildlife heritage. As a result, many important wildlife conservation laws have been passed, such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, and the Federal Aid in Fisheries Restoration Act, to name just a few. The remarkable successes of these and other wildlife laws have saved many species from extinction, restored many game fish and wildlife species, and even led to the recovery of the bald eagle, the nation's symbol. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today on several proposed bills regarding wildlife conservation, and the efforts of the Congressional sponsors of these bills, to further advance conservation of our nation's fish and wildlife for the benefit of all citizens.

The Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2012 Section (S.2071) and The Migratory Bird Habitat Investment and Enhancement Act (S.2156)

The National Wildlife Federation has supported the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, or "Duck Stamp Act," since our founding in 1936. In fact, J.N. "Ding" Darling not only helped establish the Duck Stamp Act in 1934 and was the artist for the first-ever federal duck stamp, he also was a founder of the National Wildlife Federation and the artist for our first annual production of "conservation stamps."

The Duck Stamp Act is strongly supported by hunters and other conservationists, and requires all waterfowl hunters to purchase a duck stamp. The revenue is used to further conservation of waterfowl and other wildlife and has contributed to the addition of almost six million acres to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

In 2006, the Electronic Duck Stamp Act (S.1496) was passed to authorize a 3-year trial of electronic or so-called "E-stamps" with the intent of facilitating purchase by waterfowl hunters among others. The August 2011 "Federal Duck Stamp Program - Electronic Duck Stamp Pilot

Program Report" prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reveals that electronic sales were tested in eight states and administrative procedures refined over the 3-year trial period, resulting in an operationally-effective program. Furthermore, there was no apparent decrease in sales, and hence revenue for conservation purposes.

In light of the success of the 2006 Electronic Stamp Act pilot program, the National Wildlife Federation now urges enactment of "The Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2012" (S.2071). This bill would facilitate electronic sales of the duck stamp while retaining the long tradition of the annual duck stamp contest and collection of duck stamps by hunters and other supporters. We also urge that Congress encourage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to explore and implement ways in which voluntary purchase of duck stamps by other members of the public (beyond the required purchase by waterfowl hunters) can be increased to raise additional revenue for conservation. Electronic sales of duck stamps will make them much more accessible for purchase. A better conservation investment would be hard to buy given that ninety-eight cents out of every dollar from duck stamp sales goes directly to wetlands protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Although the duck stamp program has been extremely successful, changing times have reduced its effectiveness. The price of a duck stamp was \$1 in 1934, and was increased seven times by Congress, to its current price of \$15, set in 1991. Thus, the duck stamp price has not been raised in 21 years, compared to an historic average of an increase every 8 years. During this 21 years, duck stamps have lost 40% of their value based on the consumer price index, while the average price of wetlands for purchase through this program has more than tripled from \$306 per acre to \$1091 per acre. Due to the absence of significant increases in the price of duck stamps, coupled with consumer price index growth and the increasing cost of protecting wetlands, the duck stamp program's effectiveness will continue to decline. To maintain its buying power and effectiveness in conserving wetlands, we support appropriate increases in the price of duck stamps. The Migratory Bird Habitat Investment and Enhancement Act (S.2156) provides a mechanism by which the price of the duck stamp can be periodically assessed and raised to continue its effectiveness.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Reauthorization Act (S.1494)

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has been a remarkable conservation success ever since it was first established by Congress in 1984 for the purpose of facilitating private investments in fish and wildlife conservation in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. NFWF currently has partnerships with 14 federal agencies and has received funding contributions from thousands of corporations, foundations and other private entities. In these times of tight fiscal constraints, it is noteworthy that NFWF leverages every federal dollar with at least 3 dollars from private sources to fund conservation. In fact, to date, NFWF has leveraged \$576 million in federal funds into \$2 billion for conservation for non-regulatory, voluntary, on-the-ground fish and wildlife conservation projects that benefit private working lands and local economies in all 50 states.

