

Testimony of the Izaak Walton League of America Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

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The Izaak Walton League of America appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning appropriations for fiscal year (FY) 2011 for various agencies and programs under the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee. The League is a national, nonprofit organization founded in 1922. We have nearly 38,000 members and more than 260 local chapters nationwide. Our members are committed to advancing common sense policies that safeguard wildlife and habitat, support community-based conservation, and address pressing environmental issues. The following pertains to programs administered by the Departments of Agriculture and Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Environmental Protection Agency.

Departments of Agriculture and Interior, Land and Water Conservation Fund

The League is very encouraged by the president's proposal to increase funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to approximately \$620 million in FY 2011 with the goal of fully funding LWCF at \$900 million by 2014. The League strongly supports full funding and its members reaffirmed this commitment in 2008 by adopting a resolution during our National Convention endorsing this goal. It is important to begin to reinvest in strategic land acquisition to protect critical habitat, provide recreational access, and to buffer against the likely impacts of climate change.

Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System

The League joins other members of the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE), a diverse coalition of 22 wildlife, sporting, conservation, and scientific organizations representing over 14 million members and supporters, in requesting \$578 million in FY 2011 for operations and maintenance of the National Wildlife Refuge System. We urge the Subcommittee to reject the administration's proposal to cut the operations and maintenance budget by more than \$3 million compared to the FY 2010 appropriation.

We greatly appreciate the Subcommittee's leadership in boosting Refuge System funding to approximately \$503 million in the FY 2010. We are concerned that the president's proposal would stall momentum the Subcommittee has created over the past three years. Moreover, if a funding freeze or cuts are continued over multiple fiscal years, this could force the Fish and Wildlife Service to curtail visitor services, eliminate staff, and further delay essential maintenance projects.

It is important to note that the cut proposed by the administration is greater than \$3.3 million because the Department is proposing that agencies absorb fixed costs. The Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that the Refuge System requires at least \$15 million annually to keep pace with inflation, including rising fuel, rental, and utility costs and cost-of-living adjustments for staff.

Therefore, the effective budget cut would exceed \$18 million. The Refuge System has a \$2.7 billion maintenance backlog today, in part, because the Service has been forced to continuously defer essential maintenance when base funding fell short of basic operational needs. The administration's proposal would only exacerbate this problem.

Furthermore, the administration proposes specific cuts within the operations and maintenance budget that we oppose and consider counterproductive. For example, it recommends cutting the visitor services account by nearly \$4 million. Last year, 42 million Americans visited wildlife refuges across the country to hunt and fish, observe wildlife, learn from Service professionals, or simply take a walk in the woods. And these visitors have a direct, positive impact on local economies. The Service estimates that refuge visitors generate \$1.7 billion in sales and support 27,000 private-sector jobs. If visitor services decline due to budget cuts and visitation is negatively impacted, our shared goal of reviving the economy and creating jobs could be undermined.

In addition, the administration proposes to cut the law enforcement budget. We believe this fails to reflect an urgent need across wildlife refuges. The analysis of Refuge System performance issued in 2008 by Management Systems International (MSI) concluded that "[A]t many refuges, law enforcement coverage is insufficient to ensure protection of resources and the safety of visitors and refuge staff." This analysis recommended that the Service double the number of refuge law enforcement staff from 200 to "at least 400 full-time officers." In FY 2010, the System has approximately 210 full-time law enforcement personnel. Moreover, the analysis tied the law enforcement problem directly to funding stating "[I]t is highly unlikely that any meaningful progress towards improving the Refuge System's law enforcement capability (will occur) under current and expected budget allocation levels." Increasing funding for operations – rather than cutting it – will allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to begin to boost law enforcement capability, which is important to protecting visitors, fish, wildlife, and habitat.

Fish and Wildlife Service, State Wildlife Grants

As a member of the Teaming with Wildlife National Steering Committee, the League urges the Subcommittee to provide \$100 million for the State Wildlife Grants Program in FY 2011.

The State Wildlife Grants Program supports proactive conservation projects aimed at preventing wildlife from becoming endangered. Experience shows that efforts to restore imperiled wildlife can be particularly contentious and costly when action is taken only after species are formally listed as threatened or endangered pursuant to the Endangered Species Act. State Wildlife Grants support state and community-based efforts to safeguard habitat and wildlife before either reaches the tipping point. This program also provides states with an important source of federal funds to address non-game species. Finally, the federal investment leverages significant funding from private, state, and local sources.

