

## STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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HOUSE RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON FISHERIES AND OCEANS

MARCH 10, 2005

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to discuss our budget request for 2006 as proposed by the administration. I would like to thank you, Chairman Gilchrest, and Mr. Pallone, in your role as Ranking Minority Member, as well as the Members of the Subcommittee for your support of our mission. I would also like to welcome the new Members of the Subcommittee.

Our budget request for 2006 is \$1.323 billion, an increase of \$30.9 million over last year's enacted level. In addition, we will use \$710.9 million in permanent appropriations to meet our mission responsibilities. This funding level will allow the Service to continue to achieve its mission and goals. The 2006 request includes a modest increase that rewards successful programs achieving results while maintaining the fiscal discipline necessary to halve the deficit by 2009.

### Cooperative Conservation

A key component of our request is a suite of grant and other programs that support the Secretary's cooperative approach to conservation that emphasizes voluntary partnerships with states, tribes, private landowners, local governments, and community organizations. Our request includes \$345.9 million for these programs, a \$56.5 million increase over 2005. These programs leverage limited federal funding, typically providing a non-federal match of 50 percent or more. They provide a foundation for cooperative efforts to protect endangered and at-risk species, engage local communities, organizations, and citizens in conservation; foster innovation; and achieve conservation goals while maintaining working landscapes.

To highlight the importance of working with private landowners to conserve threatened or endangered species, we request \$40.0 million for the Landowner Incentive and \$10.0 million for Private Stewardship programs, an increase of \$21.4 million over 2005. While the Landowner Incentive program is in the midst of finalizing baseline data for its strategic plan in 2005, I can already report that the Service and its partners plan to conserve over 180,000 acres in Montana alone.

For the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, we request \$80.0 million, roughly the same as last year's enacted level. This program will continue its successful path in 2006 of working with states to conserve the most imperiled components of biological communities and improve the health of watersheds and landscapes. The proposed funding level would provide \$45.7 million to support Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition; \$14.2 million for Recovery Land Acquisition grants; \$10.0 million for traditional grants to states; and \$7.6 million for HCP planning assistance to states.

We request \$74.0 million, including \$6.3 million for tribes, for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants. This is a \$5.0 million increase over 2005 and will focus on new projects that implement completed comprehensive wildlife conservation strategies that aim to keep additional species from being listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The budget requests \$49.9 million for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, an increase of \$12.5 million over 2005. This increase, combined with other dedicated funds will be matched by at least \$230.0 million and will lead to at least an additional 2.5 million acres of migratory bird habitat being protected or restored in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Our Cooperative Conservation programs also include our highly successful Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, our Coastal Program, the National Wildlife Refuge System challenge cost-share grants, and the Joint Ventures program. We request \$92.0 million for these programs, which is an \$18.2 million increase over 2005, and will be discussed under operations.

### Operations – Resource Management

For our main operations account, we request a total of \$985.6 million, a net increase of \$22.6 million over 2005.

Included within this total is a request for \$19.2 million to pay for important fixed costs, such as the pay raise for federal employees.

The budget highlights our core mission areas and will increase our accomplishment in core areas. The budget

proposes reductions in one-time projects and lower priority programs. The budget also includes savings from a re-focusing of the Environmental Contaminants program and an overall reduction of \$1.3 million tied to expected savings from improved vehicle fleet management. These savings have been redirected towards high priority programs in the request.

The 2006 request also highlights our use of budget and performance integration. More than half of the Service (as measured by full-time employees) has undergone Program Assessment Rating Tool evaluations, and the Service is using the results to formulate budgets and strategic plans. These programs include the National Fish Hatchery System, Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, National Wildlife Refuge System (including Land Acquisition), the Migratory Bird program, and a National Fish Hatchery System re-evaluation. The latter two programs underwent evaluation as part of the FY 2006 budget process.

#### Science Excellence Initiative

To support the Service's core mission, the Service requests \$2.0 million for the Science Excellence Initiative, which will provide managers better access to the best available science and better ability to apply that science toward adaptive management. This initiative is at the forefront of a renewed commitment to scientific excellence that will support the Secretary's Four C's vision. This will be accomplished by expanding partnerships, by applying scientific information to develop explicit population and habitat goals to better guide conservation efforts, and by developing state-of-the-art techniques.

Closely tied to the Science Excellence Initiative is a request of \$771,000 for the National Conservation Training Center for mission related training in three critical areas: science, partnerships, and leadership to build employee competencies.

#### Endangered Species

The Service requests a total of \$140.1 million, \$3.1 million below the enacted level. The majority of the decrease results from eliminating unrequested projects, which allows for increases in priority program areas. Within the total operations request, the budget includes program increases of \$1.9 million for the listing program to reduce delays in critical habitat designations; \$1.3 million for the general priorities in the consultation program to support energy development and other priorities; and \$2.0 million for the general priorities for the recovery program and an additional \$1.0 million for a special tamarisk control effort tied to recovery plans.

#### Habitat Conservation

To accelerate the accomplishments of the highly effective Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, the Service requests \$52.2 million, a net increase of \$4.7 million. However, by eliminating un-requested projects, the budget actually includes a requested increase of \$12.5 million for priority projects and an additional \$5.3 million for the Klamath watershed. At the request level, the Service will work with 2,400 private landowners under the Secretary's Cooperative Conservation Initiative to restore 45,868 acres of wetlands and 313,817 acres of native grasslands and woodlands.

This year we propose an innovative redesign of the Environmental Contaminants program. We will refocus the program to implement Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration program (NRDAR) projects with restoration funds recovered through natural resource damage assessment cases. The 2006 Budget includes this tactical shift, so that our request for Contaminants is \$2.4 million less than 2005, but this decrease will be offset by seeking additional funds for restoration activities from the Restoration Fund.

