AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

H.R. 4722, LAKE ERIE WESTERN BASIN INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ESTABLISHMENT ACT

LEGISLATIVE HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

July 18, 2002

Serial No. 107-142

Printed for the use of the Committee on Resources

Available via the World Wide Web: http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/house
or
Committee address: http://resourcescommittee.house.gov

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

80-803 PS WASHINGTON : 2002

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; DC area (202) 512–1800
Fax: (202) 512–2250 Mail: Stop SSOP, Washington, DC 20402–0001

COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

JAMES V. HANSEN, Utah, *Chairman*
NICK J. RAHALL II, West Virginia, *Ranking Democrat Member*

Don Young, Alaska,
Vice Chairman
W.J. "Billy" Tauzin, Louisiana
Jim Saxton, New Jersey
Elton Gallegly, California
John J. Duncan, Jr., Tennessee
Joel Hefley, Colorado
Wayne T. Gilchrest, Maryland
Ken Calvert, California
Scott McInnis, Colorado
Richard W. Pombo, California
Barbara Cubin, Wyoming
George Radanovich, California
Walter B. Jones, Jr., North Carolina
Mac Thornberry, Texas
Chris Cannon, Utah
John E. Peterson, Pennsylvania
Bob Schaffer, Colorado
Jim Gibbons, Nevada
Mark E. Souder, Indiana
Greg Walden, Oregon
Michael K. Simpson, Idaho
Thomas G. Tancredo, Colorado
J.D. Hayworth, Arizona
C.L. "Butch" Otter, Idaho
Tom Osborne, Nebraska
Jeff Flake, Arizona
Dennis R. Rehberg, Montana

George Miller, California
Edward J. Markey, Massachusetts
Dale E. Kildee, Michigan
Peter A. DeFazio, Oregon
Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, American Samoa
Neil Abercrombie, Hawaii
Solomon P. Ortiz, Texas
Frank Pallone, Jr., New Jersey
Calvin M. Dooley, California
Robert A. Underwood, Guam
Adam Smith, Washington
Donna M. Christensen, Virgin Islands
Ron Kind, Wisconsin
Jay Inslee, Washington
Grace F. Napolitano, California
Tom Udall, New Mexico
Mark Udall, Colorado
Rush D. Holt, New Jersey
Anibal Acevedo-Vila, Puerto Rico
Hilda L. Solis, California
Brad Carson, Oklahoma
Betty McCollum, Minnesota
Tim Holden, Pennsylvania

Tim Stewart, *Chief of Staff*
Lisa Pittman, *Chief Counsel/Deputy Chief of Staff*
Steven T. Petersen, *Deputy Chief Counsel*
Michael S. Twinchek, *Chief Clerk*
James H. Zoia, *Democrat Staff Director*
Jeffrey P. Petrich, *Democrat Chief Counsel*

SUBCOMMITTE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS

WAYNE T. GILCHREST, Maryland, *Chairman*
ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD, Guam, *Ranking Democrat Member*

Don Young, Alaska
W.J. "Billy" Tauzin, Louisiana
Jim Saxton, New Jersey,
Vice Chairman
Richard W. Pombo, California
Walter B. Jones, Jr., North Carolina

Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, American Samoa
Neil Abercrombie, Hawaii
Solomon P. Ortiz, Texas
Frank Pallone, Jr., New Jersey

C O N T E N T S

	Page
Hearing held on July 18, 2002	1
Statement of Members:	
Dingell, Hon. John D., a Representative in Congress from the State of Michigan	7
Prepared statement of	9
Gilchrest, Hon. Wayne T., a Representative in Congress from the State of Maryland	1
Prepared statement of	1
Kaptur, Hon. Marcy, a Representative in Congress from the State of Ohio	3
Prepared statement of	5
Underwood, Hon. Robert A., a Delegate in Congress from Guam, Prepared statement of	2
Statement of Witnesses:	
Chase, Edith, President, Ohio Coastal Resource Management Project	27
Prepared statement of	27
Huntley, Melinda, Executive Director, Lake Erie Coastal Ohio, Inc.	22
Prepared statement of	24
Mastroianni, Theodore, Special Assistant to Mayor Jack Ford, Toledo, Ohio	19
Prepared statement of	21
Speck, Samuel W., Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources	15
Prepared statement of	17
Stieglitz, Barry W., Deputy Chief, Division of Conservation Planning and Policy, National Wildlife Refuge System, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior	11
Prepared statement of	14
Additional materials supplied:	
Front, Alan, Senior Vice President, Trust for Public Land, Statement submitted for the record	31

LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON H.R. 4722, LAKE ERIE WESTERN BASIN INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ESTABLISHMENT ACT

Thursday, July 18, 2002
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans
Committee on Resources
Washington, DC

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:08 a.m., in room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Wayne T. Gilchrest [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Mr. GILCHREST. Marcy and John, do you want to come up to the table?

STATEMENT OF THE HON. WAYNE T. GILCHREST, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MARYLAND

Mr. GILCHREST. We are happy to have you here this morning, and we look forward to your testimony on the refuge proposal. We have looked at some of the information and geological surveys, and we know that it is an area that is home to just a myriad of wildlife habitat for migrating birds and ducks, and much of the original area has been developed and populated and bridged and roaded and built on and so on, but we know you are looking to carve out a certain area that can still retain its value for open space and habitat for wildlife.

And we look forward to working with you on this issue, even though it is in a fairly metropolitan area, to make it happen.

And I ask unanimous consent that Mr. Underwood's statement be submitted into the record and my full statement be entered into the record, and we look forward to your testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gilchrest follows:]

Statement of The Honorable Wayne T. Gilchrest, Chairman, Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

Good morning, today, the Subcommittee will conduct a legislative hearing on an innovative proposal by our colleagues Marcy Kaptur, John Dingell, and Paul Gillmor to establish the Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey: "Lake Erie is the 11th largest fresh water lake in the world and it has the most productive fishing habitat in all of the Great Lakes."

It provides essential habitat for 43 different fish and 325 avian species including bald eagles and black ducks. Sadly, like so many areas, nearly 98 percent of the

original coastal marsh wetlands of the Western Lake Erie region have been lost to development.

While I am intrigued by this proposal and compliment the authors of this bill, I am hopeful that a number of questions will be answered during this hearing. These include: a map delineating the property to be incorporated within the proposed refuge; the costs and source of Federal funding; the species that will be conserved and protected with a refuge designation and a list of organizations that support this idea.

I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses and I am pleased to recognize my friend from Guam, Congressman Robert Underwood.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Underwood follows:]

Statement of The Honorable Robert A. Underwood, a Delegate in Congress from Guam

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I have often stated, our nation's National Wildlife Refuge System is one of the Federal Government's best kept secrets. This System, comprised of 535 units that protect over 94 million acres of habitat, functions as our only network of lands and waters dedicated exclusively for the conservation of fish, wildlife and plant resources.

It is, however, no secret that the growth and expansion of human settlement continues to stress, if not completely transform, the landscape; a transformation which is almost always detrimental to both wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Consequently, it is no surprise to me, Mr. Chairman, when our colleagues propose legislation to add new refuges to the Refuge System or to expand existing refuges. They are, like yourself, simply recognizing a stark reality: that new refuges are necessary to meet the needs of wildlife, and that more refuges are needed to address the public's demand for wildlife-oriented outdoor recreation. If anything, with public visitation to our National Wildlife Refuges now exceeding 35 million Americans annually, this demand will only become greater in the years ahead.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I commend our colleague, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, for introducing her legislation, H.R. 4722, which would establish the Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge. As you know, Mr. Chairman, this legislation is strongly supported by the Ranking Democrat Member of the Resources Committee, Congressman Nick Rahall. Both he and I sincerely appreciate your expedited consideration of this bill.

It is not, in my estimation, an overstatement to say that H.R. 4722 would represent a bold step forward in the conservation and protection of valuable fish and wildlife in the western basin of Lake Erie. The Western Basin is distinguished by a diverse ecosystem comprised of islands, channels, rivers and shoals that support dense populations of fish, wildlife, migratory birds and aquatic plants. Unsurprisingly, the region is already partially protected by the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Based on these facts, expansion of the existing refuge would seem to make sense ecologically and administratively. This bill would also appear to build on the innovative legislation sponsored by the Dean of the House, Congressman John Dingell, and signed into law by President Bush last year, that established the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

Yet, as we learned at the June 20 hearing on Chairman Gilchrest's legislation to expand the Susquehanna National Wildlife Refuge, the Bush Administration has decided that the Refuge System has expanded, perhaps, a bit too much.

Regrettably, we have not received any further information from the Administration concerning the specifics of their new policies regarding the establishment of new refuges or the expansion of existing units. Perhaps we will learn more about those policies this morning. But if not, I would urge the Administration to engage in a more robust consultation with the members of this Committee before finalizing new policies.

Nevertheless, in the interim, the Congress should reserve its right to exercise its legislative prerogative to establish new units or expand existing refuges. And where the conditions warrant purposeful action, the Congress should act to ensure healthy and abundant fish and wildlife habitats for future generations of Americans.

I earnestly hope that we are able to work collaboratively and in good faith with the Administration to fairly assess this proposal as we were able to do successfully last year when we considered and passed Mr. Dingell's legislation.

In my opinion, H.R. 4722 is legislation that has a genuine potential to protect and improve the remaining fish and wildlife habitat in the Western Basin of Lake Erie.

And in the end, I hope that what is best for the fish and wildlife resources of Lake Erie will ultimately guide our judgements. Thank you.

Mr. GILCHREST. And, Marcy, you may begin.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. MARCY KAPTUR, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF OHIO

Ms. KAPTUR. Good morning, Chairman Gilchrest and members of your staff. I would like to ask, first, unanimous consent to submit my full statement into the record.

Mr. GILCHREST. Without objection.

Ms. KAPTUR. And also express my deepest gratitude for Congressman John Dingell for joining us this morning and for his enormous leadership in the area of wildlife protection and the restoration of our ecosystems across this country and world, and surely in the area in which we reside.

We share a State border. I am the Buckeye part and he is the Wolverine part. And we also have our districts that front on the shallowest of the Great Lakes, Lake Erie. And this happens—the confluence of our districts and the water systems and the adjacent ecosystems are actually at the nexus of the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways. And so I think John sort of knew that as a child, growing up and trapping and hunting and so forth.

But we have been about the task over a number of years now of restoring the damaged shreds of an ecosystem that was ignored for a very long time. And so the purpose of my testimony this morning is to talk to you about the crown jewels of Ohio and, if I might be so bold, Michigan; and to ask for your continued support of H.R. 4722, which is entitled the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Expansion.

And the purpose of the bill is to expand the boundaries of an area in which the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio could purchase additional land, as well as accept donations of land and conservation easements. And, for the record, I would also like to say that Lake Erie, as the shallowest of the lakes is most fragile; she is the warmest, and, because of that, has the most bird life and sea life and also human life, using the beaches. We have a lot of different users of the water system, and Lake Erie is the most tapped of our lakes for those that live around its perimeter.

And, in addition to that, we are a wildlife center in the fishing industry for our entire country. And the areas we are talking about literally dot the perimeter, the shoreline. It goes up into Michigan—and John will talk about that—it comes down to Ohio. It includes the Lake Erie Islands, including the West Sister Island, which is a National Wildlife Refuge for the blue heron. And I just wish we had more of those refuges, because we have the current refuges being used by all these birds that fly from south to north, and they nest in our region. I would like to believe we have a lot more birds in Ohio than Michigan.

But we are talking here at America's north coast—and the current area, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, attracts over 130,000 visitors a year. We get a lot of birders and a lot of fishermen and -women, hikers, artists, and photographers. And we are building a new visitor's center at that wildlife refuge.

We thank the Subcommittee and the Full Committee for their support in order to handle the growing numbers of people that are gravitating to this lake and lakefront. We are talking about the Lake Erie marshes, the wetlands, and, of course, the thousands of miles of shoreline.

I also wanted to thank the Fish and Wildlife Service, if I could—I have it in my testimony—because they have been just magnificent to work with, particularly post-9/11, with all the responsibilities they have protecting our national monuments from damage and also fighting forest fires, they managed to be very helpful advisers to us as we proceeded forward on this.

Mr. Chairman, it is all in the testimony, but I just wanted to mention Ottawa covers over 5,000 acres currently, and was first created in 1961; an adjacent wildlife refuge called Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge was created in 1964,and contains over 2,400 acres. I mentioned West Sister Island in the lake, which comprises about 77 acres.

And then the Ohio Department of Natural Resources—and its director, Mr. Sam Speck, is here today, and we also want to acknowledge him in the record—manages the Magee Marsh, which is adjacent to all of these facilities that I am talking about. And Director Speck is deeply committed to the future of the Lake Erie wetlands and Lake Erie islands in Ohio, so that future generations can enjoy the natural beauty that we see disappearing before our eyes if we aren't more aggressive about paying attention to the ecosystem.

I wanted to also mention, before I turn it over to Congressman Dingell, that H.R. 4722 emphasizes cooperation, as was the case in Congressman Dingell's bill, the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Our bill does not allow for forced takings or the use of eminent domain. And if a landowner doesn't want to sell or donate or convey property or property rights, nothing happens. And similarly, if the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service don't want to accept an offer of a donation, nothing happens. As was the case with the Detroit River Refuge, both the property owner and the Federal Government must voluntarily agree or nothing happens. But if both parties do agree, then the bill provides a mechanism for making a positive and lasting contribution to the beauty of our area.

I wanted to say that Congressman Dingell's efforts north of our border have begun to bring the kind of regional attention that we need to this region. And our bill starts at the southern boundary of the area that was defined in Congressman's Dingell's bill, and then wraps around the corner of the western basin of Lake Erie, and it proceeds east along the coastline to Sandusky Bay, and including all of the Lake Erie islands, which are very small islands but also ones that are very heavily used, and in some cases neglected.

For the record, as our testimony states, almost 98 percent—98 percent of the original wetlands in northwest Ohio have been lost. And we know that about 70 percent of the Mississippi flyway population of black ducks use Lake Erie marshes for migration. You can see the Canadian geese, you can see the egrets, the eagles. By the way, the eagles are coming back. I think this year we have, I want to say, over 50 nesting pairs. When I began in my job, I think we

had 4 or 6. And so we are trying to restore the bird populations in our part of North America.

I wanted to also place on the record, if I could, we have had meetings in our region of stakeholders, and we have over 600 letters of support, probably more like 800 letters of support, from every county commissioner of every county involved; all the local officials, non-governmental officials, environmental organizations, Ducks Unlimited, many of the groups that are in the audience today that will be testifying.

So I think we have done our homework in terms of letters of support. And for the record, I would like to submit all of these, along with a letter from Mr. Joe Summers, who was the former director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. So we have quite a heavy volume here of support for this.

Mr. GILCHREST. Without objection, they will be submitted into the record.

[The information referred to has been retained in the Committee's official files.]

Ms. KAPTUR. And Mr. Chairman, I know you will be introducing these individuals later, but I also wanted to thank Congressman Paul Gillmor, who is my neighbor in Ohio and a supporter of this legislation; Gail Norton, the Secretary of the Department of Interior. I mentioned Mr. Sam Speck who will be testifying. Representing the Mayor of the City of Toledo, the largest community that borders this region, will be Mr. Theodore Mastroianni, the mayor's special assistant; also, Mr. Christopher Knock, the director of the Trust for Public Lands, Ohio Chapter; and Ms. Melinda Huntley, the executive director of Lake Erie Coastal Ohio, Incorporated.

I think I would like to just submit the rest of my remarks for the record. And I thank you so very, very much. I think we are fortunate to be before your Subcommittee as we proceed with this legislation, Congressman Gilchrest. You are such a leader for all of the Nation in this regard. Thank you.

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you, very much Ms. Kaptur. We look forward to working with you as we go through the process to make this all happen.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Kaptur follows:]

Statement of The Honorable Marcy Kaptur, a Representative in Congress from the State of Ohio

Dear Chairman Gilchrest and Ranking Member Underwood:

Thank you for this hearing and for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee on H.R. 4722.

The purpose of this bill is to expand the boundaries of the area in which the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio could purchase land as well as accept donations of land and conservation easements.

The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge complex, which is located east of Toledo along the Lake Erie coastline, America's North Coast, is becoming increasingly known in the Great Lakes region as a great success story.

The refuge attracts approximately 130,000 visitors each year hunters, fishermen, photographers, birders, hikers, artists and schoolchildren. We are hopeful about the prospects for construction of a new visitors' and education center at the Ottawa refuge; funds for that project were contained in the Fiscal Year 2003 Interior Appropriations bill that is scheduled for a vote in the House this week. The new visitors and education center will enhance the ability of the Fish and Wildlife Service to tell the wonderful story of the Lake Erie marshes, wetlands and shoreline to hundreds of thousands of people.

Let me take just a moment, if I may, to recognize the wonderful contributions made by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to our country. Most Americans are not aware that the Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement personnel have over the past several months been providing increased security at our national treasures-such as Mount Rushmore.

Moreover, in the past several weeks, Fish and Wildlife Service personnel from throughout the country—including our own region, which is headquartered in Minneapolis—have been enlisted in fighting fires throughout the Western United States. So let me offer my sincere thanks to the Service and its hard-working employees for their service to our nation.

Mr. Chairman, the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge complex consists of three refuges.

The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, which covers more than five thousand acres, was created in 1961 when local conservation and hunting clubs donated land to the Fish and Wildlife Service. If not for these donations, the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge might never have been created. H.R. 4722 seeks to build on that legacy of cooperation.

The Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge was created in 1964 and covers 2,445 acres. The West Sister Island National Wildlife Refuge was created in 1937 and all its 77 acres were designated as wilderness in 1975. It is the only national wilderness area in the state of Ohio and is home to the blue heron, among other species.

Adjacent to the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge is the Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, which is managed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Magee Marsh is a testament to cooperation between the state and Federal Governments.

I am particularly honored that Dr. Sam Speck, director of ODNR, has joined us today. I know from conversations with Director Speck that he is deeply committed to the future of the Lake Erie wetlands and the Lake Erie Islands in Ohio so that future generations can enjoy the natural beauty and the recreational opportunities they provide. I sincerely appreciate his taking the time to come to Washington to testify on behalf of H.R. 4722 because the essence of this legislation is cooperation, about working together, and, to be honest, the state of Ohio is the key partner.

H.R. 4722 emphasizes cooperation, as was the case with the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, which was introduced by our colleague, Congressman Dingell, and then approved by this Subcommittee, the Resources full Committee, the House and eventually signed into law by President Bush last December.

H.R. 4722 does not allow for forced takings or the use of eminent domain.

H.R. 4722 builds on that same public mindedness that led to the creation of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge some 50 years ago. Nothing can happen without the agreement of both parties: if the landowner does not wish to sell, donate or convey property or property rights, nothing happens. Similarly, if the Secretary of Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service do not wish to accept an offer of a donation, nothing happens. As was the case with the Detroit River refuge, both the property owner and the Federal Government must voluntarily agree-or nothing happens.

If both parties agree, however, this bill provides a mechanism for making a positive and lasting contribution.

Over the past seven months, Congressman Dingell's successful effort to establish the Lower Detroit River refuge has already brought greater awareness to the unique nature of our area. I say "our" area because Congressman Dingell and I not only represent adjacent districts—we share an ecosystem. Indeed, 95 percent of the inflow to Lake Erie comes from the Detroit River.

Basically, H.R. 4722 starts at the southern boundary of the area that was defined in the Dingell bill, then wraps around the corner of the western basin in Lake Erie and extends along the coastline to Sandusky Bay. It also includes the Lake Erie Islands in Ohio.

We are acutely aware in Northwest Ohio, and becoming more aware each day, of the importance of the Lake Erie wetlands. We are also aware that almost 98 percent of the original wetlands in northwest Ohio have been lost. The remaining wetlands are vitally important to our region's future.

The western Lake Erie basin wetlands lie at the intersection of the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways. The Ottawa refuge complex is a major feeding, nesting and resting area for migrating birds. The same birds that are today taking advantage of the Lower Detroit area will likely visit the Lake Erie Islands and the marshes in the Ottawa National Wildlife refuge tomorrow. As much as 70 percent of the Mississippi Flyway population of black ducks use the Lake Erie marshes for migration.

Lake Erie is the warmest and most biologically productive of the Great Lakes. The Lake Erie walleye fishery is widely considered the best in the world.

I have often referred to the Lake Erie coastline and the Lake Erie Islands as Ohio's "crown jewel." They become more precious with each passing day. And

H.R. 4722 can help everyone who is interested in this incredible resource to work together.

H.R. 4722 will help raise the profile of the Lake Erie marshlands and Lake Erie islands.

It will provide another tool to facilitate voluntary land transfers between individuals, businesses, and local, state and Federal Government.

It will engender greater cooperation between individuals, organizations, communities, and all levels of government. We have held two stakeholders meetings on this legislation one in Michigan several weeks ago and one in Ottawa County, Ohio (near the Ottawa refuge) just last week. The response from the public has been tremendous, almost overwhelming. My Toledo office has received more than 600 e-mails of support since last week's meeting alone.

Indeed, we have received support letters not only from hundreds of individuals, but also governmental and non-governmental organizations, including county officials from each county affected by the proposed expansion, the property rights community in Northwest Ohio, and the City Council or mayor from almost every community along the affected shoreline. With the Committee's permission, I would like to submit these letters of support for the record.

Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Dingell.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. JOHN D. DINGELL, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Chairman, thank you. Thank you for holding this hearing, and thank you for your courtesy to me over the years and for your great leadership in the area of conservation of natural resources. The country owes you a debt, and I am proud to be here to pay tribute to you and this Subcommittee which under your leadership has done such an outstanding job.

I begin by asking unanimous consent to insert my full statement in the record.

Mr. GILCHREST. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Chairman, I am very happy to be a cosponsor of this with Ms. Kaptur, who is my dear friend and neighbor to the south. When I began my efforts on the Detroit River International Refuge, I didn't realize what was going to come of it, but it has achieved extraordinary success and popularity, and Ms. Kaptur came to me early on to discuss the possibility of extending it down into Ohio. I indicated that I was apprehensive that that would not be possible because of possible complications in a piece of legislation which, with your help and this Subcommittee, was moving along very well.

I have worked closely with Ms. Kaptur on this matter, and you will note that the borders of that refuge and the borders of our refuge are in fact together, and that they both involve western and southern Lake Erie, which is a precious area. As Ms. Kaptur has mentioned, we have lost all but 2 percent of the wetlands around there.

And I want to stress several things:

First of all, it is not our purpose to have compulsory takings. That is not permitted under the legislation. We acquire these refuges in the same way we do all fish and wildlife refuges. And I know much about this because I am a member of the Migratory Bird Commission which superintends the purchase of those lands.

The actual land acquisition is going to be very small, and not all of it will be in fees. As a matter of fact, the largest part probably will not be ownership of fee, but probably will be by cooperative management agreements or by purchase or gift of easements.

I would tell you that the refuge in the Detroit River is now a great success. It is moving forward not only with the enthusiastic support of our people in the area, but also with the enthusiastic support of our Canadian neighbors who are moving their share of the process.

I would note that the people in the southern part of my district in Monroe County came to me early on and said, "Dingell, why aren't you including us?" And I said, "Well, it just didn't work out that way, but we will do so at the earliest minute."

So I am here not just to speak about my own experiences, but to tell you about how the people of Monroe and the area in the southern part of my district feel about this. They enthusiastically support this. And Ms. Kaptur has graciously held a number of meetings there to discuss what it is that she is doing with her admirable proposal and the efforts that she is making to bring this into reality.

I would note that the success which we have had has already brought into public ownership something like about 300 acres or a little more, and that more will come. We are anticipating that by the end of this Congress we will probably have acquired 40 acres of land which will become a part of an administered area, but also a county park for our area which will be included within the boundaries of the refuge; and that we are hopeful that if everything goes right, we will achieve something on the order of 440 acres, which will be purchased by money which is now in the appropriations process.

Cooperative management agreements are going forward, and it is interesting to note that a number of gifts of land, one of about 20 acres and one of about another 15 acres, are now pending. As I mentioned, the Canadians are moving forward and anticipate that they, using different systems of acquisition, will of course begin the process of building their share of the refuge on the Canadian side of the river and the Detroit River International Refuge.

The remarkable thing which I can report to you is the enthusiastic support of the people in the area, both units of local government, the State, the conservationists, and all of people who are concerned with protection of the great values. This is an area where better than 7 million ducks and geese fly north and south every spring and every fall. It is also an area which is characterized by a remarkable, in fact an extraordinary spectacle which occurs every spring and fall, which is the migration of wonderful numbers of hawks, owls, eagles, raptors of different kinds who fly north and south along with the other migrating game birds and aquatic and other birds which are migratory in character.

I will tell you, Mr. Chairman, there is no opposition to this legislation in my district. As a matter of fact, my people are delighted that this is moving forward, and this is one of the reasons that I am working so closely with Ms. Kaptur. The other two reasons are, of course, the remarkable friendship which we share and the great admiration I have for her; but also, Mr. Chairman, the fact that

this is a wonderful, good step which affords this country an opportunity to move in new and different and better ways to preserve lands in areas of this kind where there is enormous population. And, as you very well know, this population is something like about 40 million people in the immediate vicinity of this refuge, within a circle of about 100, 150 miles. So populations are dense.

People want to preserve Lake Erie. And it is loved by all our people in our area, including folks in Ohio, in Michigan, and, of course, in Canada and the rest of the adjacent Great Lakes States.

So I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that this is an admirable proposal. It is one which will work, it is one which will cost little, it is one which will do enormous good, and it is one which has enormous support.

One last thought, and that is to commend the Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Lands which have been enormously helpful in these undertakings, as well as the other conservation organizations which strongly support this legislation, as do the elected officials at all levels in my district, and I am sure also in the district represented so ably by Ms. Kaptur.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dingell follows:]

Statement of The Honorable John D. Dingell, a Representative in Congress from the State of Michigan

Good morning Mr. Chairman and other distinguished Members of the Committee. It is an honor and a pleasure for me to join you today to testify in support of H.R. 4722, legislation that will create the Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge in southeast Michigan and northern Ohio. I thank the Subcommittee, Chairman James Hansen, and the Ranking Member, Nick Rahall, for their assistance and for holding this hearing. This legislation is of immense importance to the people of southeast Michigan and our neighbors in Ohio.