NFWF's purpose is to achieve conservation success on the ground. It does not and cannot provide grant funds for litigation, advocacy, or lobbying. Its on-the-ground conservation successes are far too many to describe in detail here, but cover a broad range of habitats, fish and wildlife across the country.

Longleaf pine restoration is one example of an on-going program at NFWF that brings together federal agencies and the private sector to address a conservation challenge. NFWF recently expanded this program through two new federal partners that will support accelerated restoration in the longleaf pine ecosystem. Originally covering 90 million acres, this ecosystem is today only three percent of its original size, and is the only home for some threatened and endangered species, such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, the gopher tortoise and the indigo snake. Since 2004, NFWF and the Southern Company have invested over \$8.7 million into projects which will restore more than 82,000 acres of longleaf pine forest.

Another outstanding on-going project is the collaboration of the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program and NFWF which recently announced over \$10.9 million in grants for 55 environmental projects in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed's six states and the District of Columbia. The projects will preserve 3,729 acres of land, restore 32 miles of riparian areas and stream banks and implement the best stormwater management practices on 2,878 acres.

The bill willreauthorize NFWF at its existing authorization level and, among other things, will strengthen its ability to work with federal agencies more effectively, reduce bureaucratic burdens, and maximize conservation outcomes. NWF supports the bi-partisan "National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Reauthorization Act" (S.1494) to build further on NFWF's remarkable legacy of conservation success.

Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act (S.1249)

The very first lobbying accomplishment of the National Wildlife Federation, ably facilitated by Ding Darling, was securing Congressional passage in 1937 of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Restoration Act). This landmark legislation directs that excise taxes on sporting arms and ammunition be dedicated to restoring wildlife, development of access facilities to public lands, and hunter education programs, including construction and operation of public target ranges.

Since its inception, the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act has generated over \$2 billion, which has been augmented by \$500 million in matching money from the states implementing the programs. The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act is strongly supported by hunters and shooters because they know that the special excise taxes on guns and ammunition is dedicated to Restoration Act purposes. More than 62% of the revenue is used to buy, develop, maintain, and operate wildlife management areas. Some 4 million acres have been purchased outright since the program began. The Act's many outstanding conservation successes include restoration of pronghorn, elk, wild turkeys, deer and many other wildlife species.

The Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act (S.1249) would further states' abilities to use Restoration Act funds "to facilitate the construction and expansion of public

target ranges, including ranges on Federal land managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management." We recognize the need to ensure that people of all ages have proper training and facilities to ensure safety in hunting. While supporting this concept, we encourage consideration of several factors.

The toxicity of lead to wildlife, including lead used in ammunition and fishing tackle, is well known. In fact, the National Wildlife Federation lead the charge to ban the use of lead and other toxic substances in shot used for waterfowl hunting because of widespread ingestion of spent lead shot by ducks, geese and other wildlife, thereby causing their death by lead poisoning. It is also well known that shooting ranges can accumulate very large quantities of lead. We encourage Congress to consider ways in which any newly constructed shooting ranges can be managed to encourage voluntary conversion by the public at the shooting range and in their hunting activities, to non-toxic forms of ammunition.

We are also concerned that reduction in the non-federal matching proportion from 25% to 10% reduces the ability to maximize total dollars for Restoration Act purposes, and also comes at the expense of the Restoration Act dollars dedicated specifically to conservation purposes. However, as the bill is written, these impacts will be minimal.

Wildlife Disease Emergency Act (S.357)

Wildlife disease is a growing problem that threatens the well-being of native wildlife. West Nile Virus in birds, Chronic Wasting Disease in Cervids, Chytrid Fungus infection of amphibians, and White-Nose Syndrome in bats are examples of the challenges and widespread impacts of wildlife diseases. Many factors contribute to the spread and impacts of diseases in wildlife, including widespread international trade in wildlife. Although not the subject of this hearing, invasive species, which can carry disease and can even be a disease, is a huge problem which threatens wildlife and ecosystems across the country. For example, feral pigs can spread brucellosis and the invasive Asian tiger mosquito is known to transmit more than 30 different viruses. We urge Congress to strengthen laws and regulations to contain and stop the continued nation-wide epidemic of invasive plants, animals and pathogens entering the United States virtually every day, and which continue to cause widespread and costly damage to wildlife, habitats, agriculture, people, and infrastructure.

White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) in bats, a deadly disease caused by a fungus (*Geomyces destructans*), was first observed in 2006 and is estimated to have killed 5.7 million to 6.7 million bats in eastern North America since then.ⁱ In addition to its potential spread and impact on bat populations across North America, the decline of this important insectivore may facilitate the spread of diseases transmitted by insects.

Another recent serious wildlife disease is chytridiomycosis in amphibians, caused by the chytrid fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*. Thought to have initially been spread by trade of the African clawed frog, it is has now infected many amphibian species throughout the world, included at least four species listed under the Endangered Species Act in the United States—the Wyoming toad, mountain yellow-legged frog, California red-legged frog, and the Chiricahua leopard frog.

The Wildlife Disease Emergency Act (S.357) will facilitate more quickly addressing emerging wildlife diseases by authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to declare a wildlife disease emergency and coordinate rapid response to the emergency, including providing grants to state wildlife agencies and Indian tribes to address the problem. We support the intent of S.357 to provide needed resources via a Wildlife Disease Emergency Fund through the Department of the Interior to quickly address wildlife disease issues in the interest of wildlife conservation. We appreciate that the bill would establish the Wildlife Disease Committee with membership from Federal and state agencies, tribal entities, and "individuals who represent public and private organizations." We suggest further definition of the Wildlife Disease Committee to ensure balanced representation, specifically including representation by one or more national 501(c)3 wildlife conservation organizations, and the National Wildlife Health Center.

We note that the bill restricts the definition of wildlife to native species. As we addressed above, invasive non-native species can be a serious threat to native wildlife. We recommend that this bill provide a means to also address disease in non-native species because of the potential for non-native species to harbor and transmit disease to native wildlife.

Finally, is unclear to us the extent to which this bill would rely on existing legal authority and federal programs already in place to address wildlife disease issues. Nonetheless, ensuring adequate resources to address wildlife disease issues is important, and we welcome the opportunity to work with this committee to further define this bill, including its relationship to existing authorities to address wildlife disease issues.

Delaware River Basin Conservation Act (S.1266)

The National Wildlife Federation supports the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act as it provides a framework for making substantial progress in protecting and restoring the Delaware River Basin. The four-state Basin watershed encompasses the Delaware River—which is the longest undammed river east of the Mississippi—and the ecologically- and economically-significant Delaware Estuary. Protecting ecosystems is critical to protecting wildlife.

More than 200 migrant and resident finfish and shellfish species use the Delaware Estuary for feeding, spawning, or nursery grounds. These species include sharks, skates, striped bass, shad, sturgeon, American eel, blueback herring, Atlantic menhaden, alewife, bluefish, weakfish, and flounder. Oysters and blue crabs are important recreational and commercial shellfish resources in the Estuary; annual landings are currently valued at \$14 millionⁱⁱ. The Delaware Estuary is also home to the largest population of horseshoe crabs in the world and is an important stop for shorebirds and waterfowl along the Atlantic Flywayⁱⁱⁱ. Natural habitats in this watershed include tidal salt marshes, tidal freshwater marshes, intertidal mudflats, oyster reefs, beaches, inland wetlands, and upland meadows and forests. Historically, the Delaware Estuary's extensive tidal wetlands provided critical habitat for many of the region's threatened and endangered species and are still fundamental for their survival.

The Delaware River, stretching from the Catskill Mountains in New York to the metropolitan hubs of Trenton and Philadelphia, is home to important species such as American shad, bald eagle, river otter, bog turtle, several endangered and threatened freshwater mussels, and brook and brown trout. The river's coldwater streams and tributaries offer some of the best recreational fishing opportunities in the eastern United States. Other habitats include freshwater wetlands and riparian forests and grasslands. Because of the high quality of the habitat in this region, much of the mainstem Delaware River has been included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This area also provides untreated drinking water to seven million people in New York City.