Environmental Protection Agency, Clean Water State Revolving Fund

The League supports the request for \$2 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF). Nationwide, broken sewer pipes and overflows spill more than one trillion gallons of untreated

sewage into our waterways every year costing more than \$50 billion for cleanup. These overflows pose serious risks to fish, wildlife, and human health. The SRF is a highly successful program that provides the funds needed to reduce sewage contamination and improve water quality. However, the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water and Drinking Water Infrastructure Gap Analysis found a \$535 billion gap between current spending and projected needs for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure over the next 20 years. Investing \$2 billion in the Clean Water SRF is essential to improving water quality, protecting public health, and supporting jobs across the country.

Environmental Protection Agency, Great Lakes Restoration

The League is also very encouraged by the president's on-going commitment to Great Lakes restoration. We support providing at least \$300 million as requested to build on the funding Congress provided in FY 2010 and to support implementation of the recently released Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan. The Great Lakes provide drinking water to 35 million people and support jobs and recreational opportunities for millions more. However, the health of the Great Lakes is seriously threatened by untreated sewage, toxic pollution, invasive species, and other problems. The eight states that border the Lakes and many non-governmental organizations have invested significant resources to safeguard these national treasures. Significant federal investment is also needed or the problems will only get worse and cost even more to fix. Cleaning up the Great Lakes will provide many benefits, including economic development in the region.

The League urges the Subcommittee to provide at least \$300 million to advance this critical initiative, especially when numerous studies estimate that \$5 billion is required to restore the Great Lakes ecosystem. In addition, we believe it will be important to appropriate \$475 million for Great Lakes restoration in FY 2012 and beyond. In the Action Plan, the administration states its intention to request this amount in the future and the recently introduced Great Lakes Ecosystem Protection Act (HR 4755 / S 3073) authorizes this amount between FY 2011 and 2016.

Environmental Protection Agency, Non-point Source Management Program (Clean Water Act Section 319)

The League urges the Subcommittee to appropriate at least \$200 million for Section 319, the Non-point Source Management Program, as requested by the president. This program provides grants to states, territories and tribes for non-point source pollution reduction activities. EPA and many states report that non-point source pollution is the leading cause of water quality problems, including harmful effects on drinking water supplies, recreation, fisheries and wildlife. The Non-point Source Management Program provides critical funding for restoration. For example, 172 water bodies in 44 states have been restored with Section 319 funding. Continued investment in this program will help restore our waterways for people and wildlife.

Environmental Protection Agency, Chesapeake Bay Program

The League strongly supports the administration's request for \$63 million in FY 2011 for the Chesapeake Bay Program.

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary on the Atlantic coast and one of the largest in the world. EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office (CBPO) is the primary facilitator of restoration activities by partners throughout the watershed. Although the Chesapeake Bay Program has made significant progress toward pollution reduction, habitat restoration, fisheries management, and watershed protection goals, much more work is needed to restore the Bay. For example, habitat restoration efforts are collectively less than half way to Program goals and there is concern about the overall quality of habitat that remains.

Although the request is positive, the League believes it is important for the administration and the Subcommittee to prepare to make substantial additional investments in Bay restoration. According to the Chesapeake Bay Commission's report *The Cost of a Clean Bay* (2003), \$19 billion is needed to meet the restoration goals outlined in the *Chesapeake 2000* agreement. Additional investment will be necessary to fulfill new goals being developed following the president's 2009 Chesapeake Bay executive order. The executive order establishes the framework for a comprehensive federal effort, in partnership with states, local governments, and many others, to tackle persistent problems that negatively impact water quality, habitat, recreation, and important sectors of the regional economy. The EPA is completing a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for the Bay that will be a key tool in improving water quality. At the same time, it must be coupled with proactive technical assistance and funding to assist local governments, farmers, and others with compliance. Achieving the president's goals, successfully implementing new pollution reduction measures, and restoring habitat, streams, and wetlands will depend, in part, on significant new investment in future fiscal years.

The League appreciates the opportunity to testify about these important issues.