

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



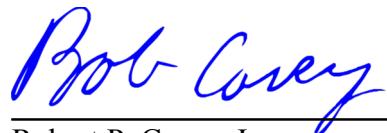
Michael D. Crapo  
United States Senator



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



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United States Senator



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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



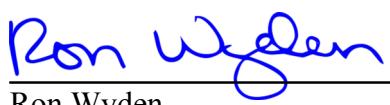
Dianne Feinstein  
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Jeanne Shaheen  
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Michael F. Bennet  
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Raphael G. Warnock  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



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James E. Risch  
United States Senator



Roger W. Marshall  
Roger Marshall, M.D.  
United States Senator



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Steve Daines  
United States Senator



Thom Tillis  
Thom Tillis  
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Mazie K. Hirono  
Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



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Joe Manchin III  
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Kyrsten Sinema  
Kyrsten Sinema  
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Kirsten Gillibrand  
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Richard Blumenthal  
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Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown  
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Mike Braun

Mike Braun  
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Roger Wicker

Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner

Mark R. Warner  
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Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

Robert Menendez

Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

Ben Ray Luján

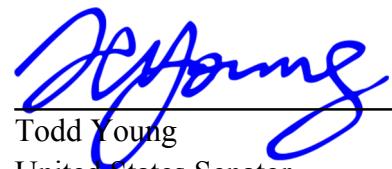
Ben Ray Luján  
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich

Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



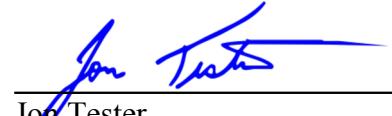
John Kennedy  
United States Senator



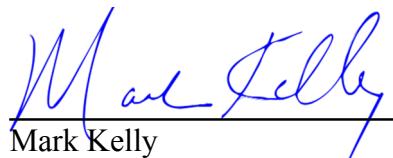
Todd Young  
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Chair  
Subcommittee on Fisheries,  
Water and Wildlife  
Committee on Environment  
and Public Works



M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator