

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable Donna Christensen**  
**Ranking Member**  
**Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs**  
**Wednesday, March 2, 2011**  
**Oversight Hearing on the President's Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Request for the United**  
**States Fish and Wildlife Service and Office of Insular Affairs**

Thank you Mr. Chairman. The Administration has requested \$1.7 billion for the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), an increase of \$48 million from the enacted level for Fiscal Year 2010. This request reflects the difficult fiscal situation in which our country finds itself, yet at the same time, by fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the budget request also reflects the importance of legacy investments in our nation's fish, wildlife, and habitats for the benefit of the American people.

The Administration's budget request stands in sharp contrast to the majority's continuing resolution, which would indiscriminately cut almost \$400 million, or 25%, from the Service's discretionary budget. For example, the majority's cuts would eliminate \$90 million in funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. This Program provides money to States and Tribes to prevent future endangered species listings by implementing voluntary conservation actions to stabilize declining fish and wildlife populations. In my district, these grants provide almost \$200,000 to implement our Wildlife Action Plan, providing jobs and conserving wildlife in the U.S. Virgin Islands. I commend the Administration's efforts to increase its request for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Programs and for making other strategic choices to protect American jobs, and to preserve sustainable industries including hunting, fishing, and wildlife tourism.

Nevertheless, I continue to remain concerned with the long-term operations and maintenance budget backlog facing the National Wildlife Refuge System and the cuts to the Multinational Species Conservation Programs. I recognize that we face a difficult funding climate for several years ahead, yet we will have to strike the right balance in continuing to support the programs that we care about and those that provide the greatest conservation benefits.

[OIA]

I look forward to hearing from our witness today and exploring these issues more deeply.