

May 27, 2022

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies Appropriations
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

The *North American Wetlands Conservation Act* (NAWCA) is a very popular and successful conservation program that has strong support in Congress, the conservation community, and among private landowners, including farmers, ranchers, and foresters across the United States. NAWCA is a unique, public-private partnership-based program that matches non-federal and federal funds to protect, restore, and manage wetlands and associated habitats for migratory birds and other wildlife. We greatly appreciate the subcommittee's past support for NAWCA, and we urge your continued strong support for this valuable program in fiscal year 2023 (FY23).

Since its enactment in 1989, NAWCA has proven effective far beyond the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats. A large number of wildlife species, as well as people, benefit tremendously from healthy wetland systems that are the result of on-the-ground conservation made possible by the act. It is proven that wetlands help prevent flooding, reduce the severity of storm surges, and mitigate the damaging effects of soil erosion. Wetlands also improve water quality by working with underground aquifers to filter out pollutants.

NAWCA is one of the government's most cost-effective conservation programs. Federal dollars invested in NAWCA are typically matched by more than three dollars from non-federal partners including corporations, private landowners, non-profits, state governments, and local organizations. In the last 33 years, federal funding of more than \$1.9 billion has leveraged more than \$3.95 billion in partner contributions. Regional Joint Ventures, established to support the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, play a substantial role by fostering collaborative efforts to successfully implement NAWCA.

The United States has lost roughly half of its original wetlands and continues to lose more than 80,000 wetland acres each year. NAWCA is helping to reverse this trend of wetland loss.

We commend the support your subcommittee has provided this program in the past and would like to reiterate the features that few federal programs can match:

- **NAWCA creates jobs and stimulates the economy.** Outdoor recreation generates over \$689 billion of economic output, supports 4.3 million American jobs, and comprises 3 percent of all U.S. employees. In many cases, this economic activity is vital to the incomes of rural Americans. One study suggests NAWCA, on average, directly spurs the creation of 7,500 new jobs annually in the United States, generating nearly \$200 million in worker earnings each year.
- **NAWCA is a voluntary and non-regulatory conservation program.** Farmers, ranchers and other private landowners support the program, and every project is voluntary. Incentives allow willing landowners to restore wildlife habitat and conservation practices to their private lands.
- **NAWCA fosters conservation efforts by the non-federal sector.** 6,350 corporate, small businesses, non-profit, state, and local entities have more than doubled NAWCA dollars with matching funds. 3,150 on-the-ground conservation projects have been implemented in all 50 states, Canada, and Mexico to restore, protect, and manage more than 30 million acres.
- **Congress is involved in approving which projects are funded.** The final approval body in the project selection process is the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The seven-member body includes four members of Congress.
- **NAWCA has strong support from the states.** All 50 state wildlife agencies are active partners in the program.
- **Demand for NAWCA continues to exceed available funds.** Demand for the program in the U.S. outstrips available funding on a yearly basis. NAWCA remains a very popular program among landowners interested and willing to restore and conserve wetlands habitat.

NAWCA represents a reasonable, cost-effective approach to wildlife conservation. While we understand the fiscal constraints this year, we would like to point to this program's demonstrable success at developing non-federal funding sources and diverse partnerships for the conservation of wildlife habitat. We strongly believe that it deserves the subcommittee's endorsement for the most practical funding level. Thank you again for taking the time to consider our views and for recognizing the importance of future funding for the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act*.

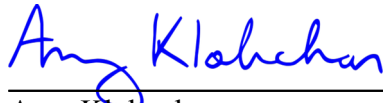
Sincerely,



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



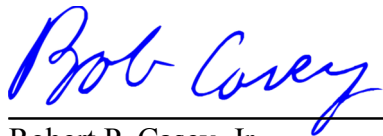
Michael D. Crapo
United States Senator



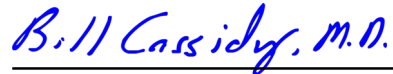
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



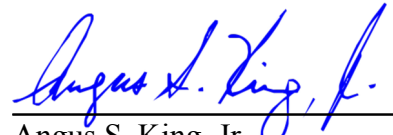
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



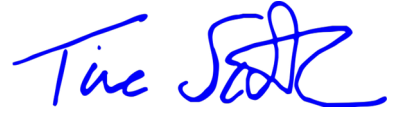
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator




Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



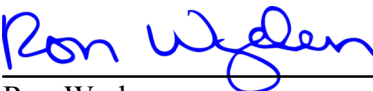
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



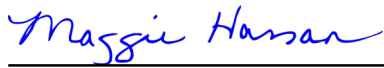
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



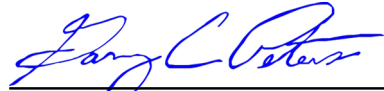
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator




Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



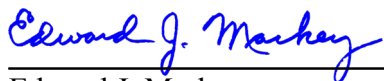
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



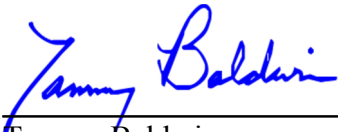
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator



Steve Daines
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Thom Tillis
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Mazie K. Hirono
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Joe Manchin III
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Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
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Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Mike Braun
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



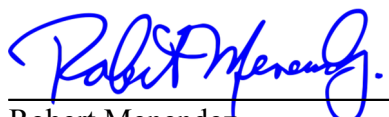
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



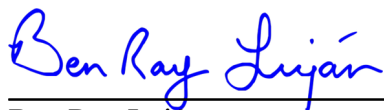
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



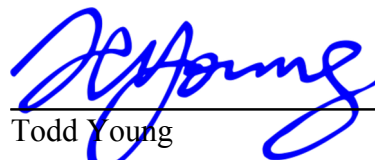
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



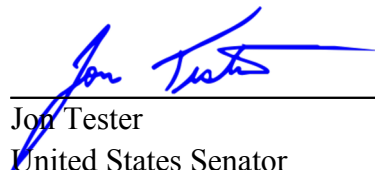
John Kennedy
United States Senator



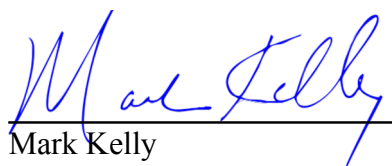
Todd Young
United States Senator



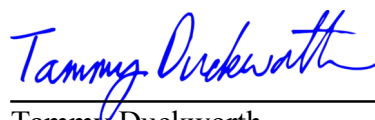
Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
Chair
Subcommittee on Fisheries,
Water and Wildlife
Committee on Environment
and Public Works



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator