

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

Submitted by Scott Kovarovics, Conservation Director

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The Izaak Walton League of America appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony for the record concerning appropriations for fiscal year (FY) 2014 for various agencies and programs under the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee. The League is a national, nonprofit organization with more than 41,000 members and 250 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, U.S. Geological Survey, and Environmental Protection Agency.

Keep FY 2014 Bill Free of Extraneous Policy Provisions

The League strongly urges the Subcommittee not to include or accept any provision in its FY 2014 bill barring the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from finalizing and implementing Clean Water Act guidance or proceeding with the formal rulemaking process to revise its clean water regulations. Our organization and other hunting, angling and conservation groups across the country actively opposed similar provisions in previous bills.

Since proposing draft guidance in April 2011, EPA has conducted a nearly unprecedented public engagement process for agency guidance. During this process, EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers held a 90-day public comment period. The agencies received more than 230,000 comments and have publicly reported that 90 percent of individual comments supported the proposal. In mid-February 2012, the Corps and EPA submitted revised guidance to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for another round of inter-agency review. This process also allows nongovernmental organizations to meet with OMB to discuss this policy.

Guidance proposed by EPA and the Corps is based on sound science and clearly complies with the Supreme Court decisions in *SWANCC* and *Rapanos*. Allowing EPA to proceed with guidance will partially restore protections for streams flowing to public drinking water supplies for 117 million Americans. It will also begin – but only begin – to restore protections for some wetlands. Healthy wetlands provide essential habitat for waterfowl, fish, and other wildlife, offer cost-effective flood protection, and improve water quality. They also support hunting, angling, and wildlife watching, which together inject \$145 billion annually into our economy. Finalizing the guidance will also provide more clarity and certainty about Clean Water Act implementation to landowners, developers, agency personnel, and state and local governments.

Departments of Agriculture and Interior, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The League supports the administration's request for a total of \$600 million (\$200 million in permanent funding and \$400 million in discretionary funding) for the LWCF in FY 2014. It is important to begin to reinvest in strategic land acquisition to protect critical habitat, secure valuable in-holdings, and expand recreational access to existing federal public lands.

Dramatically reducing funding for LWCF will not provide meaningful savings to taxpayers because it is capitalized with revenue from off-shore oil and gas drilling. As importantly, diverting resources from LWCF to offset other expenditures from the general treasury directly undermines the fundamental premise on which LWCF is based. That common sense premise is a portion of the revenue generated by natural resource extraction should be invested in conserving other natural resources at the national, regional, and state levels.

Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System Operations and Maintenance

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 approximately 15 million of members and supporters, in supporting the \$499 million requested for operations and maintenance of the National Wildlife Refuge system.

The League and CARE groups appreciate the importance of fiscal discipline and making strategic spending decisions. CARE annually develops an estimate of the operations and maintenance budget that is necessary to effectively provide visitor services and law enforcement and conserve and manage fish, wildlife, and habitat across the refuge system. CARE estimates operations and maintenance needs total at least \$900 million annually. Although our long-term goal is to make steady progress toward a budget which more accurately reflects demands on the ground, the FY 2014 request balances fiscal responsibility with pressing resource conservation, visitor services, and law enforcement needs.

Fish and Wildlife Service, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants

As a member of the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition, the League urges the Subcommittee to provide at least \$61 million in FY 2014 for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants. This amount equals the administration's request and the appropriation for fiscal year 2012. State Wildlife Grants support 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 augment state and community-based efforts to safeguard habitat and wildlife before either reaches the tipping point. The federal investment leverages significant additional funding from private, state, and local sources.

U.S. Geological Survey, Asian Carp Research and Control

Asian carp pose a serious and potentially devastating threat to the long-term health of the Great Lakes. Asian carp have been steadily migrating north along the Mississippi River and could reach the Great Lakes through a system of canals that artificially connect the Mississippi River and Great Lakes basins. Experts warn invasive carp could devastate the \$7 billion commercial and recreational fishery in the Great Lakes. The League supports the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) request for a \$2 million increase to combat Asian carp in the Great Lakes and an additional \$1 million to address the threat in the Upper Mississippi River region. In the Upper Mississippi region, the research would focus on improving methods to detect Asian carp populations at low levels and identifying habitats most vulnerable to colonization. In the Great Lakes, research would be directed toward developing methods for oral delivery of fish toxicants,

identifying and developing chemical attractants to aid in targeted removal of carp, and testing seismic technology as a means of restricting the passage of carp through locks and other navigation infrastructure.

The League believes one of the most effective ways to safeguard the Great Lakes from aquatic invasive species is to restore the natural hydrologic separation between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. In the mean time, we support this request, which represents a prudent near-term investment in invasive carp control.

U.S. Geological Survey / Environmental Protection Agency, Hydraulic Fracturing Research and Analysis

The League supports requests by the USGS and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for funding to continue and augment research concerning the potential effects of high-volume hydraulic fracturing on water and air quality, surface and groundwater resources, habitat, and fish and wildlife. The League supports responsible development of domestic energy resources, including natural gas, as well as greater emphasis on renewable sources and energy efficiency in order to improve energy independence and security. At the same time, the accelerated use of hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus region, in particular, continues to outpace our knowledge about potential negative impacts on a wide range of natural resources.

The proposed budget would augment research across a range of issues. For example, the USGS requests approximately \$18.6 million for fracturing-related research. With this funding, USGS would prioritize research on water quality and supply, air quality, characterizing gas resources and the related geologic formations, movement of methane gas during the drilling process, and the impacts of fracturing on landscapes, habitat, and other natural resources. EPA is requesting funding to support an on-going EPA study assessing the impacts of hydraulic fracturing on water resources and other applied research in cooperation with USGS and the Department of Energy.

Environmental Protection Agency, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The League supports providing \$300 million as requested for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. 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 habitat loss. The eight states that border the Lakes and many non-governmental organizations have invested significant resources to safeguard these national treasures. Sustained federal investment at a significant level 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. According to the Brookings Institution, Great Lakes restoration efforts produce \$2 in economic return for every \$1 invested. Restoration projects create jobs for engineers, landscape architects, and construction workers and improve water quality, support outdoor recreation, and reestablish healthy fish and wildlife habitat. These results lay the foundation for long-term prosperity in the region.

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

The League is concerned that Congress and EPA have reduced funding for Section 319, the Non-point Source Management Program. These reductions are counterproductive as 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. Based on the pressing nature of the problem, it makes sense to invest resources that help states and local governments more aggressively tackle non-point source pollution. The League urges the Subcommittee to provide at least the amount requested by EPA for Section 319.

Environmental Protection Agency, Chesapeake Bay Program

The League supports the request for approximately \$72.9 million in FY 2014 for the Chesapeake Bay Program. The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States and one of the largest in the world. More than 16 million people live within the Bay watershed. The Bay is a critical economic, environmental, and recreational resource for these residents and the nation as a whole. However, the productivity and health of this nationally significant resource remain seriously impaired by nutrient pollution from multiple sources throughout the watershed.

The EPA and states have launched a significant and rigorous effort to cut pollution and improve water quality. Few would argue that implementing the total maximum daily load (TMDL) will not be challenging or not require significant investment to reduce point and non-point source pollution. However, EPA is requesting additional funds, in part, to support states, local governments, and other partners as they begin implementing the TMDL. The League believes it is essential to provide technical and financial assistance to achieve results on-the-ground and lay the foundation for sustained pollution reductions over the long-term.

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