Mr. Chairman, last year, thanks to support from local grassroots organizations, conservation groups, state and local governments, as well as our Canadian neighbors, we were able to pass H.R. 1230, legislation that created the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. This refuge is already demonstrating how—working as a team—Federal, state, and local officials in the United States and Canada, can work with businesses, conservationists and private citizens to create something special, that will improve the quality of life for all our area residents.

We passed H.R. 1230 because the Lower Detroit River is an area of tremendous bio-diversity, with unique geological features and a wide variety of plant life that attracts numerous species of fish, birds, and waterfowl. Like many rivers along the Great Lakes, the Detroit River has suffered the consequences of prolonged periods of unsound environmental practices. The Detroit River has lost over 95 percent of its coastal wetland habitats.

In the Great Lakes region, there is a great urgency and unique opportunity to protect the remaining high quality habitats before they are lost to further development and to rehabilitate and enhance degraded ones. This is essential to sustain the quality of life enjoyed by the people living along the Detroit River corridor. The Detroit Wildlife Refuge was a good start, but more must be done. It is my hope that in time, much of the Great Lakes coastline will be protected using the same commonsense approach of H.R. 1230. Today, we are here to discuss H.R. 4722, a bill introduced by my neighbor to the south, Marcy Kaptur, which will establish the Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge in Ohio and Michigan. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of H.R. 4722, and I applaud the efforts of my colleague and friend from Ohio for introducing this important bill.

The western basin of Lake Erie is vitally important to the economic and environmental future of the United States. In the 1970's and 1980's, the ecological health of Lake Erie was a running joke. Water quality was poor, and fish and wildlife suffered accordingly. However, over the past two decades, the citizens and governmental institutions of both the United States and Canada have devoted increasing attention and resources to the restoration of the water quality and fisheries of the Great Lakes, including the western basin. Numerous grassroots environmental and

conservation organizations have worked dutifully to address environmental degradation in the region. I am happy to say that these efforts have been successful, though there is still much more that must be done.

The Great Lakes account for more than 90 percent of the surface freshwater in the nation. The western basin receives approximately 90 percent of its flow from the Detroit River and only approximately 10 percent from tributaries. The western basin of Lake Erie is an important ecosystem that includes a number of distinct islands, channels, rivers, and shoals that support dense populations of fish, wildlife, and aquatic plants.

The coastal wetlands of Lake Erie support the largest diversity of plant and wildlife species in the Great Lakes. More than 320 species of birds and 43 species of fish have been identified in the aquatic and wetland habitats of the western basin. The shallow western basin is home to the largest concentration of marshes in Lake Erie, which makes it a major migratory bird corridor. Seventy percent of the Mississippi Flyway population of black ducks is concentrated in the Lake Erie marshes during fall migration.

The importance of Lake Erie is manifested in the United States congressional designation of the Ottawa and Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuges. Lake Erie has an international reputation for walleye, perch, and bass fishing, as well as duck hunting. On an economic basis, Lake Erie tourism accounts for an estimate $1,500,000,000 in retail sales and more than 50,000 jobs.

Coastal wetlands in the western basin have been subjected to intense pressure for 150 years. In fact, 98 percent of the vast coastal wetland system that existed in western Lake Erie in the early 1800's has been lost. What was once a system of 1,540 square miles today has been decreased to 38 square miles. Along the Michigan shoreline, coastal wetlands were reduced by 62 percent between 1916 and the early 1970s. The development of the City of Monroe has had a particularly significant impact on the coastal wetlands at the mouth of the River Raisin.

H.R. 4722 is very similar in content to H.R. 1230. It aims to protect the remaining fish and wildlife habitats of the western Lake Erie, assist in international efforts to conserve and restore wildlife habitat, and facilitate partnerships between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian national and provincial authorities, and a wide array of private and public sector entities.

In Michigan, the Refuge will run from the southern boundary of Sterling State Park to the eastern edge of Sandusky Bay, Ohio. The Secretary of Interior is authorized to acquire by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or grant conservation easements within the boundaries of the Refuge. Any and all acquisitions of lands are voluntary, and Federal takings are strictly prohibited. I would note that the Secretary shall administer all Federally owned lands, waters, and interests within the Refuge in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966. Thus, the rights of sportsmen like myself will be fully protected.

It is because this bill is sensible, balanced and foresighted that it enjoys broad local support in Michigan, Ohio and beyond. I recently held a meeting with local officials in Michigan, all of whom expressed strong support for H.R. 4722. I would note that H.R. 1230, the predecessor to H.R. 4722, also enjoyed broad support from business and conservation groups, as well as from local governments.

Mr. Chairman, I again thank the Committee for their assistance. H.R. 4722 is an important piece of legislation which will be of great benefit to the people of Michigan, Ohio, and Ontario, and represents a sound approach to protecting, preserving, and restoring the wildlife habitat of the Great Lakes.

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you, Mr. Dingell. I share your sense of urgency to move the legislation. I believe it will be successful up here because you have done the kind of work that is necessary to create a base of broad support. What is left is not much, and it is fragile, weak, vulnerable, and highly valuable. And so it will be up to our skill collectively; your leadership in particular, Ms. Kaptur and Mr. Dingell, for years of your service and conservation. You made a precedent, I think, in the last 6 months or so with the Wildlife Refuge System you proposed, and I think you again can help the Nation set another precedent to preserve fragile, highly valuable habitat in an area of heavy concentration of population the way it is. And the people that are helping you with this realize how valuable

that is. So we will do all we can to work out the mechanics of this and get this engine running or get these wetlands humming for the birds.

If there is anything else that you wanted to add or—

Mr. DINGELL. Only, Mr. Chairman, to commend you and thank you for what you have done already, for the great work you do, and to tell you how much I appreciate your labors here, and to tell you that I know Ms. Kaptur and I will do everything we possibly can to see this bill moves forward without any trouble or controversy which might afflict you.

Mr. GILCHREST. Don't worry. We all have tough skins up here, Mr. Dingell.

Ms. KAPTUR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for receiving us. And for my good friend John Dingell, just to appear with the dean of the House is an honor for me. And I know that we are going to do something here that generations hence will wonder who did this, who made this happen? And our names won't matter, but what we did will.

And I want to thank you, Chairman Gilchrest. As I said to you privately, when I hear you on the radio or the television, you help educate a Nation about the importance of our natural resources. And thank you for receiving us so graciously this morning.

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you, Ms. Kaptur and Mr. Dingell. Thank you very much.

Mr. DINGELL. Thank you, members of Committee.

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Faleomavaega.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Chairman, I apologize for being a little late, but I want to let my good friend from Michigan, Mr. Dingell, and Marcy Kaptur testifying in support of legislation, I want to add my firm support for the proposed bill and to have me as a cosponsor of this proposed legislation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GILCHREST. Our next panel will be Mr. Barry Stieglitz, Deputy Chief, Division of Conservation, Planning and Policy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Mr. Sam Speck, Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources; Mr. Theodore Mastroianni, Special Assistant for Mayor Jack Ford, Toledo, Ohio. We might see Max Klinger here, I guess. I think he was going to testify here this morning. Ms. Melinda Huntley, Executive Director, Lake Erie Coastal Ohio, Incorporated; Ms. Edith Chase, President, Ohio Coastal Resource Management Project, Incorporated. Welcome to all of you.

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Stieglitz, you may begin, sir.

STATEMENT OF BARRY W. STIEGLITZ, DEPUTY CHIEF, DIVISION OF CONSERVATION PLANNING AND POLICY, NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE;

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Thank you, and good morning, sir.

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Subcommittee, I request that my testimony be made part of the official record.

Mr. GILCHREST. Without objection.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Thank you, sir. I am Barry Stieglitz. I am here today as the acting chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System. I appreciate the opportunity to provide the Administration's view

on H.R. 4722, authorizing the establishment of the Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge.

As will be discussed later, the Administration cannot support this legislation. However, before explaining why, I would like to begin by giving you a brief summary of Fish and Wildlife Service's involvement in the Lake Erie region. Coastal wetlands within the Western Basin of Lake Erie are of significant importance to fish and wildlife trust resources. These wetlands provide spawning, nursery, and rearing habitat for 43 wetland-dependent fish species, 26 of which have recreational, commercial, or prey value. More than 325 species of birds can also be found in the Western Lake Erie Basin, and the area annually attracts hundreds of thousands of migrating waterfowl. In addition, the area is an important staging area for migrant songbirds.

Recognizing the importance of these resources, the State of Ohio established numerous State wildlife areas, nature reserves, and parks in the region. The Service is active in its efforts to protect and restore coastal wetlands within this geographic area, and we realize the economic, recreational, and environmental benefits of protecting and restoring the coastal wetlands of Lake Erie. In fact, we have four existing refuges in the general area. These refuges, as you are aware, are the Ottawa, Cedar Point, and West Sister Island National Wildlife Refuges, as well as the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 requires the Service to develop a comprehensive conservation plan, or CCP, for each refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The CCP is intended to describe the desired future conditions of a refuge and provide long-range guidance and management direction to achieve the refuge's purposes—in other words the reason a refuge was established. It is during this process that expansion of a refuge may be recommended by the public, State, or a member of any other group that is considered a stakeholder in the area. These recommendations are then considered by the Service. If increasing the size of a refuge will help fulfill the purpose or purposes for which a refuge was established, the service provides these recommendations to the Administration.

The development of the CCP provides a forum for meaningful public participation and improved coordination with the States and local communities, and also affords local citizens an opportunity to help shape future management of a refuge, recognizing the important role refuges can play as part of the community. We have begun preparation of the CCP for the newly established Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, which will include a review of the Michigan portion of the proposed Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge.

In 1994, we proposed an expansion for the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex, including Ottawa, Cedar Point, and West Sister Island National Wildlife Refuges. After public review and comment, we adopted an increase in the size of the complex, totaling 5,000 acres, including high-priority wetland habitat areas in Lucas, Sandusky, Ottawa, and Erie Counties, the same general geographic area as the Ohio portion of the proposed refuge.

In 2000, we completed the CCP for the Ottawa complex. After extensive public review and comment, the CCP did not propose an expansion beyond the 5,000 acres previously approved in 1994.

In contrast to the 5,000-acre expansion included in the CCP, H.R. 4722 would commit the Service to a massive expansion of the refuge system in the same area. The geographic scope of the proposal includes over 175 miles of coastline, covering 100,000 acres or more. The administration is committed to taking better care of what we have, while ensuring that new acquisitions truly meet the strategic growth needs of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

There must be a balance between acquiring new lands and meeting the operational, maintenance, and restoration requirements of the resources already under public ownership. Toward this end, the Service is currently developing a plan to guide future growth and land acquisition for the refuge system. Establishing new refuges or significantly expanding existing refuges requires shifting operation and maintenance funds from existing refuges. While the President's budget proposes a funding increase for the refuge system of more than $56 million, that funding is already committed to addressing high-priority critical mission operations and maintenance projects at existing refuges. To date we have identified $1.1 billion in optimal refuge operational needs and $663 million in pending maintenance projects in the refuge system.

Currently, the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex has 100 deferred maintenance projects in our maintenance management system, or MMS, at a combined cost of $4.9 million, and 12 projects totaling $1.5 million in our priority Tier 1 refuge operational needs system, or RONS.

We appreciate that Representative Kaptur and her constituents seek to have the Service expand its role in the Lake Erie Basin; however, given our recent and impending reviews of habitat needs for Federal trust species in the area, we cannot support H.R. 4722.

In addition to the national priorities and funding constraints discussed, we have already evaluated a major portion of this area and are in the process of evaluating the remainder, through the CCP process.

After a careful review of the Ohio portion of the land covered by this bill, we have concluded after two different public comment periods several years apart that a 5,000-acre expansion of refuge system holdings is all that is needed. We are now initiating such a review of the Michigan lands covered by this legislation through the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge CCP.

H.R. 4722, in contrast, would expand the refuge system on a potentially massive scale. Given that we have concluded in consultation with our stakeholders less than 2 years ago that such a large-scale expansion in this area is not needed, we cannot now support it.

We note that opportunities and tools other than including lands in the refuge system exist for protecting resources in Lake Erie's Western Basin. Service programs, such as Partners for Fish and Wildlife, the Northern Americans Wetlands Conservation Act, the Landowner Incentive Program, and private stewardship grants can be used in cooperation with State, local, and private partners to restore and protect natural resources. The States of Ohio and

Michigan also receive funds through the Federal Aid and Wildlife Restoration and Federal Aid and Support Fish Restoration; and, if approved by Congress, Land and Water Conservation Fund, cooperative conservation initiatives through the National Park Service, which could be used toward this end if the States so choose.

This concludes my proposed statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have now or at a later time. Thank you.

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you very much, Mr. Stieglitz.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stieglitz follows:]

Statement of Barry Stieglitz, Deputy Chief, Division of Conservation Planning and Policy, National Wildlife Refuge System, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Subcommittee, I am Barry Stieglitz, Deputy Chief of the Division of Conservation Planning and Policy for the National Wildlife Refuge System. I appreciate this opportunity to provide the Administration's views on H.R. 4722, authorizing the establishment of the Lake Erie Basin International Wildlife Refuge. As discussed more fully below, the Administration cannot support this legislation.

I would like to begin by giving you a brief summary of Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) involvement in the Lake Erie region. Coastal wetlands within the western basin of Lake Erie are of significant importance to fish and wildlife trust resources. These wetlands provide spawning, nursery and rearing habitat for some 43 wetland-dependent fish species, 26 of which have significant recreational, commercial or prey value. More than 325 species of birds can be found in the western Lake Erie basin, and the area annually attracts hundreds of thousands of migrating waterfowl. The area is also an important staging area for migrant songbirds. Recognizing these important resources, the State of Ohio established numerous State Wildlife Areas, Nature Preserves, and Parks in this region.

The Service is active in efforts to protect/restore coastal wetlands within this geographic area and we realize the economic, public use and environmental benefits of protecting and restoring the coastal wetlands of Lake Erie. In fact, we have four existing refuges in the general area. These refuges are the Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Ottawa NWR, West Sister Island NWR, and the recently established Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 requires the Service to develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for each refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The CCP describes the desired future conditions of a refuge and provides long-range guidance and management direction to achieve refuge purposes. It is during this process that expansion of a refuge is considered and recommended, if increasing the size will help fulfill the mission for which the refuge was established. Development of a CCP provides a forum for meaningful public participation and improved coordination with the states and local communities. It also affords local citizens an opportunity to help shape future management of a refuge, recognizing the important role of refuges in nearby communities.

We are now preparing a draft CCP for the newly established Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, which will include review of the Michigan portion of the proposed Lake Erie Basin International Wildlife Refuge.

In 1994 we proposed an expansion for the Ottawa NWR Complex, which includes Cedar Point, Ottawa and West Sister Island. After public review and comment, we adopted an increase in the size of the complex totaling 5,000 acres, by including high-priority wetland habitat areas in Lucas, Sandusky, Ottawa and Erie Counties, the same general geographic area as the Ohio portion of the proposed Lake Erie Basin International Wildlife Refuge.

In 2000, we completed a CCP for the Ottawa NWR Complex. After extensive public review and comment, this CCP did not propose an expansion for the Complex beyond the 5,000 acres previously approved.

In contrast to the 5,000-acre expansion included in the CCP, H.R. 4722 would commit the Service to a massive expansion of the Refuge System in the same area. The geographic scope of the proposal includes over 175 miles of coastline covering a hundred thousand acres or more.

The Administration is committed to taking better care of what we have, while ensuring that new acquisitions truly meet strategic needs of the Refuge System. There must be a balance between acquiring new lands and meeting the operational, main-

tenance and restoration requirements for the resources already in public ownership. Towards this end, the Service is currently developing a plan to guide future growth and land acquisition for the Refuge System.

Establishing new refuges, or significantly expanding existing ones requires shifting operation and maintenance funds from existing refuges. While the President's budget proposes a funding increase for the Refuge System of more than $56 million, that money is already committed to addressing high-priority critical mission operations and maintenance needs at existing refuges.

We have identified $1.1 billion in optimal refuge operational needs and $663 million in pending maintenance projects for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Currently, the Ottawa NWR, Cedar Point NWR, and Sister Point NWR have 100 deferred maintenance projects in our Maintenance Management System at a combined cost of $4.9 million and 12 projects, totaling $1.5 million in our priority Tier 1 Refuge Operational Needs System.

We appreciate that Representative Kaptur and her constituents seek to have the Fish and Wildlife Service expand its role in the Lake Erie Basin. However, given our recent and impending reviews of habitat needs for Federal trust species in this area, we cannot support H.R. 4722.

In addition to the national priorities and funding constraints discussed above, we have already evaluated a major portion of this area, and are in the process of evaluating the remainder. After a careful review of the Ohio portion of the land covered by this bill, we have concluded, after two different public comment periods several years apart, that a 5,000-acre expansion of Refuge System holdings is all that is needed. We are now initiating such a review of the Michigan lands covered by this legislation through the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge CCP.

H.R. 4722, in contrast, would expand the Refuge System on a potentially massive scale. Given that we concluded less than two years ago that such a large-scale expansion in this area was not needed, we cannot support it now.

We note that other opportunities and tools beside including lands in the Refuge System exist for protecting resources in Lake Erie's Western Basin. Service programs such as Partners for Fish and Wildlife, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the Landowner Incentive Program, and Private Stewardship Grants can be used in cooperation with State, local and private partners to restore and protect natural resources. The States of Ohio and Michigan also receive funds through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration, Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration, and, if approved by Congress, Land and Water Conservation Fund Cooperative Conservation Initiative grants through the National Park Service which could be used towards this end if the States so chose.

This concludes my proposed statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speck.

STATEMENT OF SAM SPECK, DIRECTOR, OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, ACCOMPANIED BY MICHAEL J. BUDZIK, CHIEF, OHIO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Mr. SPECK. Thank you, Chairman Gilchrest and members of the Subcommittee. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today on H.R. 4722, which would provide for the establishment of the Lake Erie Western Basin Wildlife Refuge in both Ohio and Michigan. I am Samuel Speck, Director of the Department of Natural Resources, a State agency responsible for the management and wise use of natural resources in the Ohio portion of Lake Erie and its coastal region. I also serve as vice-chair of the Lake Erie Commission, chair of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission, and chair of the Council of Great Lakes Governors and Premiers water management working group, although I am not claiming to speak on behalf of those groups today.

I would also like to introduce Mike Budzik, who is the chief of our Wildlife Division and would be glad to assist in any questions that you may have.

The Department has reviewed this legislation to evaluate the potential impacts of developing a Federally owned refuge for the purpose of protecting fish and wildlife habitats of the Western Basin of Lake Erie, and to assist in international conservation, restoration, and enhancement of these resources. After considerable review, discussion internally and with key constituent organizations with whom we collaborate, the Department is pleased to endorse this legislation. We have a vested interest in the protection of natural and recreational resources in the Lake Erie area.

Specifically, we are charged with the management of 2-1/4 million acres of Lake Erie under Ohio's jurisdiction; we also have important responsibilities affecting the management of more than 5.8 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of tributary streams in the lake's western basin, coastal and watershed resources that directly affect the health and vitality of the lake itself. These responsibilities include stewardship of important coastal wetland habitat along the lake's western shore, where the State Department of Natural Resources and the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service manage in total some 18,000 acres of Lake Erie marshland.

We already have a strong partnership relationship with Fish and Wildlife Service; for example, where our Magee Marsh State Wildlife area adjoins directly the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge.

As envisioned, the proposed Western Basin Wildlife Refuge would greatly enhance the opportunities for further cooperative efforts to protect these critical habitats while providing public access for recreation and education.

The waters of Lake Erie are the most biologically productive of the Great Lakes, as this one lake alone in most years produces more pounds of fish than all of the other Great Lakes combined.

As a result, Lake Erie is one of North America's most popular sport fishing destinations. It is estimated that more than half a million people fish in the Ohio waters of Lake Erie every year, contributing many millions of dollars to the Ohio economy. This makes proper fish management an economic as well as an ecological necessity. As a result, Ohio has developed strategies in collaboration with other Lake Erie States and the Province of Ontario and other interested parties pertaining to lakewide research and assessments and harvest allocations and habitat protection and restoration projects and other management efforts in order to establish regulations necessary to protect and enhance the fishery.

I might add, in Ottawa County, which sells more fishing licenses than any other county in the State of Ohio, the majority of those licenses are actually going to out-of-state people. So it is much more than just something for Ohio and Ohio's economy that we are talking about.

The western Lake Erie marsh region and its wetlands provide for an abundance of species, as previous testaments have indicated. It is not unusual for a lakeshore visitor on any given day to observe a wide range of waterfowl. One of the things we are most proud of is the 79 pair of breeding bald eagles that we now have, with 104 young this year.

I see my time is escaping, and I would like to move to some of the points with which I wanted to conclude.

We think there are a number of important, indeed critical, elements in this proposal: that it is based upon strictly voluntary acquisition from willing sellers and donors; that it focuses on the lake and its immediate coastal area, including the exceptional resources of the Lake Erie Islands. That it provides for partnerships as key building blocks; partnerships with the public, private entities, the State, the Federal and local governments—and I would be glad to provide you with further examples of where we think that could go—that it is based upon the doctrine of multiple use, ensuring that hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education and interpretation are its primary public uses.

And, it is visionary. The proposed refuge and the philosophy of natural resources management it embodies addresses what we believe are important things as we plan for Lake Erie. And Mr. Chair, I am leaving a copy of our Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan which indicates the steps that we are already taking and how this would mesh with that plan.

Finally, it meshes with other areas of Federal-State cooperation. For example, together with the Department of Agriculture, we are involved in a quarter of a billion dollar effort in 27 counties of northwestern Ohio that are part of the watershed through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to further protect the waters flowing into the Great Lakes.

Finally, I would close by saying that we certainly understand the predicament of the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service, the enormous burden that they have in trying to protect what we already have placed in refuge. And we understand that, and we believe that that is certainly an important priority. We see this as more of an opportunity to make a commitment to the future as other funds become available and as donors step forward to provide additional monies that would protect more area than is currently committed to be protected.

So we don't see this as something that is going to happen overnight, something where the money must be spent overnight, but that it sort of says to everyone that this is our vision for the future and, as resources can be committed, we will move in this direction.

Thank you for the time and opportunity to be before you. And, again, I like others will be glad to answer any questions you have at your pleasure.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Speck follows:]

Statement of Samuel W. Speck, Director,
Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Chairman Gilchrest and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on H.R. 4722, which would provide for establishment of the Lake Erie Western Basin Wildlife Refuge in both Ohio and Michigan. I am Samuel W. Speck, director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources a state agency responsible for the management and wise use of resources in Ohio's portion of Lake Erie and its coastal region.

I also serve as vice-chair of the Great Lakes Commission, chair of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission and chair of the Council of Great Lakes Governors and Premiers water management working group, although my comments today are not given on behalf of those organizations.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has reviewed H.R. 4722 to evaluate the potential impacts of developing a Federally owned refuge for the purpose of protecting the fish and wildlife habitats of the western basin of Lake Erie and to assist in international conservation, restoration and enhancement of these resources. After

considerable review and discussion internally and with key constituent organizations we serve the Department is pleased to endorse this legislation.

The Department has a vested interest in the protection of natural and recreational resources in the Lake Erie area. Specifically, we are charged with the management of two and a quarter million acres of Lake Erie under Ohio's jurisdiction. We also have important responsibilities affecting the management of more than 5.8 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of tributary streams in the lake's western basin coastal and watershed resources that directly affect the health and vitality of the lake itself.

These responsibilities include stewardship of important coastal wetland habitat along the lake's western shore, where the state Department of Natural Resources and the Federal Fish & Wildlife Service manage, in total, nearly 18,000 acres of Lake Erie marshland. We already have a strong partnership relationship with the Fish & Wildlife Service for example where our Magee Marsh State Wildlife Area adjoins the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. As envisioned, the proposed Western Basin Wildlife Refuge would greatly enhance opportunities for further cooperative efforts to protect these critical habitats while providing public access for recreation and education.

The waters of Lake Erie are the most biologically productive of the Great Lakes, as this one lake alone in most years produces more pounds of fish than the all the other Great Lakes combined.

As a result, Lake Erie is one of North America's most popular sport fishing destinations. It is estimated that more than a half-million people fish in the Ohio waters of Lake Erie every year contributing many millions of dollars to Ohio's economy. This makes proper fish management an economic as well as an ecological necessity. As a result, Ohio has developed strategies in collaboration with the other Lake Erie states (Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York), the Province of Ontario, and other interested parties pertaining to lake-wide research and assessments, harvest allocations, habitat protection, restoration projects, and other management efforts in order to establish regulations necessary to protect and enhance this fishery.

The western Lake Erie marsh region and its wetlands provide for an abundance of species, as H.R. 4722 points out. It is not unusual for a lakeshore visitor on any given day to observe waterfowl including mallards, widgeons, songbirds, swans, herons, egrets, Canada geese and, yes, cormorants.

Also, this area is a home to deer, red foxes, cottontail rabbits, fox squirrels, and a variety of reptiles and amphibians as well as bald eagles, a particular point of pride for those of us who manage wildlife resources in the region. Virtually gone from the state by the mid–1950s, the bald eagle population has been successfully restored thanks to vastly improved lake environment and careful management of coastal resources. This spring, 79 breeding pairs of bald eagles produced 104 young in Ohio most of them in the coastal marshes of the western Lake Erie basin.

While our Department plays a key role in the management of the lake region's fish and game resources, we also manage nearly 1,600 acres of property within the western basin for an exceptional variety of plants, including habitats of prairie wildflowers, sedge meadows, sand dunes, oak openings, an open water estuary all habitat for unique and often rare plant and animal species.

Also in the western basin area, our Department manages eight state parks that consist of nearly 3,500 land acres. This property includes campsites, launch ramps, swimming beaches, picnic areas and hiking trails that provide for various recreational opportunities along the lake benefitting a multitude. And, we oversee recreational boating, with more than 417,000 registered recreational watercraft the majority of which spend all or a good portion of time in Lake Erie waters. As a result, there are more than 300 marinas along Ohio's 262 miles of Lake Erie shoreline, and prime boating opportunities abound.

Reviewing H.R. 4722 from the perspective of these diverse responsibilities on Lake Erie, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources strongly supports the creation of the Lake Erie Western Basin Wildlife Refuge, as proposed in this legislation. We agree that development of such a refuge will help to ensure an abundance of ecological and conservation improvements that will truly benefit this "Great Lake" and the millions of Americans who benefit from it.

