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a program called Conservation Reserve Program, or the CRP. And our proposal to Congress as they rewrite the farm bill, we're asking them to dedicate $50 billion over 5 years to make sure that this program continues in effect. The program has been effective for our farmers and ranchers and, equally importantly, for our bird populations. And my hope is that Congress recognizes its effectiveness and will continue to fund this program.

We're making progress in rural areas, but there needs to be some work in urban areas. And so we've got an interesting program underway to help five cities turn parks and local backyards into stopover bird habitats over the next 2 years. In other words, what we're trying to do is to make sure that we have a successful strategy in five cities that could become the blueprint for cities all around the country.

Many species of birds live part of their lives here in the United States and part in Mexico. So we have a strategy to work with Mexico to enhance bird habitats in their country. I've talked about this issue with President Calderon. He shares my concern about making sure there's critical habitat available for our migratory birds. The Secretaries of State, Interior, and Commerce are working with their counterparts in the Mexican Government. Nongovernmental partners are working to undertake important habitat projects in Mexico as well.

One of the things we have done is we've identified five priority habitats in Mexico. We listened to the experts who pointed us to five important areas, and we have provided $4 million to support conservation initiatives there. I also directed Federal Agencies to increase our Nation's participation in an international effort to protect coastal and marine migratory birds such as albatrosses and petrels. Restoring habitats at home and abroad is going to help us achieve the objectives and goals I have set out, which is providing critical habitat for migratory birds.

Our efforts to restore habitats are strengthening bird populations. Since 2004, the Department of Interior has improved the status of five migratory bird species, and the Department is helping ensure that more than 62 percent of our Nation's migratory bird species are healthy and at sustainable levels. But that's not good enough—62 percent is good, but we can do better. And so I've asked the Secretary to—Secretary Kempthorne to focus on the status of five more species over the next 5 years. And to achieve this goal, we need good data. I mean, we just don't want to be guessing about bird populations; we want to measure. And so I've asked the Secretary to produce a State of the Birds report by 2009. This report will chart our progress. It'll identify species that need additional protections and help us bring more of America's bird species into a healthy and sustainable status.

And, Mr. Secretary, I appreciate your commitment.

Secretary Dirk Kempthorne. Absolutely.

The President. I appreciate the fact that you understand America's greatness is not measured by material wealth alone; it's measured by how we manage and care for all that we have been given. We're people united by our belief that we must be good stewards of our environment. The cooperative conservation policies that we have put in place show our commitment to protecting America's migratory birds, conserving the habitat they depend on, and ensuring that generations of Americans will enjoy the beauty of birds for decades to come.

I appreciate you all joining me. I want to thank you for your interest. God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. in the Endangered Crane Complex. In his remarks, he referred to Wendy Paulson and Rusty Rose, administrative board members, Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Judd Howell, Director, U.S.G.S. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center; Brad Burns, president, Stripers Forever; and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico.

Remarks on Signing the Executive Order on Protection of Striped Bass and Red Drum Fish Populations in St. Michaels, Maryland

October 20, 2007

Thank you all. Stuart, thanks for the introduction. Thanks for the invitation here to the Maritime Museum. It's a beautiful site you got here. I can see why people want to live

in St. Michaels, and I do want to thank the good citizens of this community for coming out and greeting me and Laura. By the way, Laura is not here. She's headed over to the Vice President's house. They've kindly invited us for lunch. I guess you could say she's the taster. [*Laughter*]

The Vice President tells me there's a lot of fine fishing here, and I'm looking forward to going out and trying to catch some. I love to fish. And the good news is—there's a lot of good fishing here—is because the Secret Service won't let me go hunting with him. [*Laughter*]

I'm going to sign an Executive order today to protect our striped bass and red drum fish populations; that's what I'm here to do. The Executive order is part of our commitment to end overfishing in America and to replenish our Nation's fish stocks and to advance cooperative conservation and responsible stewardship. And this is a good place to come and sign the Executive order. And I thank you all for coming up and letting me say hello to you and witness this Presidential act.

I want to thank the Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne, for joining us today. He cares about our waters and our fish stocks, just like I do. And I appreciate Carlos Gutierrez—he's the Secretary of Commerce—for joining us as well. He's in charge of NOAA, as is Conrad Lautenbacher—run NOAA—you've got a fancy title: Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. That means he runs NOAA. [*Laughter*] And I appreciate your concern about our waters, Conrad, and I want to thank you for your service to the country.

I appreciate Wayne Gilchrest; he's the Congressman from this district. Mr. Congressman, I'm honored you're here. Thank you for taking time; appreciate you welcoming us.

I want to thank all the State and local folks who've joined us. Particularly, I want to thank people who care about fishing, and thank you for being here. I want to thank the different groups represented here.

I want to say one—there's a fellow up here named Walter Fondren. He's a fellow Texan. He had a lot to do with making sure conservation efforts on the Texas gulf coast worked. He proved, as have others here, that if you get together with responsible officials, you can help get these fishing stocks back to robust. We were losing our red fish in Texas, and he along with other concerned citizens came together and said, "Let's do something about it." And as a result, red fishing is good again. But we want to make it as good as possible all throughout the country because fishing is important to the country.

Listen, it's important to be a commercial fisherman; I understand that. But the commercial fishermen and the sport fishermen don't have to be antagonistic. It's not a zero-sum game. Good policy will help our commercial fishermen, and good policy will help our sports fishermen. And that's what we're here to talk about. And it's important to recognize here in America that sport fishing is a important industry; a lot of people make a living because of sport fishing. I don't know if people know this, but millions of Americans are spending about $40 billion a year on sport fishing. I know in our State, Walter, there's a lot of people, a lot of entrepreneurs making a good living—they're fishing guides. A lot of bait shops and small-business owners are doing well as a result of good sport fishing policy.

And so we're here today to talk about sport fishing. As a matter of fact, I'm fixing to go do some sport fishing. I can't guarantee I'm going to catch anything. I hope that frogman out there does his job. [*Laughter*]

I want to talk about a little bit of the comprehensive strategy we've put in place. In 2004, our administration released an Ocean Action Plan, the whole purpose of which was to make the oceans and the Great Lakes and the coast cleaner, healthier, and more productive. The plan is producing some positive results.

On—one of the results of the plan was the Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands that I declared. The action created the largest single conservation area in the history of the Nation. It is the largest protected marine area in the world. It is a visible sign that we care about conservation and good water policy.

I also signed the bipartisan Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act. It's a good piece of legislation. Many here worked on it, and I want

to thank you for working the Halls of Congress to get this bill to my desk. The legislation closes loopholes in the law by setting a firm deadline to end overfishing in America by 2011. The law puts in place market-based incentives to help replenish our fish stocks by granting fisherman the right to catch a designated amount of fish during a specified season. The law increases enforcement and raises penalties for those who break our fishing laws. And this law improves data collection to help ensure our decisions are based on sound science. It was an important piece of legislation, and I want to thank the authors of the bill for getting it done. I think it's going to help a lot when it comes to managing our fish stocks in a constructive, smart way.

In addition to the Magnuson-Stevenson Act, over the last couple of years, we've made a strong commitment to improve, restore, and replace our wetlands. I set out the goal that during my Presidency, we would restore—improve, restore, and replace 3 million acres of wetlands. The reason I did that is because wetlands act as what we call nature's nurseries by helping small fish survive before they head into deeper waters. We're going to make that goal. We will have replaced, improved, and restored over 3 million acres of wetlands during my Presidency.

Another significant problem is marine debris. And I was talking to Dirk Kempthorne, and he's going to host a symposium on the gulf coast to call our Nation's attention to this issue. Our strategy is going to be to work with the private sector to help clean up the debris. I don't know if you understand—it is a significant problem. Out there in the Hawaiian Island area that I set aside—Laura went out there, and a lot of birds are eating this stuff that gets washed up as a result of people just dumping whatever they want to in the ocean. It's like a—people kind of view it as, I guess, a giant garbage heap. And part of making sure that doesn't happen is to make it clear to our public the consequences of people just getting on our waters and just dumping whatever they feel like dumping out there.

And we're also going to work with the international community. A lot of the nets we're picking up out of that beautiful sanctuary in the—or the monument in Hawaii of—wash ashore because some trawler decides they don't want to mend the net or store the net or take care of the net. They just cut it and let her go, and the currents wash all that stuff ashore. We literally pulled out tons of material off these islands. And so we're going to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with this, and call people to account, and ask them to join in protecting our oceans and waterways.

We're also talking about today to make sure that not only we protect the waters; we're going to protect the marine life in the waters. And so I want to talk today about two of the most popular recreational fish, the striped bass and the red drum.

The striped bass—I don't know if our citizens follow the striped bass, but it's a good fish to catch. It's a lot of fun. It's also a good fish to eat. We've got to make sure we've got enough to catch as well as enough to eat, and we can do both in a smart way.

Striped bass range from the St. Lawrence River in Canada to the St. John's River in Florida. They inhabit parts of the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico. Some people call them stripers or rockfish. I guess we're going to call them rockfish today. [*Laughter*] They can live up to be 30 years old. In the old days, you could catch them up to 55 to 70 pounds pretty easily. And what we're trying to do is to make sure that the old days come back, that the striper is plentiful, and that you can catch some good-sized ones too—nothing like catching a big striper.

They were once so plentiful back in 1614 that Captain John Smith wrote this, he said, a man could cross over the water "dryshod" by walking on the backs of all the fish. What's interesting is, the striped bass was also one of the first species to be protected by the American people. In 1639, Massachusetts forbade the use of striped bass as fertilizer. By the early 1980s, striped bass were significantly depleted by poor water quality and overfishing.

Over the years—since that time, there's been some progress made to protect the striped bass, but not enough has been made. And so today we're going to try to make some more progress.

Red drum is another popular fish that has experienced overfishing. These fish are

called reds or redfish or channel bass or spottail. What happened to this particular fish was that it became popular to eat. The restaurants found it to be good food, and it became a popular dish, and they got overfished.

Now, we put protections in place both at State and Federal level to protect the red drum. Unfortunately, the red drum species is still trying to recover. That's why I'm going to take this additional step today, because the recovery is not complete. In the waters from North Carolina to the tip of Florida, the numbers are still too low. And in parts of our gulf, we're not sure of their status. So if you're not sure of the status, we ought to be taking special precaution. It's important that our fish stocks be full and robust and healthy.

And so I'm about to sign an Executive order, all aimed to help the Federal Government conserve striped bass and red drum in three key ways. First, the Executive order directs the Commerce and Interior Departments—that's why the two Secretaries are standing here—to work with our fishery management councils and commissions to protect—to prohibit the sale of striped bass and red drum caught in Federal waters.

Second, this Executive order encourages the periodic review of the status of the striped bass and red drum populations. This will ensure we have the most up to date information for determining whether breeding stocks are attaining healthy numbers and size in Federal waters.

Data is important when it comes to managing the fishing stocks. To improve the quality of our data, we're building a recreational saltwater registry that will collect information from sportsmen about local fish stocks, which will help us better protect striped bass, red drum, and all our fisheries. We're going to count on the people who really care about the fish stocks to get good, solid, sound information so we can do a better job not only today but tomorrow in making sure our fisheries are strong.