Changes in land use, the regions legacy of pollution, and declines in living resources are among the top environmental concerns in the Delaware Basin, resulting in habitat loss and negatively impacted fish and wildlife. Data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration suggests that within a recent 5-year period, the watershed lost between 25 and 35 acres of land to development each day. Forest lands—which provide critical habitat and regulate water quality—experienced the greatest rate of conversion, equating to one football field every two hours.^{iv} Such changes in land use are associated with increased stormwater runoff, resulting in discharges of higher concentrations of nutrients, toxics, and heavy metals into the watershed and ultimately to the Delaware Estuary.

The Delaware River Basin Conservation Act (S.1266) would address these concerns and greatly benefit wildlife and wildlife habitat. The bill would require the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in partnership with other federal agencies, to establish a non-regulatory Delaware River Basin Restoration Program to increase coordination and collaboration of conservation efforts currently underway in the entire Basin. The legislation would also establish a competitive grants program—along with much-needed technical assistance—to add to the limited federal resources available to the watershed for (1) the restoration or protection of fish and wildlife species and habitats, and the (2) improvement or protection of water quality.

NWF believes that this S.1266 will provide much needed resources for this important ecosystem. We support the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act and applaud the committee for favorably reporting it in December 2011.

North American Wetlands Conservation Extension Act (S. 2282)

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) serves as a model for successful public-private cooperation for on-the-ground wildlife conservation. The National Wildlife Federation supports the extension of this valuable habitat program.

Since its inception nearly a quarter-century ago, NAWCA has facilitated the protection and restoration of more than 26 million acres of important wetlands and other habitats in all 50 states. Wetlands sustain tremendous biodiversity, and a variety of wetland-dependant species directly benefit from this investment in conservation, including ducks and geese, shorebirds, frogs and salamanders, beavers and otters, myriad invertebrates and many species of fish. Additional community benefits include expanded outdoor recreation opportunities (including hunting, fishing, wildlife watching and photography) and improved water quality.

Because of the competitive nature of the grant program, NAWCA regularly leveres each dollar in public funds with more than three in private dollars—despite only requiring a one-to-one match. This impressive financial commitment signifies strong support for conservation and restoration from local partners, landowners, and private organizations; more than 4,500 partners have contributed to NAWCA projects over the years.

For example, the Kansas Wildlife Federation, an affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation, partnered with a dozen other organizations and agencies in 2011 to complete the 243-acre Slate Creek wetland restoration project in Sumner County, Kansas. The \$75,000 small NAWCA grant was matched with more than \$300,000 in private funding contributions, equating to a private-public ratio of four-to-one. This project will provide well-managed and robust habitat for northern pintails, mallards, redheads, canvasbacks, little blue heron, American bittern and marsh wren.

Because NAWCA has a proven track-record of incentivizing significant investment in highquality habitat protection and restoration efforts across North America, NWF supports bipartisan Congressional efforts to reauthorize this program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we appreciate the committee's effort to address the important wildlife issues discussed in today's hearing, and look forward to working with you to further develop the proposed bills. Addressing these wildlife issues is important to help protect and conserve wildlife for our children's future.

Thank you.

ⁱ http://batcon.org/pdfs/USFWS_WNS_Mortality_2012_NR_FINAL.pdf

ⁱⁱ Kauffman, Gerald. 2011. *Economic Value of the Delaware Estuary Watershed*. University of Delaware, Newark DE.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dove, L.E., and R.M. Nyman (ed). 1995. *Living Resources of the Delaware Estuary*. Delaware Estuary Program Report Number 95-07. Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Wilmington, DE

^{iv} National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Coastal Services Center. 2008. Assessing the Delaware River Basin Using Land Cover Information. http://www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/action/ccapde-river