

**Opening Statement
Ranking Member Markey
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing
September 9, 2011**

It is important to be very clear, for the record – there is broad agreement that hunting, fishing, trapping and other wildlife-dependant activities have always taken place on our federal lands and should continue to take place on our federal lands.

Democrats and Republicans agree on that. The Obama Administration and the NRA agree on that. The Safari Club and the Wilderness Society agree on that.

So the most important question we need to ask at this hearing is – what is the problem we are trying to solve? At a time when this nation is facing very real and very serious challenges, is this a good use of our time?

The numbers of visitors to public lands who engage in hunting, fishing and other wildlife-dependant activities remain constant and they remain quite high – approximately 13 million people a year between 2005 and 2009 on our National Forests alone.

The alleged attack on hunting simply does not exist, and any claim that hunters or anglers are being turned away from public lands in droves is plainly false.

Not only is the need to defend hunting on public lands *not* an important issue for our *nation*, it does not even make the list of the most serious problems facing our national parks or public lands.

So if there is broad agreement on this issue, and if the threat to hunting is not real – why are we considering two bills that would fundamentally rewrite current law?

The answer is that the temptation to legislate based on anecdotes and rumors is powerful. The temptation to rewrite existing laws based on one story from here or one

allegation from there is difficult to resist. Too often, a good anecdote can seem more convincing than real information.

And the difficult lesson to be learned – after long experience – is that legislation based on anecdotes – rather than facts – can have disastrous, unintended consequences.

In this case, bills that are supposed to be pro-hunting and fishing could create severe funding shortages for the management of those activities and could destroy efforts to protect and expand the habitat that is so crucial to wildlife populations.

Hunting and fishing have flourished on federal lands without Congressional intervention. These activities are not under attack but could suffer serious harm if Congress decides to begin trying to micro-manage these pursuits without any evidence that intervention is warranted.

The legislation before us today is unnecessary and should be shelved in favor of proposals to deal with the many far more serious issues facing our public lands.