And finally, the Executive order encourages States to take a look at their own management of the fish stocks. See, we believe in cooperative conservation. That means cooperation at the Federal, State, and local levels. We believe in a collaborative approach, that the Federal Government ought to work with all stakeholders to achieve common consensus. And I respect the State's role in the management of the natural resources under their care. So I'm directing Federal Agencies to work with State officials to find innovative ways to help conserve striped bass and red drum.

And one such way is to use the State designation of game fish where appropriate. I hope the State officials take a serious look at game-fish designation; it is an effective tool to protect endangered or dwindling species. See, it prohibits commercial sales, which removes the incentive to catch the fish for anything other than recreational purposes. State designations of game fish have helped the recovery of species such as trout and largemouth bass and tarpon and snook. People need to take a look at this tool to make sure that the fisheries are robust. Strong fisheries mean local sales. Local sales means better local economy.

And so the Executive order shows our commitment to conserving our Nation's resources. Our hope, everybody—the hope of everyone here is that decades from now, our children and grandchildren will see oceans, lakes, and rivers teeming with fish and sea life. I can't guarantee they're going to be able to walk across their backs—[*laughter*]—like John Smith observed, but I can guarantee that we're committed to taking care of that which we have been given. My hope is people look back at our oceans' policies and our record of conservation and say, "We're grateful that concerned citizens came together to protect our heritage."

And so I want to thank you all for coming and giving me a chance to visit with you about a vision that is a hopeful vision and an important vision. And I thank you for witnessing the signing of the Executive order to protect the striped bass and red drum fish populations.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Stuart Parnes, president, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum; and Walter W. Fondren III, chairman, Coastal Conservation

Association. The President also referred to Executive Order 13449.

Executive Order 13449—Protection of Striped Bass and Red Drum Fish Populations

October 20, 2007

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, to assist in ensuring faithful execution of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, and the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act (chapters 38, 71, and 71A of title 16, United States Code), and to conserve striped bass and red drum fish, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Policy*. It shall be the policy of the United States to conserve striped bass and red drum for the recreational, economic, and environmental benefit of the present and future generations of Americans, based on sound science and in cooperation with State, territorial, local, and tribal governments, the private sector, and others, as appropriate.

Sec. 2. *Implementation*. (a) To carry out the policy set forth in section 1, the Secretary of Commerce shall:

(i) encourage, as appropriate, management under Federal, State, territorial, tribal, and local laws that supports the policy of conserving striped bass and red drum, including State designation as gamefish where the State determines appropriate under applicable law;

(ii) revise current regulations, as appropriate, to include prohibiting the sale of striped bass and red drum caught within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States off the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico;

(iii) periodically review the status of the striped bass and red drum populations within waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and:

(A) take such actions within the authority of the Secretary of Commerce as may be appropriate to carry out the policy set forth in section 1 of this order; and

(B) recommend to the President such actions as the Secretary may deem appropriate to advance the policy set forth in section 1 that are not within the authority of the Secretary.

(b) Nothing in this order shall preclude or restrict the production, possession, or sale of striped bass or red drum fish that have been produced by aquaculture.

(c) The Secretary of Commerce shall implement subsections 2(a)(i) and (iii), insofar as they relate to Atlantic striped bass, jointly with the Secretary of the Interior, as appropriate.

Sec. 3. *Definitions*. As used in this order:

(a) "Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States" means the marine area of the United States as defined in Presidential Proclamation 5030 of March 10, 1983, with, for purposes of this order, the inner boundary of that zone being a line coterminous with the seaward boundary of each of the coastal States;

(b) "red drum" means the species *Sciaenops ocellatus*; and

(c) "striped bass" means the species *Morone saxatilis*.

Sec. 4. *General Provisions*. (a) This order shall be implemented in a manner consistent with applicable law (including but not limited to interstate compacts to which the United States has consented by law, treaties and other international agreements to which the United States is a party, treaties to which the United States and an Indian tribe are parties, and laws of the United States conferring rights on Indian tribes) and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(b) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, and legislative proposals.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, enti-