In particular, we note features of this legislation that support our existing and to date very successful efforts by Ohio and its Lake Erie partners to protect the lake's resources and ensure their future well-being:

- The development of this wildlife refuge is based strictly upon on the voluntary acquisition of land from willing sellers or donors.
- It is focused on the lake and its immediate coastal area, including the exceptional resources of the Lake Erie islands.

- It provides for partnerships as its key building blocks: partnerships of public and private entities and of state, Federal and local governments.
- It is based on a doctrine of multiple use, ensuring that hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation are its primary public uses.
- And it is visionary. The proposed refuge and the philosophy of natural resources management it embodies address what we in Ohio are doing as we work toward our regional, state and local goals for the future of Lake Erie.

These are goals addressed in the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan, prepared by Governor Bob Taft and his administration as Ohio's long-term action agenda for improving the environmental, recreational and economic assets of our state's single most important natural resource.

Finally, establishment of the Lake Erie Western Basin Wildlife Refuge would complement important Federal/state/local investments being made in this resource, including a $201 million Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program in the lake's western watershed, new and aggressive efforts by state and local partners to eliminate nonpoint source pollution in tributary streams and the acquisition of key lakeshore properties for public use and recreation.

Should the proposed refuge come to fruition, we in Ohio would look forward to greatly strengthening important efforts already underway as we work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Michigan, our Canadian partners and others to ensure that our resources within the lake's Western Basin and the entire Lake Erie watershed continue to thrive for future generations

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I will gladly respond to any questions.

Mr. GILCHREST. What was that book you held up, Mr. Speck?

Mr. SPECK. Pardon?

Mr. GILCHREST. The book you held up.

Mr. SPECK. This is the plan developed by the Lake Erie Commission and introduced by—announced by Governor Taft of the lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan that the State government agencies, in cooperation with a wide range of partners, have developed as our long-range plan for the protection and restoration of the Ohio part of Lake Erie.

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you. Is Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge mentioned in that plan?

Mr. SPECK. No. Because this plan was done in 2000, and I don't think we were that far along with this proposal at that time. But certainly Ottawa was considered to be an integral part of our work as well as the other Federal sites.

Mr. GILCHREST. I see. Thank you.

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Theodore Mastroianni.

STATEMENT OF THEODORE MASTROIANNI, SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR MAYOR JACK FORD, TOLEDO, OHIO

Mr. MASTROIANNI. Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to testify before this body on behalf of the Mayor of Toledo, Ohio. The Mud Hens also say hello.

Mayor Jack Ford sends his greetings to the Subcommittee members and to Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur. I also want to thank our Member of Congress, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, for introducing H.R. 4722. We are very proud and honored to be represented by Ms. Kaptur.

My name is Theodore Mastroianni. I am employed by the City of Toledo as a special consultant for operations. I have served in different capacities in government for over 35 years. During those years, I served in two major cities as an official in the Departments of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs.

I want to convey Mayor Jack Ford's commitment to this important H.R. 4722. As we read through it, the bill made clear sense to include Canada, our bordering States, Federal agencies, and local jurisdictions in addressing the problems and challenges facing us. We are not only a multistate region, but an international region as well. We all enjoy Lake Erie, and are collectively responsible for its well-being and for the wetlands, swamps, and rivers feeding it.

One item that caught our attention was a documentation of the lost coastal marsh and swamp system of the western basin starting after 1850. According to H.R. 4722, prior to that year, 1850, we had approximately 122,000 hectors, or 305,000 acres. By 1951, only 12,407 hectors remain. Half of that total was lost between 1972 and 1987. Only 5,000 hectors, or 12,500 acres remain. Let me repeat this. We have only 5,000 hectors or 12,500 acres left from 305,000 acres. All was lost within the last 150 years.

The Canada-Ontario Agreement respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem states: Wetlands are valuable pieces of real estate. They are natural water filtration plants and flood control reservoirs and tourist sites.

Why do we need to protect our wetlands, marshes and swamps? Only for the birds and other wildlife? Well, let's look at the hard side of it. Let's look at the economic side. The City of Toledo has had a stormwater sewage problem for many years. When severe storms and heavy rains hit the surrounding area, our storm system cannot handle the load. In turn, the stormwater floods the raw sewage filtration systems and forces raw sewage into our streams, rivers, and Lake Erie.

When marshes, swamps, and wetlands existed, water was diverted naturally to those areas. The waters were filtered through the wetlands into Lake Erie. As we developed and filled in the wetlands, our problems grew. No wonder the loss from 305,000 to 12,5000 acres has created a problem.

What does this mean to Toledo and its citizens? It means an Environmental Protection Agency and the Justice Department suit has been ordered to correct the problem. The correction will mean $400 million in costs and doubling of the water and sewage rates for our citizens. If we continue losing our wetlands and not try to restore them, what will be the additional cost to the region and to this city?

Even though many of us want to save the wetlands, it is more than just saving the beauty of a wetland marsh or swamp, to hear the frogs and birds sing, or to see the butterflies move along the wildflowers on a summer morning. It is to appreciate the love of life. It means tourists can snap photographs. It means all of us can enjoy the beauty.

These areas are also needed so the fish in Lake Erie can procreate in the wetlands. These areas also give life to many species that are vital to our well-being, and it can help control flooding. According to the U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet, F S093-01, August 2001, it states: Lake Erie is the 11th largest freshwater lake in the world, and has the most productive fishing in all of the Great Lakes.

When someone asks, "What use is that wetland?" and "It won't cost us anything to fill it in and develop," ask them about the $400

million storm sewage system that must be enlarged and improved, or ask the fishermen who complain about the depletion of fish in the lake.

The City of Toledo thinks this is more than just saving some swamp area. This is about improving our quality of life and the thousands of people who will live after us.

I close with this quote from Mr. Aldo Leopold, an American naturalist, a Midwestern citizen, and an author:

"we abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you very much, Mr. Mastroianni. Well said.

Mr. MASTROIANNI. Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mastroianni follows:]

Statement of Theodore Mastroianni, Representing Mayor Ford of Toledo, Ohio

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to testify before this body on behalf of the Mayor of Toledo, Ohio. Mayor Jack Ford sends his greetings to the Subcommittee members and to Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur. I also want to thank our Member of Congress, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur for introducing H.R. 4722. We are very proud and honored to be represented by Ms. Kaptur.

My name is Theodore Mastroianni. I am employed by the City of Toledo as a special consultant for operations. I have served in different capacities in government for over 35 years. During those years, I served in two major cities as an official in the Departments of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs.

I want to convey Mayor Jack Ford's commitment to this important H.R. 4722. As we read through it, the Bill made clear sense to include Canada, our bordering states, Federal agencies and local jurisdictions in addressing the problems and challenges facing us. We are not only a multi state region but an international region as well. We all enjoy Lake Erie and are collectively responsible for its well-being and for the wetlands, swamps and rivers feeding it.

One item that caught our attention was the documentation of the lost coastal marsh and swamp system of the Western Basin starting after 1850. According to H.R. 4722, prior to that the year 1850, we had approximately 122,000 hectares or 305,000 acres. By 1951 only 12,407 hectares remained. Half of that total was lost between 1972 and 1987. Only 5,000 hectares or 12,500 acres remain. Let me repeat this: we have only 5,000 hectares or 12,500 acres left from 305,000 acres. All was lost within 150 years.

The Canada/Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem states, " Wetlands are valuable pieces of real estate. They are natural water filtration plants and flood control reservoirs...and tourist sites.

Why do we need to protect our wetlands, marshes and swamps? Only for the birds, and other wildlife? Well, let's look at the hard side of it. Let's look at the economic side. The City of Toledo has had a storm water sewage problem for many years. When severe storms and heavy rains hit the surrounding area, our storm system cannot handle the load. In turn, the storm water floods the raw sewage filtration system and forces raw sewage into our streams, rivers and Lake Erie. When marshes, swamps and wetlands existed, water was diverted naturally to those areas. The waters were filtered through the wetlands into Lake Erie. As we developed and filled in the wetlands our problems grew. No wonder the loss from 305,000 acres to 12,500 acres has created a problem. What does this mean to Toledo and its citizens? It means an Environmental Protection Agency and a Justice Department suit has been ordered to correct the problem. The correction will mean $400 million dollar in costs and doubling of the water and sewage rates for its citizens. If we continue losing our wetlands and not try to restore them what will be the additional cost to the region and the city?

Even though many of us want to save the wetlands, it is more than just saving the beauty of a wetland, marsh or swamp. To hear the frogs and birds sing or to see the butterflies move along the wild flowers on a summer morning. It is to appre-

ciate the love of life. It means tourists can snap photographs. It means all can enjoy the beauty. These areas are also needed so the fish in Lake Erie can procreate in the wetlands. These areas also give life to many species that are vital to our well-being and it can help control flooding.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet FS093–01, August 2001, states, "Lake Erie is the 11th largest fresh water lake in the world and has the most productive fishing in all of the Great Lakes." When someone asks, "What use is that wetland?" and "It won't cost us anything to fill it in and develop?" ask them about the $400 million dollar storm sewage system that must be enlarged and improved or ask the fisherman who complains about the depletion of fish in the Lake.

The City of Toledo thinks this is more than just saving some swamp area; this is about improving our quality of life and the thousands of people who will live after us. I close with this quote from Mr. Aldo Leopold, an American naturalist, a Midwestern citizen and an author, "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

Thank you.

Mr. GILCHREST. Ms. Melinda Huntley. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF MELINDA HUNTLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LAKE ERIE COASTAL OHIO, INC.

Ms. HUNTLEY. Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee and staff. My name is Melinda Huntley, and I am Executive Director of Lake Erie Coastal Ohio. This is a new nonprofit organization that has been formed to really change the way we look at Lake Erie. Together with tourism professionals and resource managers along the shoreline, we are developing a nature-based tourism strategy for the lake. Tourism is pretty hard to get your hands around. It is not like you can drive down the interstate and you see a factory that says "Tourism made here." We can't be neatly bottled or packaged and placed on a shelf, but we are an important industry.

Ms. HUNTLEY. In fact, for some communities of the Lake Erie Western Basin area we are defined as being their GM plant. Tourism generates over $7 billion for the Lake Erie coastal area and is responsible for supporting over 260,000 jobs.

But we are an industry at risk. Over the last 6 years we have lost approximately 21 percent market share. One of the reasons for this is our inability to respond to changing consumer trends, and thus we have not diversified our product.

We are not as well known for our massive glacial bedrock systems, or spectacular spring migratory systems as we are known for our roller coasters, which has created a complete dependence on the family travel market which is highly seasonal. This results in an economy that has—72 percent of all Ohio trips are actually marketable trips, are seasonal trips compared to the U.S. Norm of about 62 percent.

Our season used to extend from Memorial Day until Labor day. Now we have shrunk to about 5 weeks. A lot of this is due to the fact that we have increased time demands in the family market. Those of you who have children know you have baseball camps, baseball games, church camps, you name it, that extend to mid-July, only to follow up with football practices and band camps in early August. The family market is shrinking. Dual working parents have also complicated the situation, creating a complete dominance of the area on weekend travel only.

If Lake Erie continues to focus only on those attractions that appeal to the family travel vacation market we will continue to be faced with shrinking seasons and weekend travel domination. This leads to price cutting, less visitor spending and continued decline of tax revenues.

On the other hand, nature tourism is growing at 10 to 30 percent, compared to typical travel at 4 percent. They include hiking, fishing, photography, visiting historic areas and natural sites.

But the fastest-growing recreational activity out there right now is bird watching, which has increased 301 percent since 1982. If you find that hard to believe, consider David Sibley's bird identification book spent multiple weeks on the New York Times Bestseller List and at one time was number 20 on Amazon.com as a bestseller.

The proposed expansion area is located at the junction of two major flyways that bring in neotropical warbler migrations spring and fall. This means it also brings in the bird watchers who come to see these species. In fact, bird watching generates over $5.6 million for businesses surrounding the Ottawa Refuge area. These nature tourists have both discretionary time and dollars. They travel midweek and they also travel year-round because, unlike an amusement park, nature's attractions change every day.

The Western Basin expansion will expand public access. People are desiring places that are remote and untouched, and along Lake Erie we are not remotely untouched.

Mr. Chairman, we do not have a Grand Canyon. We do not have a Yosemite. But we do have one of the most prolific and best freshwater lakes on the planet. Yet we haven't done a real good job of providing access to that resource. In fact, only 15 percent of the lake shoreline is accessible.

The expansion of the refuge will attract more visitors to provide an increased wildlife viewing opportunities as well as the increase biodiversity that will occur with a more cohesive habitat corridor. The expansion of the refuge will protect existing public lands.

We simply do not have the time to delay acquisitions. The demand for outdoor recreation is projected to grow 15 to 30 percent by the year 2010, yet the acreage available for these activities is expected to decrease 6 to 8 percent. This means increased pressures on existing parks. Additional public lands will help satisfy this increased demand by shifting activities to more than a handful of sites.

The refuge expansion will also protect Lake Erie's long-term health. You don't need a scientist to tell us that people prefer to live, work and play by waters that are clean. From an economic standpoint, if the water quality of Lake Erie were to decline again, fewer people would choose to visit Lake Erie.

Thank you for permitting me to speak about the importance of our natural areas to the economics of the Lake Erie Western Basin economy. The natural attractiveness and desirability of the coastal region as a year-round travel destination depends upon maintaining the ecological integrity of Lake Erie. Our natural region is, in fact, our greatest economic asset.

Thank you.

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you, Ms. Huntley. I understand that you responded in a very quick fashion from our original request. It is well appreciated.

Ms. HUNTLEY. Well, I appreciate the opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Huntley follows:]

Statement of Melinda Huntley, Executive Director, Lake Erie Coastal Ohio, Inc.

Good morning Chairman Gilchrest, Ranking Minority Member Underwood, and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Melinda Huntley, and I am executive director of Lake Erie Coastal Ohio, Inc., a new nonprofit organization that has been created to change the way we look at Lake Erie. This organization is governed by a board representing tourism professionals, natural and historical resource managers, and community planners from across the Lake Erie shoreline, and our goal is to increase visitor spending along Lake Erie through marketing our rich natural and historical resources.

I stand before you today, not as an expert on natural resources or conservation methods, but as an economic development specialist interested in the future sustainability of Lake Erie tourism and dependent industries. My comments will address three areas: the status of Lake Erie tourism and impending threats and opportunities, nature-based tourism as a tool for reversing trends that threaten our livelihood, and the probable impact of the Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge to the basin's economic stability.

Tourism Economics in the Lake Erie Western Basin

Tourism within the Lake Erie coastal counties supports more than 264,00 jobs and provides tax revenues to support infrastructure improvements and a wide range of social services. Lake Erie direct sales to travelers totaled $7.3 billion in 1999. Including direct and indirect efforts, state and local taxes generated in the region in 1999 were $599.7 million and $608 million respectively (Longwoods/Rovelstad, 2000). Travel and tourism sales taxes generated the second largest revenue pool of state sales tax, second only to automobile sales.

It's also an industry at risk. Tourism businesses in the State of Ohio have experienced a 21% decline in market share over the last six years (Longwoods International, 1999). Factors contributing to this loss include noncompetitive funding of the state's tourism budget, increased regional and global competition, and changing visitors trends. These shifting patterns of consumer needs and desires should be considered as opportunities, not as threats.

Despite the changing preferences of travelers, the Lake Erie tourism industry has not diversified its product offering to meet these needs. This has created an unhealthy dependence only on the family travel market due to tradition, as well as the promotional efforts of a major amusement park in the region that outspends the State of Ohio in advertising dollars, dollars directed toward the family travel market. The family travel market is highly seasonal, resulting in a Lake Erie tourism economy with a disproportionate number of low-paying service sector jobs and higher unemployment rates. Travelers visiting Ohio April through September represent 72% of all Ohio overnight marketable trips, as compared to the U.S. norm of 62% (Longwoods International, 1999).

U.S. travelers report that the major reasons they do not travel include lack of time and lack of vacation time (TIA 2001). Lake Erie's tourism season used to stretch from Memorial Day to Labor Day, but this is no longer the case. Families are increasingly time-pressed, and organized summer recreational activities such as baseball games, camps, and band practices now last at least till mid–June only to resume in early August. Dual working parents have further complicated the situation by forcing families to vacation predominantly on the weekend. Weekend travel has risen a startling 72% since 1986 compared to weekday travel increases of 15% (TIA, 1997).

If Lake Erie continues to focus only on those attractions that appeal to the family vacation market, we will continue to be faced with shrinking seasons and weekend travel domination. This translates to continued price-cutting, less visitor spending, and the continued decline of tax revenues generated by the tourism industry.

Another important market for Northwest Ohio is sportfishing, representing approximately 22% of tourism spending. This market is also at risk. Consumer participation in sportfishing, and other consumptive wildlife activities, is decreasing nationwide, with a 28% drop in anglers between 1991 and 2001 (US Fish and Wildlife,

2002). From 1989 to 1999, fishing license sales declined by 25.8 percent in the State of Ohio.

Nature-based Tourism as an Economic Tool

Nature-based tourism is gaining popularity among travelers as well as communities seeking to benefit from its economic and conservation results. Visitor demands for activities are shifting to those heritage-oriented, nonconsumptive, participatory and educational. Among the top activities desired by U.S. travelers are general outdoor activities (17%), visiting historical places and museums (14%), beaches (10%), visiting national/state parks (10%), and cultural events/festivals (10%) (TIA, 1999). In addition, 35% of U.S. travelers are seeking destinations they've never been before, and 34% are seeking destinations that are remote and untouched (Cook, 2002).

Nature tourism is increasing at an annual rate of 10% to 30%, compared with an overall tourism growth of 4% (Reingold, 1993). The four most popular outdoor activities are walking, visiting a beach or waterside, family gatherings and sightseeing. Secondary to these, but still attracting at least 20 million participants each year, are hiking, camping, visiting nature centers and historic sites, wildlife viewing, studying nature near water, freshwater fishing, motorboating, swimming and picnicking. The sharpest rise in outdoor activity popularity has been in birdwatching. Since 1982–83, birdwatching has increased 301% from 21.2 million participants to 84.9 million (USDA, Univ. of Tennessee, 2000)

Caution should be used when comparing these results to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife–Association Recreation report. Although this survey shows wildlife viewing as the only wildlife-related recreation to have experienced an increase during the most recent survey period, it understates the level of activity compared to fishing and hunting. Fishing and hunting require licenses to be purchased, and therefore participants can be counted no matter what their level of involvement. It is more difficult to quantify the level of wildlife/nature viewing because there is no direct licensing database to count.

Individual ecotourism efforts along Lake Erie near the proposed refuge site are already underway. Lake Erie Wing Watch is a marketing coalition of wildlife managers and tourism professionals in Erie, Ottawa, and Lorain counties. Located at the junction of two waterfowl flyways, these counties attract colorful neotropical bird migrations every spring and fall. These areas also attract the bird watchers, who spend more than $5.6 million in the local community. (Kerlinger, 1994)

Who are these nature travelers, and why will additional efforts to attract them benefit Lake Erie's tourism economy? Profiles of the nature and heritage traveler depict them as being Baby Boomers with an average age of 52.1 years and a household size of 2.45 persons (Eubanks). They have both discretionary time and dollars. They also travel year-round, as nature's attractions vary with the seasons.

Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge: Expanding Public Access

Only 15% of the lake's 262-mile Ohio shoreline is accessible to the public (Ohio Lake Erie Commission, 2000). Lake Erie Coastal Ohio was formed to promote the natural and historic treasures of Lake Erie to the nature tourism traveler in order to diversity our product line, minimize the seasonality of our marketplace and increase the economic impact through direct visitor spending. In March 2002, we completed a shoreline Resource Inventory of sites that would be of interest to the nature traveler, an interesting challenge consider the expanse of development that has occurred along our shoreline in just 200 years.

This patchwork assemblage of sites is stitched together with common natural and historical themes. Additional public lands would increase our ability to attract these visitors through increased wildlife viewing opportunities, as well as the increased biodiversity that would occur with a more cohesive habitat corridor.

Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge: Protecting Existing Public Lands

The demand for outdoor recreation is projected to grow, while the acreage available for these activities is projected to decrease. This means increased pressures on existing parks. Recreational activities away from home that are expected to grow by 2008 include those found at refuge areas and other public lands in the western basin region. They include day hiking (30% projected growth), bicycling (23% projected growth), sightseeing (18% projected growth), wildlife observation (15% projected growth), camping (13% projected growth) and canoeing/kayaking (13% projected growth) (Pollock). Yet, the amount of acreage in wilderness areas is expected to decrease 6% to 8% by 2010 (Pollock).

If this trend is not reversed, existing wilderness areas will see increased usage at a rate that may devastate the resources. Additional public lands will satisfy this increased demand by shifting activities to more than a handful of sites.

Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge: Protecting Lake Erie's Long-Term Health

Scientists don't have to tell us that people prefer to live, work and play by waters that are clean. In just 200 years, we've removed more than 90% of the wetlands bordering our Great Lake. This would alter any body of water, but for Lake Erie, it's an even greater shock to the system. Lake Erie is the shallowest of all the Great Lakes, making it the most fragile and susceptible to change.

Shoreline habitat, including wetlands, provides vital functions for maintaining the balance of Lake Erie. They dissipate wave energy thus protecting the nearshore ecosystems, and they improve the water quality through absorption of toxins and nutrients. They also provide sediment control. When these areas are removed, the waters are no longer filtered properly and the water quality suffers.

From an economic standpoint, if the water quality of Lake Erie were to decline, fewer people would choose to visit, work and live by its shore. It's that simple.

Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge: Other Considerations

As further discussions are held regarding H.R. 4722, it's also important to ensure adequate funding to operate and maintain the future refuge. The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge has done an excellent job documenting a long-term comprehensive plan for maintaining and enhancing the existing refuge sites. Among the recommendations are improvements to the interpretive functions and infrastructure to enhance the experience for the public. Now is the time to consider the operating budget requirements for infrastructure improvements, such as trails and visitor interpretation centers that will protect, as well as enhance, the refuge for future guests.

The Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge planning committee should consider the future roles of existing refuges, and the interpretive structure and wildlife- viewing infrastructure at all sites, during the planning process.

Conclusion

Thank you for permitting me to speak about the importance of our natural areas to the economic future of the Lake Erie Western Basin. The natural attractiveness and desirability of the coastal region as a year-round travel destination depends upon maintaining the ecological integrity of Lake Erie. Our natural region is in fact our greatest economic asset. Thank you.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cook, Suzanne, 2002, Travel Industry Association of America and AAA Summer Travel Forecast Press Conference, Washington, DC. May 16, 2002.

Eubanks, Ted, and Davidson, Seth, 2000, The Business of Nature, Fermata, Inc., Austin, TX.

Kerlinger, Paul, 1994, The Economic Impact of Birding Ecotourism on the Magee Marsh Wildlife Area/Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Area, Ohio.

Longwoods, International and Rovelstad and Associates, 2000, The Economic Impact, Performance and Profile of the Lake Region of Ohio Travel and Tourism Industry.

Longwoods International, 1999, Ohio 1999 Travel Year, research study for Ohio Department of Development, Division of Travel and Tourism.

Ohio Lake Erie Commission, 2000, Lake Erie Protection & Restoration Plan, Toledo, Ohio

Pollock, Sean R. (ed.) (1995). Statistical Forecasts of the United States. New York: Gale Research Inc.

Reingold, L., 1993, "Identifying the Elusive Ecotourist", Tour and Travel News Supplement (Going Green), October 25: 36–37.

Travel Industry of America (TIA), 1997, The 1997 Travel Market Report.

Travel Industry of America (TIA), 1999, The 1999 Travel Market Report.

Travel Industry of America (TIA), 2001, The 2001 Travel Market Report.

USDA Forest Service and the University of Tennessee, 2000, National Survey on Recreation and the Environment.

US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife–Associated Recreation. Preliminary Findings.

Mr. GILCHREST. Oh wait. Ms. Chase. I am getting names mixed up—names with faces. All I know about Ohio is Route 80. I shouldn't admit that, but I have been back and forth across. But I am going to stop the next time I go through there.

Miss Edith Chase. Welcome, ma'am.

STATEMENT OF EDITH CHASE, PRESIDENT, OHIO COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT, INC.

Ms. CHASE. Mr. Chairman and members, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to talk with you today.

The Ohio Coastal Resource Management Project is a nonprofit citizens organization that works on Lake Erie coastal issues, and we are celebrating our 20th anniversary this year. Last March I was on a guided tour of northwest Ohio marshes and saw the eagles and the ducks and the migratory birds coming in for the annual spring migration. That was quite a day.

We strongly support H.R. 4722 because coastal marshes have very important functions for Lake Erie and, as Mr. Mastroianni said, coastal marshes serve to reduce flooding and erosion, filter out pollutants and provide wildlife habitat and spawning and nursery grounds for fish and aquatic life. The marshes provide ecosystem services such as these of a value of over $4,000 per year at essentially no current cost.

These coastal wetlands are on the flyway and play a crucial role in migratory water fowl management for nesting and resting areas. Ohio has already lost over 90 percent of its wetlands across the State, so each additional marsh area is very important to protect for the future.

In addition, as Ms. Huntley said, travel and tourism are a $27 billion industry in Ohio, second largest industry in the State. Coastal wetlands attract visitors and residents for hunting, fishing, boating, birding and enjoyment of Lake Erie; and when you come to Ohio I will invite you to come and watch the sunset over Lake Erie because a lot of folks do, part of the quality of life.

Mr. GILCHREST. I would be happy to do that, Ms. Chase.

Ms. CHASE. Good.

This legislation will enable government to purchase or accept donations of private land along the shoreline for parks or habitat on a completely voluntary basis, and we commend the cooperation of the States of Michigan and Ohio and urge for prompt passage.

Again, thank you for the opportunity; and I will be happy to answer any questions that you have.

Mr. GILCHREST. Yes, ma'am. Thank you so much for coming.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Chase follows:]

Statement of Edith Chase, President,
Ohio Coastal Resource Management Project

The Ohio Coastal Resource Management Project, a nonprofit citizens organization, supports H.R. 4722 to provide for the establishment of the Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge in the states of Ohio and Michigan. We commend the cooperation of these two Great Lakes states to enhance the protection of Western Lake Erie marshes, those valuable and vulnerable wetlands that serve to reduce flooding and erosion, filter out pollutants, and to provide wildlife habitat and spawning and nursery areas for fish and aquatic life.

Conflicting ideas of appropriate land use and high land values have already caused destruction of many wetland areas along the Lake Erie shoreline. Wetlands

are among the most economically productive lands in the state, providing that they remain wetlands. Each acre of wetland yearly performs over $4,000 in services, such as reduction in nearshore sediment, nutrient and contaminant loading, and shore erosion, at essentially no current cost. The coastal wetlands are the prime waterfowl habitat in Ohio. These wetlands are on the flyway and play a crucial role in the migratory waterfowl management for nesting and resting areas.

In addition, travel and tourism are a $27 billion industry in Ohio, the second largest industry in the state. Coastal wetlands attract visitors and residents for hunting, fishing, boating, beaches, picnicking, hiking, biking, birding, and enjoyment of Lake Erie. These wetlands also provide opportunities for research and education for all Ohioans.

This wildlife refuge legislation would enable government to purchase or accept donations of private land along the shoreline that later would be turned over for public use as parkland or protected as habitat. Private participation is completely voluntary, according to this bill.

OCRMP urges prompt passage of this bill to authorize the Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge. Your consideration is very much appreciated.

Mr. GILCHREST. I guess I would—Fish and Wildlife raised a number of reservations, and so what I would like to do is maybe get some of those reservations at least partially resolved during the question period here so that we can move forward to see how we can, with the State, the private sector, the local communities and, actually, the Canadians, can move forward in a cooperative fashion.

I don't think anybody sitting at the table feels that every square inch that is left that is wetland or habitat open space does not deserve to be protected in some fashion. I guess it is a matter of how we proceed to insure that everybody involved in this, whether it is the Feds, the State, whoever in Canada, local government, private interest parties move together to create this structure to make it happen.

Is there—and I guess maybe, Mr. Speck, I will start with you. The boundaries and the cost estimates, is there some clarity in what the boundaries will be or are right now and is there some estimate as to what the complete package would cost?

Mr. SPECK I have not seen that data to date in that I think what we are really looking at is an area that would be subject to possible inclusion over time in a wildlife refuge. Obviously, there is development in that area that is within the map that is being developed that would not fall within the refuge. Indeed, there are communities, and the mapping of that maps an area where clearly not all of it would be included in the refuge in the future.

Mr. GILCHREST. Now, Mr. Stieglitz talked about the comprehensive plan that—did I pronounce it wrong?

Mr. STIEGLITZ. That is all right, Mr. Chairman. I am used to it.

Mr. GILCHREST. How do you pronounce your last name?

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Stieglitz.

Mr. GILCHREST. OK. My glasses aren't working this morning. Mr. Stieglitz.

Mr. Stieglitz talked about this requirement that all refuges had to come up with a comprehensive plan for that refuge—what it was going to be used for, the potential possible expansion of it. Now—and they have public hearings during that process. Has this Western Basin concept been part of that public hearing process with Fish and Wildlife?

Mr. SPECK I don't know that that has been to date, has it? I am unaware if it has been—yeah. I am correct when I said I am un-

aware that it has been, and we are told that it has not been to date.

Mr. GILCHREST. So this process—how would you on the ground in Ohio move to begin trying to incorporate this into that management plan? I guess anybody up here can offer suggestions on that.

Ms. HUNTLEY. Mr. Chairman, I would like to mention that there was one public hearing held, at least one public hearing for this refuge expansion that was held—I think it was July 8 was the date for that. So I wanted to correct that for the record.

Mr. GILCHREST. I see.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Mr. Chairman, I would also like to respond. The area that is within the relative map for the Lake Erie Western Basin National Wildlife Refuge was considered during the 1994 preliminary project proposal when the 5,000 acre expansion was proposed, and those lands were also reviewed again and considered during the current CCP process not as the Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge but as potential expansion areas to the existing refuges.

Mr. GILCHREST. So the areas that are—I know the boundaries aren't perfectly clear. But I am looking at this map. So the potential—I am assuming this map has come from—where did we get this map from? Oh, Fish and Wildlife gave us this map.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Yes, sir.

Mr. GILCHREST. So is what we see here the total 5,000 acres?

Mr. STIEGLITZ. No, sir. That—pardon me for not knowing my colors better. That kind of peachy color that is identified was a focus area that was used as sort of a rough boundary in which we would look at lands that might contribute to the purposes of the refuges that were established. So that is much greater than 5,000 acres.

Mr. GILCHREST. So I guess I would ask either Mr. Speck or Mr. Mastroianni or Ms. Huntley or Ms. Chase, does this mirror at all what you are trying to do? Have you seen this map?

Ms. HUNTLEY. Yes, absolutely. It mirrors what we are looking to do and also mirrors the ecological habitats that must be protected along the Western Basin.

My understanding—correct me if I am wrong—but in the CCP that was developed by the Ottawa Wildlife Refuge some years ago I happened to take part in part of that process and some of this land was identified then as possible subject areas for future acquisition. I think it boils down to—I believe Mr. Speck identified it the best, that we are not seeking the immediate acquisition of some of these projects at this point but that it provides the way to acquire these lands in the future, and that that future is rapidly occurring and this land is becoming lost.

Mr. GILCHREST. I understand that you are not looking for the acquisition dollars immediately but over a period of time that this can be acquired in the future. Is it something that has to be done by Fish and Wildlife, that can't be acquired by—in part by the State of Ohio, by the City of Toledo? Are there any pieces that can be joined together through a cooperative purchasing agreement that runs right from the Feds to the State to the local community?

Ms. HUNTLEY. I think partnerships are key.

I think also, in regard to some of the concerns that were brought up by the Fish and Wildlife Service, I think we have got to be quite

creative in being able to provide public access as well as being able to provide the infrastructure at these sites to enable a visitor to see them. I think even with some of the operating and maintenance costs that are being dealt with by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service we need to be a little more creative in reaching out to private industry and to other entities to help with those, and I think those partners would be available in this region. It is very important to us, and I will let Director Speck mention a little bit about the State partnership.

Mr. SPECK Right. A couple of comments, Mr. Chairman.

First, the peachy map area, we don't see—we are not here to say we want all of this to be purchased by the Federal Government and taken over as a refuge of this scope at all. We don't see it as what is really in the future in the best of all worlds. But, rather, that by designating this area as an area in which the Federal Government can partner with other parties that we would find what areas we could bring enough land and marshland and water together to make groupings that could be managed as refuges, and we would see that as a partnership between the Federal Government and the State government.

You know, we are talking about the Ottawa Refuge being directly adjacent to our own Magee Marsh Refuge right now. I know that the representative, principal sponsor, Congressman Kaptur is talking about, I think in another Committee, money for a new visitor center at Ottawa. I am not certain we shouldn't be talking about a joint visitor center. I think there are ways in which we can work in putting those things together.

In Iowa, on the Iowa River, I am told there is a Federal refuge adjacent to the State's refuge. There is actually a contract between Fish and Wildlife and the State for the State to manage that Federal portion, and I can see that going in two directions.

I think we have to be creative here in finding ways to partner in putting this all together. It should be one in which the State plays a role and the State's land holdings play a role and we may purchase some parts of this together, just as we have done in the past in a number of other ways, whether it be land and water conservation funds or a variety of other sources of funds where we partner with various Federal agencies to acquire lands.

Mr. GILCHREST. I think you are absolutely correct, and I think we are moving into an era where the Feds can't do everything, the States can't do everything, the City of Toledo can't do everything unless you can tap into match and get some of those revenue streams for the City of Toledo.

But I have some more questions. What I would like to do—and I think we can work through the mechanics of this. The important thing is the last few square inches of fragile ecosystems we can't afford to let go. So we will work through this process and create a structure that can tap into all of the available creativity and the resources.

But at this point I yield to the gentleman from American Samoa, Mr. Faleomavaega.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to ask unanimous consent that the statement by Mr. Alan Front dated July 18, 2002, be submitted and be made part of the record.

Mr. GILCHREST. Without objection.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Front follows:]

Statement of Alan Front, Senior Vice President, The Trust for Public Land

Mr. Chairman and Representative Underwood, on behalf of the Trust for Public Land, and our local partners Erie MetroParks, Ohio B.A.S.S. Chapter Federation, and the Black Swamp Conservancy, I thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee today and offer the strong support of the for H.R. 4722, to establish the new Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge that it will authorize. I urge you to guide this important legislation to the timely enactment it deserves.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit organization that works with private landowners, public agencies, community leaders, and other partners to conserve landscapes with compelling natural, recreational, cultural, and other resource values. Since its founding in 1972, TPL has assisted in over 2,000 willing-seller public acquisitions involving well over a million acres of resource lands. From this on-the-ground perspective, I would like to share with the Committee my organization's view that:

- The proposed Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge is a logical extension of newly created Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, which was strongly supported by Congress last year;
- The proposed Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge is also a logical extension of the existing Ottawa, Cedar Point, and West Sister Island National Wildlife Refuges in northwestern Ohio;
- The time to act is now to preserve the unique and important natural resources of the Lake Erie western basin or risk losing this opportunity forever; and
- The legislation before you today has been carefully crafted by Congresswoman Kaptur and Congressman Dingell to provide a focused approach to addressing community and ecological needs, and promoting public-private partnerships in Ohio and Michigan to safeguards the region's natural resources.

The unique landscapes across America provide the regions of our country with their distinctive character and identity. Lake Erie is the defining geographic feature of northwestern Ohio and southeastern Michigan. Lake Erie is to this part of the country what the Chesapeake Bay is to the coasts of Maryland and Virginia, what the Grand Canyon is to northern Arizona, what the Puget Sound is to the shores of Washington State, and what the Grand Tetons are to western Wyoming.

Lake Erie is one part of the Great Lakes, the largest freshwater system in the world. Indeed, the Great Lakes account for more than 90 percent of the surface freshwater in the United States. Lake Erie itself is the eleventh largest lake in the world by surface area. This abundance of freshwater has been integral to the economic might of northwestern Ohio and southeastern Michigan and safeguarding this natural resource is essential to the future economic vitality of the region.

Lake Erie is also an extraordinarily productive natural resource. Lake Erie's fisheries are by far the most productive of the Great Lakes and the walleye fishing in Lake Erie is widely regarded as the finest in the world. A popular destination for anglers, the lake's western basin is world-renowned and last year boasted an astounding walleye harvest of 1.2 million fish. Lake Erie is also known for amazing yellow perch, smallmouth bass, and steelhead trout angling opportunities. Ohio anglers caught nearly 5.5 million yellow perch and 28,000 steelhead trout last season, and the lake's smallmouth fishery continues to be among the best in the country.

The western basin of Lake Erie is at the intersection of the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways, representing one of the most diverse and important bird flyways in the country. An extraordinary array of migratory birds can be observed here, including the bufflehead, common golden eye, common merganser, and ruddy duck. With over 300 species in the western basin of Lake Erie, the region is one of the top ten birding spots in the entire country. During the spring and fall migrations, birdwatchers from across the country and around the world flock to the shores of western Lake Erie to observe this spectacular site.

The wetlands along the western Lake Erie shoreline also provide extraordinary habitat for nesting waterfowl, including the largest concentration of American Black Duck in the nation. Areas to be included within the proposed refuge also support

the largest heron and egret breeding colonies in the Great Lakes. These wetlands also support one of the largest populations of nesting bald eagles found anywhere in the Great Lakes region.

However, over the course of the past 150 years, the wetlands of the region have all but disappeared. A dramatic illustration of this is the loss of the Great Black Swamp, which once extended across northwest Ohio into Indiana. Today, less than 5 percent of the Black Swamp remains in existence. What remains, however, provides critical habitat for the eagles, herons, egrets and other waterfowl identified above.

To the east of Toledo, several spectacular islands are found along the shores of the western basin of Lake Erie. Among the inhabitants of these islands is the Lake Erie water snake, a non-poisonous snake that is unique to the islands. The Lake Erie water snake lives along the islands' distinctive limestone shorelines, but has seen its population dramatically decline in recent decades as development has destroyed its habitat. For example, in recent years, the population of the Lake Erie water snake has declined by 75 percent on North Bass Island and by 81 percent on Middle Bass Island.

In 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Lake Erie water snake as being threatened with extinction. The decline in the population of the Lake Erie water snake is a "canary in the coal mine" alerting us to potentially irreversible changes in the ecology of the region and highlighting the need to act now.

H.R. 4722 as introduced by Congresswoman Kaptur and Congressman Dingell is a carefully balanced approach, a helping hand rather than an iron fist, to address the restoration and land-protection needs of the western basin of Lake Erie. Like other legislation approved by this Committee, the bill authorizes acquisition of refuge lands for public management and stewardship. But the Lake Erie Western Basin International Wildlife Refuge Act also includes a variety of provisions specific to the needs of this unique place. With regard to land acquisition, the bill explicitly focuses on charitable land donations and willing-seller purchases, ensuring that all landowner participation will be by choice. It maintains an emphasis on historic public use by sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts. It offers mechanisms for voluntary habitat management agreements between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its private neighbors. This legislation also provides for coordination with Canadian authorities on cooperative approaches to habitat improvement between their side of the western basin of Lake Erie.

We look forward to working with you toward enactment of H.R. 4722, and to the remarkable cooperative model for conservation it will allow for the western basin of Lake Erie.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Stieglitz, I can pretty much appreciate the concerns that the Administration has and the national wildlife service and to the extent that you are always faced with the problem of limited resources and having just tremendous responsibility and then trying to allocate those resources in the way that you feel comfortable in administering the process. Is basically the opposition from the Administration coming in fear that there is going to be additional funding necessary to implement the provisions of this bill?

Mr. STIEGLITZ. That is part of the Administration's concern, yes, sir. The cost of acquisition itself, according to one of our regional refuge realty officers is pennies per acre when considered in perpetuity. But the operational and maintenance cost and potentially restoration as clearly identified in the proposed bill are the greater concern, sir.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. And how much is that, again, for the record in terms of the Administration's understanding how much the cost is going to be?

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Sir, I am sorry. We are unable to evaluate that because the proposed bill does not define a clear area or contain a specific amount of acreage. It would be very difficult for us to es-

timate. I would not feel comfortable at this time making a guess, sir.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. This agreed portion in the peach proposal here in terms of what the bill proposes to acquire, how many acres are we talking about in this proposed bill, or hectares? I would rather call them in acres.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. I don't do metric either, sir. We do not have an exact acreage figure represented by this. We know that it is 175 miles of coastline, but the actual acreage figure I do not have. It is not in the proposed bill.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. You mentioned earlier about the Comprehensive Conservation Program that the Fish and Wildlife administers. How many years has this program been in place in this area of the country as far as conducting studies and review?

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Sir, this was a directive within the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. So this is a process outside of Alaska that we have only been doing for about 5 years, and we basically started from scratch with very little policy, no planning positions. So we have been planning in earnest perhaps for two and a half years since that law was passed.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. What I am concerned about, Mr. Stieglitz, is that we are going to continue reviewing, studying this thing to death and ending up with no results in terms of giving a little more realistic and factual information not only for the Committee but for the Congress to make a final determination of whether or not the proposed legislation has validity and acceptance also by the Congress to move forward in passage of this proposed bill.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. I am sorry, sir. I didn't catch the question in there. I understand your concern that we—

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. The question, Mr. Stieglitz, is that—how many more years are we going to continue making reviews and studies under the Comprehensive Conservation Program?

I believe your colleagues there, members of the panel, all seems to be very positive not only in terms of economic benefits—it is an ecosystem. We are not talking about a destruction of wildlife, the validity that bird watching is the No. 1 enjoyment that the public has. I mean, it is such a win-win situation as far as not only preserving the wetland but as a refuge. It is a very positive activity for the people in these communities, and I just can't understand why the Administration would be not supporting such an effort.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Yes, sir. I am sorry. I caught the question that time. The CCP for the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge complex is completed. It was posted to the Internet within the last month. Based upon that evaluation, which includes stakeholder input, the recommendation that was accepted was that there would not be any additional expansion of refuges in Ohio in addition to that 5,000 acres that was identified in 1994.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Are you suggesting that Mr. Speck and other State leaders and organizations all agree with the results of the Comprehensive Conversation Program review of this additional 5,000 acres?

Mr. STIEGLITZ. No, sir. I am just repeating the results of that particular study. You are asking how long it would take. So that one is complete.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge CCP is just beginning, and I believe we have about 18 months to complete that, sir.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speck, are you familiar with the comprehensive conservation plan as outlined by Mr. Stieglitz and on the part of the administration—as part of the review process?

Mr. SPECK. I have not had an opportunity to review that plan.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Has the Fish and Wildlife Service ever contacted your office and other organizations of Ohio and Michigan State officials about this Comprehensive Conservation Program?

Mr. SPECK. I would imagine that they have, sir. I suspect that when this plan was being put together I was not in office.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Well, how about your predecessors?

Mr. SPECK I am told by our chief of wildlife, who has been in office a good bit longer than I have, that they did contact us and that we did have discussions.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. And that the input given by the State officials of both States has been comprehensive as well in supportive of the idea of expanding this area.

Mr. BUDZIK. Mr. Chairman, yes, we did. We did support the expansion as long as it didn't go deep into the farmland. That is a very intensively farmed area. We did support the expansion of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge but only if it didn't go within a certain mile point in land.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. The reason for my raising the question, Mr. Speck, is that I want to make sure that whatever the Comprehensive Conservation Program puts out in suggesting that after public review and commenting that part of the program review makes a very factual statement about the input from the community leaders, States and every other way.

I mean, you know, I like the idea, well, we ask for public input and then they come out and say something entirely different from what you are proposing or something that you would be supportive of; and I just want to make sure that the Comprehensive Conservation Program does reflect accurately the concerns and what the community leaders of the States are putting in as far as being participants in this Comprehensive Conservation Program.

Mr. SPECK. As Chief Budzik indicated, we are comfortable with that expansion. But you will recall in my own testimony today in indicating reasons why we were supportive of this proposal, one was that we were supportive on the assumption that it would stay close to the water and not be used as a device for moving substantially inland.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Stieglitz, would you be in favor and for which I—you took the words out of my mouth, Mr. Chairman, and some comments made earlier by members of our panel that this can be done on a partnership scale in the situation where administration and the community leaders participated actively so that the entire burden of—if you talk about the financial burden, that this could be done as in partnership with the both State governments and whatever organizations that are willing to be participants in.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Yes, sir; and I believe earlier in my testimony I provided a number of partnership opportunities whereby the States and other local communities and organizations could receive fund-

ing from the Fish and Wildlife Service to protect these areas and restore them without necessarily becoming part of the refuge system. So those opportunities are certainly in place already, sir.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. To suggest that both the Chairman and myself fully support in that pursuing the concept of partnerships and in the process of reviewing the provisions of the bill, how much time do you think the Administration is going to need for the input from our community leaders and from the Members of Congress like Marcy Kaptur and John Dingell so that we can package this thing?

Obviously, we are getting closer and closer to adjournment. But what do you suggest, a time scale that we can start working on this thing so that we come out with a proposed bill that is favorable both to the Administration as well as to our distinguished members that are proposing this legislation?

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Sir, if I understood the question correctly, the Administration does not support the legislation, that we believe that the partnership tools are in place at this time. If the Committee is asking for a more specific evaluation of actual costs and so forth, it would take us probably 2 or 3 weeks after we receive very specific boundary information and so forth to put together a preliminary estimate.

Did I answer your question correctly, sir?

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Oh, that really answers my question very well.

So, in other words, we can really move in getting to the specifics and see where we can go and continue the dialog with your office and our friends from the two States on how we can move this on as far as partnership principle is concerned.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Yes, sir.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. All right. Boy, that is very complimentary to the Administration, Mr. Chairman; and I look forward in working with you and our friends from the Administration to see if we can really move this legislation forward.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the members of the panel and Mr. Stieglitz and administration for their input and, hopefully, that we can work as quickly as we can to move this legislation forwards. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank the members of the panel.

Mr. GILCHREST. Thank you, Mr. Faleomavaega.

This is an interesting proposal in that it is—in one way, it is similar to what I am trying to do in my district along with two other States, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. It is called the Delmarva Peninsula between the Atlantic ocean and the Chesapeake Bay, and we just passed and got signed into law legislation for a pilot project for a conservation corridor from Virginia to Pennsylvania hooking or linking wildlife—existing wildlife refuges, both Federal and State, and existing farmland that—where easements have been purchased. Those would be the hubs for wildlife habitat, and the corridors would link them.

Now, there are no boundaries in that legislation, and there basically is no cost estimate in that legislation. It uses existing authorization through the Department of Agriculture, and we are, on our own, on the parameters partnering with every conceivable potential

ally out there, whether it is other Federal agencies, State agencies, State departments of agriculture, the private sector and so on.

So what I would like to do with Ms. Kaptur and Mr. Dingell and yourselves also, as we move through this process, is maybe some of the language that we used in that legislation—and we have a 5-year pilot project. It is really going to be a 20- or 30-year project that exists in the early stages of development. But we would like to work with you on this in developing something similar so that you can move forward.

I understand Fish and Wildlife's reservations about the ambiguities in the language about the cost and the boundaries and the lack of specifics, and I understand your concept that we have this area out there and we would like to study it and see what are the best areas that can be purchased and at what price. So I think we could probably marry the two of those together and move forward.

I did have one other quick question and maybe it is to Mrs. Huntley about wanting to increase access. I guess my question is, how do you provide increased access without increased degradation of the very habitat you are trying to protect?

Ms. HUNTLEY. That is a question that has been studied for quite a while, and it is something we are taking into consideration as we develop our strategy.

We also know it has got to be a hand-in-hand process as we go about identifying some of the resources along Lake Erie. We are also providing some of the tools for site managers to help minimize some of this impact. There are obvious areas that are hands-off, that you don't want additional people to visit. But there are also areas with boardwalks in place and the funding to be able to generate some of those boardwalks and interpretation where public access is important, because that is the only way you are going to reach the conservation message to other people. So that is something we are taking into consideration as we go through our presentation and our strategic plan.

One of the things we want to put into effect is a conservation fund that will help wildlife areas, whether they be Federal, State, county or private landowners that they can use to generate improved infrastructure for dealing with additional people as well as improve the interpretation of the natural resources.

Mr. GILCHREST. Is anybody thinking about going so far as to limiting the—you talked about certain areas where there would be boardwalks, so I guess people wouldn't walk on the bogs or the marshes. Is there any discussion as to certain areas where power boats would be appropriate, power boats would not be appropriate, jet skis versus canoes and kayaks, four-wheel-drive vehicles versus horses? Are those kinds of things being discussed?

Ms. HUNTLEY. I think those are things that are going to be discussed very quickly. Obviously, the incompatible uses between some of the off-road vehicles are already becoming a problem in some of the more urban areas.

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speck.

Mr. SPECK. Mr. Chair, I might comment that we already do that with some of our wildlife refuges at the State level in terms of controlling the kinds of boating access to those. And in some of our nature preserves along the lake and indeed out on the islands, some

are open to the public. Some are open to the public if they stay on the boardwalks only and some are open only by special permit where it is so rare and endangered that we feel it has to be a very controlled access.

Let me take the liberty of saying that we see this as an opportunity not only to move for additional Federal support but to bring State resources that our anglers and hunters and others provide and also leverage other private sector resources, the Ducks Unlimited, for example, and others that we have partnered with and I think the Federal Government has partnered with. We seldom expand a refuge without a good many partners at the State level, and we think this might facilitate that as well.

There are also a number of private refuges up through this area; and as membership in those refuges evolve, it might provide opportunities for those members to say at some point in the future we will retain access for our members, but at some point in the future we might put this within a Federal refuge. I think there are a lot of opportunities to be creative.

I think, on the other hand, you need to be careful with maps like this that they do not appear to suggest that the Federal Government is going to come in with partners or no partners and take over that whole area or that could make it difficult to expand at all if these—maps like this can be misinterpreted if they are not carefully described.

Mr. GILCHREST. Absolutely. Open communication is vital with the community.

Mr. SPECK. If it implied that the Feds were going to come in with money to take over all the peachy area, you can be certain that I would be giving different testimony.

Mr. MASTROIANNI. A few comments on what was said.

In Canada, the government of Ontario Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program offers 100 percent tax exemption to eligible property owners who agree to protect the natural heritage of their land. So I think that if we are concerned with budgetary items that is—

Mr. GILCHREST. Can you do that in Ohio?

Mr. MASTROIANNI. Anything is possible through legislation. We would certainly -.

Mr. GILCHREST. As an incentive for people to—

Mr. MASTROIANNI. Yes. So I think that we might want to work with the State and with the Federal Government to concentrate some areas as we are looking at now, that if it is owned privately and they do not want to donate it to the State or local government or to the Federal Government, that perhaps we could work out some tax incentive for the protection.

The other thing, on maintenance costs, there are maintenance costs with wildlife refuges but not as much as it would be in an active park. And I think that even though costs are always a consideration, I know as a former parks commissioner in two cities one of the things I did was moved from active recreation into wildlife preservation because it costs—the costs went down dramatically, and then we worked with volunteers to help maintain those areas.

So I think that the overcautiousness by the Park Service may be unwarranted on what this was really going to cost us, and so I

would be hesitant to believe that the cost would be so prohibitive that we should not pursue a move toward protecting these wildlife areas because I think that we could deal with the costs very effectively. Thank you.

Mr. GILCHREST. I couldn't agree with you more on that score.

Ms. Chase, do you have anything else to tell us this morning, comments on what we have been discussing?

Ms. CHASE. Just to support the comments of Dr. Speck and the others.

Mr. GILCHREST. Who we certainly—

Ms. CHASE. I think partnerships are a key to whatever we do.

Mr. GILCHREST. Yes, ma'am.

Mr. Stieglitz.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I had a sinking feeling right as Mr. Faleomavaega left the room that there is some confusion, so I want to be sure—

Mr. GILCHREST. You know, I picked up on that. I will talk to him about it later.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. —that we are perfectly clear. The administration does not support this legislation. The administration feels that there are existing tools in place to allow protection of this area to go through in partnership without establishing a new or expanded National Wildlife Refuge. Was that the understanding that you had, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. GILCHREST. I think I had that understanding. I think when you said it would take about 3 weeks to figure out the cost once you got the boundaries, Mr. Faleomavaega got very interested in that.

Mr. STIEGLITZ. OK. Well, I am glad I clarified it.

Mr. GILCHREST. So you want me to tell Mr. Faleomavaega that in about 3 weeks you will have that all ready for him?

Mr. STIEGLITZ. Yes, sir, if you are not too busy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to clarify the Administration's position.

Mr. GILCHREST. Yes, sir. I understand.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very, very much for your interest in this. We will figure this out one way or another; and, as Mr. Speck said earlier, our time is escaping.

The hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:41 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

○