For the Coastal Program, which is part of the Secretary's Cooperative Conservation Initiative, we request \$14.9 million, an increase of \$3.2 million over 2005. Since 1994, the Coastal program restored over 118,000 acres of coastal wetlands and uplands, and assisted in the permanent protection of over 1 million acres of coastal habitat. The requested increase will support high priority efforts in Alaska, the Great Lakes and the tidal marshes in the southeast.

#### National Wildlife Refuge System

We request \$393.9 million for the National Wildlife Refuge System, an increase of \$12.9 million over 2005 enacted levels. In line with the Secretary's Cooperative Conservation Initiative, we request an increase of \$7.7 million for on-the-ground, challenge cost share partnership projects, for total funding of \$12.0 million. As in 2005, invasive species continue to be a growing concern for the Service, and we request \$7.5 million to combat invasive species. We also request an additional \$2.1 million for Refuge Law Enforcement for implementing the Department's Incident Management, Analysis, and Reporting System, and for hiring additional full time enforcement and zone officers to better provide protection to the Refuge System.

The President's budget also proposes to restructure the Refuge System budget. Restructuring the Refuge System budget will provide for better integration of budgets with performance and will give greater transparency to programs and activities. This greater clarity results from expanding the Refuge System's budget from two sub-activities to five sub-activities.

## Law Enforcement

To support the highest priority work in the Law Enforcement program, we request \$57.6 million, an increase of \$2.0 million over 2005. The request will greatly enhance our ability to complete computer forensics investigations tied to wildlife crimes and will also increase operational capabilities. Of note, the request includes operational support for the Ports of Entry in Louisville, Kentucky and Memphis, Tennessee.

## Migratory Bird Management

We request \$41.6 million for Migratory Bird Management, an increase of \$6.2 million. This includes a priority operations increase of \$3.5 million for conservation and monitoring for timely annual bird survey completion. Annual surveys count over 90 million ducks of over 15 species and 4 to 6 million geese and swans.

This past year the Administration reviewed the migratory bird program using the Program Assessment Rating Tool. The evaluation of the Migratory Bird program indicated that the program has a clear mission and accomplished valuable planning with partners, yet lacks specific long-term outcome goals and annual performance goals. The evaluation process helped develop these goals. In addition, the program agreed to carry out independent evaluations, develop baselines for new performance measures, and align employee performance plans with program performance goals to ensure greater accountability toward its mission.

After consultation with OMB and Department of the Interior, the program adopted the long-term performance measure of attaining healthy and sustainable population levels for 564 of 912 migratory bird populations by 2007, an increase of 5 healthy populations over what is presently the case.

The program further stipulated that by 2012, the status of another 5 birds will be similarly improved (status is reviewed every five years). The adoption of this measure clarifies that the program is expected to implement focused management actions that produce desired changes in the status of targeted bird populations.

Given the wide range of factors that affect bird populations, many of which are outside the program's scope and control, we have determined that the most critical initial action necessary to attain the PART goal is to identify the initial five target focal species, and then to develop detailed management plans that describe, prioritize, and estimate budget requirements for the steps that need to be taken to achieve population status objectives. Our supporting budget request was described in the Service budget justifications.

With the success of the Joint Ventures, we request funds to implement six new Joint Ventures to better address migratory bird needs and to create more partnerships. These proposed new Joint Ventures include Central Hardwoods, Northern Great Plains, Rio Grande, Appalachian, East Gulf Coastal Plain, and Central Texas/Oklahoma.

Since 1986, Joint Venture partners expended approximately \$2.3 billion on habitat conservation projects, leveraging funds from multiple private, State and federal sources to protect, restore, or enhance 8.7 million acres of U.S. wetlands, grasslands, forests, and riparian habitat, more than one-half of the 17 million acres of U.S. habitat objectives under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

## Fisheries

For the National Fish Hatchery System we request \$58.0 million, a net increase of \$1.2 million above the 2005 enacted level. This includes an operations increase of \$3.2 million and a maintenance increase of \$458,000, offset by the elimination of an un-requested project. The increase will fund the implementation of 34 high-priority projects, accounting for 63 priority tasks.

The PART re-evaluation of the National Fish Hatchery System stated that the program is actively addressing previously identified deficiencies. The Hatchery System integrated the mission statement and goals developed during this second-round review through its strategic planning activities that include a new outcome goal for restoring threatened and endangered populations, and by incorporating specific targets into its managers' performance plans. In addition, the Hatchery System identified all mitigation-related costs, began pursuing full cost recovery, and started working closely with

the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council to implement objective, independent evaluations. The Council finalized the evaluation protocols, and the first independent evaluation is scheduled for early 2005. These accomplishments helped the Hatchery System improve its score by 30 percent over the initial rating.

We request \$49.7 million for the Fish and Wildlife Management program, a net decrease of \$8.7 million. While the request will allow the program to meet its performance goals and operate successfully, the reductions will result in fewer stream miles restored and reduced participation in partnerships. Targeted increases to existing programs include Alaska subsistence fishing, sea lamprey administration, Pacific Northwest salmon and Great Lakes Consent Decree.

#### International Conservation

A programmatic increase of \$571,000 will support international trade. We request \$8.3 million for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund. Within this fund, we propose to include \$4.0 million for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. Included in this request are \$1.0 million each for African and Asian Elephant Conservation, \$1.1 million for Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation, \$900,000 for Great Ape Conservation, and \$300,000 for Marine Sea Turtle Conservation.

#### Conclusion

Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee. We appreciate the Committee's past support, and look forward to working with the Subcommittee.