

**INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES  
CONCERNING FISCAL YEAR 2021 APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE  
UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
FEBRUARY 6, 2020**

**SUBMITTED BY BARBARA VOLKLE, PRESIDENT OF FRIENDS OF THE MIGRATORY BIRD/DUCK  
STAMP**

Chairwoman McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce, and Members of the Subcommittee:

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp. We are requesting \$1 million for the Duck Stamp Office, Migratory Bird Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We also request \$586 million in funding for the operations and maintenance of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS).

The Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp was formed in 2011 to promote, preserve, foster the sales of the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp and support the work of the Duck Stamp Office. We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on the FY 2021 Interior Appropriations bill.

Along with the National Wildlife Refuge Association and other National Wildlife Refuge Friends groups, we request \$586 million in funding for the operations and maintenance of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). This request of \$586 million is an increase of \$84 million over FY 2020 appropriations. The NWRS is the only system in the world that is managed for fish, wildlife and the people that enjoy them. In many cases the NWRS is the only remaining habitat for many wildlife species. Many refuges provide critical habitat for nesting, resting and feeding for numerous migratory birds as they move through the North American continent and beyond.

The NWRS has been underfunded since its humble beginning 117 years ago. It is nothing less than amazing that the NWRS has grown to over 835 million acres of land and water with a visitation of 59.7 million. Additional funding will provide for better wildlife management, public access and safety for each visitor. In many cases endangered and threatened species find a home within the NWRS as their habitat shrinks.

Our greatest focus is in protecting important landscapes before they disappear. One of the most important tools for protecting landscapes for migrating birds and other wetland dependent species is the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp known affectionately as the Duck Stamp. Duck Stamp receipts are used to purchase additional lands located within and adjacent to National Wildlife Refuges established for the management of migratory birds. Ninety-eight percent of these Duck Stamp dollars go directly for the purchase of these important lands and waters. This stamp is required by all waterfowl hunters as their Federal license to hunt waterfowl. Hunters have led the way in purchasing Duck Stamps. The number of migratory bird hunters is in a long-term decline. In order to continue to provide permanent protection for additional waterfowl and wetland dependent species other citizens must be made aware of the benefit of purchasing an annual Duck Stamp. This responsibility for increasing annual sales of Duck Stamps for both the traditional hunter and the general wildlife observer falls to a single

person within the US Fish and Wildlife Service. This person must arrange for the annual Duck Stamp contest and communicate with state and local governments and organizations to make Duck Stamps available for purchase.

In addition to supporting increased funding for operation and maintenance we request \$1 million for the Duck Stamp Office, an increase of \$444 thousand over FY 2020 appropriations. This funding level is essential to generate greater support for the sales of Duck Stamps to provide for purchases of lands and waters from willing sellers. For the non-consumptive user this Duck Stamp program is all voluntary and as such is not a further demand upon the general public.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact Barbara Volkle, President, the Friends of Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp.