

March 18, 2013

Chairman Benjamin Cardin
Water and Wildlife Subcommittee
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6175

Ranking Member John Boozman
Water and Wildlife Subcommittee
Committee on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6175

Dear Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Boozman:

Each spring, more than four billion birds of over 500 different species make their spectacular migration from their winter habitats in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean to their breeding grounds throughout North America. These birds face multiple threats, and in particular, the continuing loss of habitat on their wintering grounds. As a result, many of these bird species are experiencing significant population declines making it more important than ever now to support funding and legislation reauthorizing the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

The **North American Wetlands Conservation Act** (NAWCA) was passed in 1989 by President George H.W. Bush, and has had bipartisan support in Congress for the 24 years since. This competitive grant program awards anywhere from several thousand dollars to one million dollars for wetland restoration projects, and the 4,500 partners include landowners, non-profits, Boy Scouts, and businesses of all sizes. All grants are required to attract at least a 1:1 match, but because of its popularity, the average match over the life of the program is over 3:1, with an impact on over 26.5 million acres across the continent.

The NAWCA program is particularly important to hunters and anglers, who use these lands for outdoor recreation and which support wildlife populations. Hunters and anglers in the United States spent over \$90 billion in 2011 pursuing their passions. That's \$246 million per day continuing an outdoor tradition that has been passed down through generations of Americans since the founding of our country. Overall, hunting and fishing support more than 1.6 million jobs and generate more than \$25 billion a year in federal, state, and local taxes. For generations, hunters and anglers have placed high priority on taking care of the land and water so that in return they can support abundant fish and wildlife populations.

Low NAWCA funding levels equates to reduced funding for critical restoration work. For every federal dollar cut, the program will lose an additional \$3 million in private partner match, resulting in \$4 million in total cuts. Should the sequestration cuts be implemented, \$3 million in federal funding cuts will result in an additional loss of \$9 million in private partner match.

Since 2002, the **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act** (NMBCA) has functioned as a matching grant program to fund projects that conserve neotropical migratory birds--those that breed in or migrate through the United States and Canada and spend the non-breeding season in Latin America and the Caribbean. Migratory birds make a significant contribution to the US economy. Recreation associated with migratory birds is big business in this country. The [*2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*](#), conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that out of nearly 47 million birdwatchers in the United States, 41.3 million of those are around-the-home observers who spend over \$4 billion on bird feed and \$969 million on nest boxes, bird houses, bird feeders, and bird baths annually.

Funding for NMBCA includes partnership programs to conserve birds in Latin America and the Caribbean, where over 4 billion birds representing over 380 species spend their winters, including some

of the most endangered birds in North America. Conservation of these migratory birds in Latin America and the Caribbean is critical to protect our investments and to ensure the birds return to the US. All NMBCA grant requests must be matched with non-federal funds at least 3 to 1.

The program has already been cut by nearly 25% since Fiscal Year 2010. With these cuts, the program has reduced the number of projects. Additional reductions would be devastating to this modest program, currently funded at \$3.786M.

Migratory birds are unique in that they migrate long distances and cross political boundaries. Many species of birds that we see in our back yards are significantly affected by the habitat conditions in their wintering grounds which are located outside of the U.S. Without the support NMBCA grants provide for conservation actions on these wintering grounds, there is an increased likelihood more migratory bird species will become endangered or threatened resulting in the need for even more resources to be allocated. The Golden-winged warbler, a species which the U.S. has invested significant funding into conserving, is an example of a targeted species that the NMBCA focuses on to protect the investment we make at home.

NMBCA has a proven track record of success over more than a decade. Since its inception, the program has received more than \$43 million to positively affect 3 million acres and partners have leveraged federal funds with more than \$166 million in non-federal contributions – a more than four-to-one match ratio.

We the undersigned organizations representing _____ millions of Americans urge the Committee to move both the NAWCA and the NMBCA reauthorization bills through the Committee process expeditiously.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to working together with you on this endeavor.

Sincerely,