Appendix 2: Public Scoping Report

Executive Summary: On November 8, 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with APHIS/WS, published a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and national management plan for the double-crested cormorant. This action was in response to increasing populations of cormorants, and subsequent growing concern from the public and natural resource management agencies that cormorants are negatively impacting or pose a threat to resources such as other colonial waterbirds, island vegetation, aquacultural stock, and sport fish populations. Public comment on issues of concern and potential management alternatives was solicited. A Notice of Meetings was published on April 14, 2000, announcing ten public scoping meetings across the United States. Public comments were accepted from the opening of the comment period until June 30, 2000. In summary, over 900 people attended the public scoping meetings, with 239 providing oral comments, and over 1450 submitted written comments. Analysis of the comments was separated by geographic region and into the following groups: private individuals, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local government agencies and associations, Federal agencies, State agencies, tribes, Canadian agencies, and legislative officials.

Background

On November 8, 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with APHIS/WS, published a Notice of Intent (64 FR 60826) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and national management plan for the double-crested cormorant (DCCO). This action was intended to address impacts caused by population and range expansion of the DCCO in the contiguous United States. The notice did not identify preliminary alternatives, but rather stated that cormorants have been implicated as being responsible for: (1) economic losses at commercial aquaculture facilities; (2) damage to trees and other vegetation associated with breeding colonies and roosting sites; (3) impacts to other species of migratory birds in the vicinity of cormorant breeding colonies; (4)declines in economic revenues associated with outdoor (primarily fishing-related) recreational activities; (5) declines in populations of sport fish; and (6) lowering of private property values.

The November 8 notice stated that comments on issues, alternatives, and impacts to be addressed in the EIS are being solicited and, in particular, comments of value would: (1) identify and, where possible, quantify impacts caused by increasing cormorant populations; (2) suggest management strategies to resolve such conflicts; and (3) identify determining factors in justifying the need for control, if any.

The notice also stated that the primary issue to be addressed during the scoping phase is to determine which alternatives for managing DCCO populations would be analyzed in

the EIS. It indicated that we would prepare a dicussion of the effects, by alternative, in each of the following resource areas: (1) DCCO populations and their habitats; (2) other bird populations and their habitats; (3) effects on other species of flora and fauna; and (4) socioeconomic effects.

Public Scoping Meetings

A subsequent notice was published on April 14, 2000, identifying ten public scoping meeting locations (65 FR 20194). The ten public scoping meetings, were held at the following dates, times, and locations:

April 25, 2000	Washington, DC	Department of Interior Building Auditorium, 1849 C Street, NW	10:00 AM		
April 27, 2000	Portland, Oregon	Red Lion Hotel Coliseum, 1225 N. Thunderbird Way	7:00 PM		
May 9, 2000	Burlington, Vermont	Clarion Hotel and Convention Center, 1117 Williston Road			
May 10, 2000	Watertown, New York	Dulles State Office Building Auditorium, 317 Washington Street	7:00 PM		
May 11, 2000	Syracuse, New York	Carous el Center M all, Skyde ck, Sixth Level, 9090 Carousel Center Drive	7:00 PM		
May 15, 2000	Green Bay, Wisconsin	Ramada Inn, 2750 Ramada Way	7:00 PM		
May 16, 2000	Mackinaw City, Michigan	Mackinaw City Public Schools, Gymnasium, 609 West Central	7:00 PM		
May 17, 2000	Hauppage, New York	Windham Watch Hotel, 1717 Vanderbilt Motor Parkway	7:00 PM		
May 22, 2000	Jackson, Mississippi	Primos Northgate, Convention Hall B, 4330 N. State Street	7:00 PM		
May 23, 2000	Athens, Texas	Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, 5550 Farm Market Road 2495	7:00 PM		

Over 900 individuals attended the scoping meetings, at which anyone who wished to present oral and/or written comments was allowed to do so (239 people provided oral comments). A court reporter was present at each meeting in order to provide transcripts of the verbal testimony.

Washington, DC

Approximately 10 people attended the Washington, DC meeting. Representatives from the American Bird Conservancy, the Ornithological Council, and the Humane Society of the United States spoke. The primary concern was that management decisions be based on sound science. Other concerns/ideas that were raised include: fish-eating birds are increasingly being "scapegoated" for fishery declines; DCCOs have distinct, regional populations and management options must consider this; other factors, such as habitat destruction and modification, contaminants, hatcheries, and hydropower must also be considered as factors affecting fish populations; education and outreach are extremely important; the current management situation is not necessarily inadequate and the cormorant problem is actually a people problem; the Service needs to cooperate with Canada and Mexico as they develop a management plan; and an interdisciplinary approach is important. Representatives from APHIS/WS and USFWS Division of Migratory Bird Management and Division of Law Enforcement were present.

Portland, OR

Approximately 20 people attended the Portland meeting. Four individuals spoke. The primary concern was cormorant predation on salmonid smolts, from both a sport fishing and an endangered species standpoint. Ideas that were raised included: major reduction in DCCO populations; issuing a permit to kill 6-8 DCCOs each week and examine their stomach contents; conducting a predation study in the lower Columbia River estuary while smolts are there in the spring; and squirting the birds with ammonia to keep them off the breeding grounds. Representatives from the Washington Department of Wildlife, APHIS/WS, and USFWS Region 1 and Division of Migratory Bird Management were also present.

Burlington, Vermont

Approximately 120 people attended the Burlington meeting. Of 32 individuals who spoke, one person stated that we need to learn to coexist with DCCOs and should use only non-lethal control methods. Others who testified were supportive of more aggressive control. Some speakers suggested removing the species from the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, hunting them, or allowing the States to manage them. The major concerns expressed were declines in fishing and associated impacts on Vermont's tourist economy, destruction of island vegetation (from a property, aesthetics, and/or biodiversity perspective), water contamination caused by DCCO excrement, and impacts to other bird species. Representatives from Congressman McHugh's office and the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife testified. Also present were representatives from APHIS/WS and USFWS Region 5 and the Division of Migratory Bird Management.

Watertown, New York

Approximately 175 people attended the Watertown meeting. Of 23 individuals who

spoke, all were concerned about fishery impacts, economic impacts, and/or human health impacts caused by DCCOs. Nearly everyone stated the need for DCCO population reduction, specifically via hunting. Representatives from Congressman McHugh's office and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation testified. Also present were representatives from APHIS/WS and USFWS Region 5 and Division of Migratory Bird Management.

Syracuse, New York

Approximately 50 people attended the Syracuse meeting. Of 18 individuals who spoke, 17 expressed concerns that DCCOs are causing an ecological imbalance, are a serious detriment to the sport fishery and economy of Oneida Lake, and/or are destroying island vegetation. Most were supportive of controlling, even eradicating, DCCO populations in the area. One individual stated that the federal government should stop protecting special interest groups and leave DCCOs alone. Representatives from APHIS/WS and USFWS Region 5 and Division of Migratory Bird Management were present.

Hauppauge, New York

Approximately 10 people attended the Long Island meeting and five spoke. Comments included: the Service should base their decisions on science and not political pressure; humans should manage predators when they are preying on populations that humans depend upon; oiling eggs is the only acceptable means of control; and DCCOs are damaging sailboats in harbor marinas. Representatives from the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and USFWS Region 5 were present.

Green Bay, Wisconsin

About 80 people attended the Green Bay meeting. Of 27 individuals who spoke, 26 were in support of cormorant control. The crowd was firm in its conviction that cormorants are impacting fishing (especially yellow perch) and associated economies, as well as island vegetation and other colonial waterbirds, and should be controlled. A cormorant researcher from the University of Wisconsin testified that studies have consistently shown that yellow perch make up a very small proportion of what is being consumed by DCCOs (he also commented that DCCOs should be kept off certain islands, while acknowledging that it is normal for bird populations to change the composition of island vegetation). Representatives from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, APHIS/WS, and USFWS Region 3 and Division of Migratory Bird Management were present.

Mackinaw City, Michigan

Approximately 140 people attended the Mackinaw City meeting. Of 33 individuals who spoke, all were anti-cormorant. Some of the points made include the following: concern about cormorant impacts (biological and economic) on yellow perch, especially in the spring during spawning, in the Les Cheneaux Islands of Lake Huron; concern about the

spread of cormorants to inland lakes such as the Manistique lakes; concern that tax dollars being spent on fish restoration and stocking are being wasted; and concern that anglers are going to Canada because cormorants have decimated the fishing in Michigan. A cormorant hunting season was favored by a number of speakers. Representatives from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, APHIS/WS, and USFWS Region 3 and Division of Migratory Bird Management were present.

Jackson, Mississippi

Approximately 55 people attended the Jackson meeting. Of 18 individuals who spoke, all but 3 were associated with the aquaculture industry and expressed concern about serious economic impacts related to chasing cormorants off their ponds, in addition to what the birds eat. They stated that the Depredation Order (which allows shooting of birds) is not effective in reducing impacts; population level control is needed. Other comments that were made include: fish farmers need to be more creative and entrepreneurial in finding solutions to reduce DCCO impacts; DCCOs are just doing what comes naturally to them; fish farmers should unionize; and roost harassment efforts are an annoyance to neighboring landowners. Representatives from APHIS/WS, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Mississippi Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and USFWS Region 4 and Division of Migratory Bird Management were present.

Athens, Texas

Approximately 120 people attended the Athens meeting. Of 35 individuals who spoke, all but three were concerned about economic and recreational impacts of DCCO predation on fish in small, private lakes and were in support of increased control, either through removal from the MBTA, a hunting season, or delegation of management to the States. Concerns about human health effects of increasing DCCO populations were also raised. Other comments included: the EIS and any management actions must be based on sound science; the Service must consider not only negative recreational and economic impacts but also positive direct and indirect value of DCCOs; DCCO management should not impact the rare Neotropic Corm orant and should include education efforts to help people distinguish the two species; and the national management plan should have a regional focus and involve Canada and Mexico. Representatives from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and USFWS Region 2 and Division of Migratory Bird Management were present.

Two additional meetings were held in Little Rock, Arkansas (June 5) and in Angle Inlet (Lake of the Woods), Minnesota (June 24), at the request of Congressman Jay Dickey (AR) and Congressman Collin Peterson (MN), respectively.

Little Rock, Arkansas

Approximately 100 people attended the Little Rock meeting and 35 individuals spoke.

All speakers were concerned about economic impacts on fish farmers and/or impacts on sport fish populations, and were generally supportive of regional control. Also raised was the issue of impaired peace of mind to farmers caused by the increasing presence of DCCOs. Representatives from APHIS/WS, USFWS Region 4 and the Division of Migratory Bird Management were present. Representatives from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the office of Senator Blanche Lincoln, the Arkansas Development Finance Authority, and Congressman Jay Dickey testified.

Angle Inlet, Minnesota

About 20 people attended the Minnesota meeting. Of the 10 individuals who spoke, most were very concerned about the impact of DCCOs on local walleye and perch populations and associated economic effects on resorts, charter boats, and recreation fishing. They supported some type of localized control although several people who spoke in favor of DCCO population reduction did not support hunting as a means of accomplishing this. Concern about potential impacts of management actions on colonial waterbirds that nest near DCCOs was also expressed. One speaker stated that management activities should be based on science and that there is more to the value of Lake of the Woods than fish alone. Representatives from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and USFWS Region 3 and Office of Migratory Bird Management were present. DNR fish survey data were presented and they did not support the contention that sport fish populations have declined in Lake of the Woods. Congressman Collin Peterson testified.

Written Comments

Public comments were accepted from the opening of the comment period on November 8, 1999, until June 30, 2000. Over 1450 comments were received, either by mail or electronically (via cormorant_eis@fws.gov). Analysis of the comments was separated by geographic region (USFWS Regions 1-6; no comments were received from Region 7, Alaska) and into the following groups: private individuals, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local government agencies and associations, Federal agencies, State agencies, tribes, Canadian agencies, and legislative officials. Comments fell into two categories: (1) issues of concern and (2) suggested management options. Issues of concern included impacts on sport fishing, local economies, aquaculture/commercial fishing, bird species, ecological balance, vegetation, human health and safety, and private property. Management options included population control, leaving DCCOs alone, removing DCCOs from the protection of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, hunting, focusing on non-lethal control, letting States manage DCCOs, changing the permit policy, oiling eggs, giving APHIS/WS more authority, basing decisions on the best science, using population objectives, and increasing education efforts.

SUMMARY OF WRITTEN COMMENTS

	R1*	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Unknown	Totals
Issues of Concern								
Sport fish impacts	28	213	110	51	147	7	17	573
Econo mic impacts	0	72	20	16	36		5	149
Vegetation impacts		31	37	1	26		1	96
Destruction/odor caused by DCC	34	22	2	22		2	82	
Private property damage		62	6		7		1	76
General concern over population increase	1	52	8	2	8		1	72
Aquaculture/ commercial fishery impacts	3	7	6	30	10	2		58
Human health/safety		29	12		11			52
DCCOs causing ecological imbal	ance	5	18	3	17			43
Impacts on other bird species			16	1	20			37
DCCOs are non-native		4	6	1	13			24
Management Options								
Need to control/reduce population	20	126	97	91	125	2	11	472
Remove from MBTA protection	19	113	7	63	26	1	6	235
Don't blame DCCOs/ leave them alone	22	10	22	14	42	5	103	218
Emphasize non-lethal control	13	8	16	5	44	2	105	193
Have a hunting season	23	18	29	63	42	1	5	181
Let States manage DCCOs	19	144	5	2	7	1	2	180
Base decisions onsound science	13	5	14	11	29	2	55	129
Oil eggs	1	2	9	63	22		1	98
Give USDA/Wildlife Services authority	more	3	1	60	1	1		66
Do not allow hunting	1	2	1	3	13	1	25	46
Use population objectives in DCCO management	2	2	2	6	9	4	1	26
Need better information	2		5	3	4		5	19
Change permit policy		6	1	3	6			16
Increase education efforts	1		5		4		3	13
Don't do management plan	1		2	2	3	1	3	12
Expand depredation order to other states	2		2	1	2	2		9
Allow eggs to be gathered for foo	d		1					1
	171	949	479	497	696	32	352	3177

*USFWS Regions	States included
R1	California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington
R2	Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
R3	Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin
R4	Alabam a, Arkan sas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisian a, Mississipp i, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee
R5	Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Penn sylvania, R hode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia
R6	Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

Private Individuals

Over 75% of the written comments came from individuals who wrote to express their own personal feelings, ideas, and concerns about the impacts of DCCOs. Although a majority of the letters expressed concern about the impacts of DCCOs on sport fisheries and recommended DCCO population reduction, a great number of individuals suggested that we stop blaming DCCOs for fishery problems and recommended that only non-lethal control efforts be allowed.

Canadian agencies

We received comments from four Canadian agencies whose concerns included potential impacts of Service management actions on Great Cormorant populations (Nova Scotia) and on declining western DCCO populations (British Columbia).

Federal agencies

The National Marine Fisheries Service expressed concern about the impacts of DCCOs on "fish species that are listed under the Endangered Species Act or fish produced to meet Indian treaty trust responsibility" and recommended that the scope of the national management plan be expanded to include "effects on listed salmonid species and ... impacts on salmon and trout in the inland western states."

Biologists from the APHIS/WS National Wildlife Research Center in Mississippi stated that the goal of the management plan should be to reduce impacts (on commercial aquaculture specifically) and that the best way to accomplish this is through population reduction and science-based management efforts.

State agencies

Twenty seven States provided comments on the DCCO EIS and national management plan. Fourteen States (CT, GA, IN, IA, NE, NH, NY, ND, OH, OK, RI, TX, VT, WY)

expressed a desire for increased flexibility/increased State input in managing cormorants. Twenty three States (AZ, CT, GA, IL, IN, IA, LA, MI, MN, MO, NE, NH, ND, NY, OH, OK, OR, RI, TX, VT, WI, WY, MA) stated or implied that, under certain conditions (e.g., evidence pointing toward a problem, displacement of other colonial nesting birds, impacts on natural systems, etc.), increased control should be considered. Five States (AZ, NH, ND, SD, MN) stated that they currently have no real problems with DCCOs.

Local government agencies and associations

All of the local government agencies that provided comments expressed concern about impacts of DCCOs on sport fish populations, recreational fishing opportunities, sport fish-related economies, and/or vegetation and were supportive of control efforts.

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Comments from NGOs varied greatly and included animal protection organizations, local fishing clubs, scientific organizations, and environmental/conservation groups. Some groups requested that we stop scapegoating DCCOs and look into anthropogenic causes for fishery declines; others emphasized the need for better science to justify any control efforts; and others requested immediate control actions be put into effect to alleviate DCCO impacts.

Businesses

All but 5 of 24 businesses that provided comments were either aquaculture facilities, charter services, or other fishing-related businesses. All but one of the businesses expressed concern about the negative impacts of DCCOs on their enterprise. The one pro-cormorant business was a

cosmetics company that does not engage in animal testing.

Legislative officials

As of July 26, 2000, we had received letters from 10 legislative officials (three State and seven Federal) and one caucus (Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus). Each one of these expressed concern about the deleterious impacts of DCCOs on sport fisheries and/or the aquaculture industry.

Tribes

Three tribes sent comments regarding management of DCCOs. One tribe from Arizona (White Mountain Apache) stated support for a hunting season on DCCOs. A member of a tribe from Oklahoma (Kiowa) stated that waterbirds are sacred to them and that they would like any birds that are killed to be given to them for use in native ceremonies. The third tribe (Wampanoag/Aquinnah) expressed concern about the possible negative effects of increasing DCCO populations on tribal fishery resources.

List of Canadian agencies, Federal agencies, State Agencies, Local Governments and Associations, Non-governmental Organizations, Businesses, Legislative Officials, and Tribes Providing Scoping Comments

Canadian agencies

Alberta Environment, Office of the Deputy Minister British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Land and Parks New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy, Fish and Wildlife Branch Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

Federal agencies

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, National Marine Fisheries Service

State agencies

Arizona Game and Fish Department Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Georgia Department of Natural Resources Illinois Department of Natural Resources Indiana Department of Natural Resources Iowa Department of Natural Resources Kansas State University Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Maine Department of Marine Resources Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Michigan Department of Natural Resources Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Mississippi State University Extension Service Missouri Department of Conservation Nebraska Game and Parks Commission New Hampshire Fish and Game Department New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources North Dakota Game and Fish Department Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Plattsburgh, State University of New York Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Fish and Wildlife South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks Texas Parks and Wildlife Department University of Louisiana, Lafayette Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Local government agencies and associations Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce, VT Curtis Chamber of Commerce and Manistique Lakes Area Tourism Bureau, MI Lake Florida Improvement Association, FL Lake Ontario Fisheries Coalition, NY Lake Puckaw ay Protection and Rehabilitation District, WI Northwest Angle and Islands Chamber of Commerce, MN Oneida Lake Association, NY Portage Township, MI State of New York Conservation Fund Advisory Board Thomas Lake Road Community Association, TX Town of Orleans Conservation Commission, MA

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) Agricultural Council of Arkansas American Association of Retired Persons, Inc., Chapter 3876, TX American Bird Conservancy American Fisheries Society Animal Protection Institute, CA Association of Northwest Steelheaders, North Fork Nehalem Chapter, OR Atlantic States Legal Foundation, Inc., NY Audubon Society of Central Arkansas BASS, Inc., AL Coalition of Louisiana Animal Advocates, LA Concerned Citizens for Cormorant Control, AR Connecticut Harbor Management Association, CT Coon Creek Club, TX Dixie Lake Hunting and Fishing Club, TX Eastern Lake Ontario Salmon and Trout Association, NY

Fishers Island Conservancy, Inc., NY The Ford Plantation, GA Friends of Animals, CT Fur Harvester's Association of Jefferson County, NY Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council Green Bay Area Great Lakes Sport Fishermen Club, WI Green Mountain Animal Defenders, VT International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island, CA Lake Champlain International, Inc. Lake Champlain Walleye Association, VT Lewis County Association of Sportsmen's Clubs, NY Marsh Lake Ducks Unlimited, MN Michigan United Conservation Clubs National Aquaculture Association National Audubon Society New York State B.A.S.S. Chapter Federation Niagara River Anglers Association Inc., NY Onondaga County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, NY Pelican Harbor Seabird Station, Inc. Rainforest Action Network Rochester Birding Association, NY Schubert and Associates (on behalf of The Fund for Animals and the Humane Society of the United States) Society for Animal Protective Legislation Straits Area Sportsmen's Club, MI United States Trout Farmers Association Vermont Audubon Council Wildlife Management Institute Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Businesses After-U Charters, OH Beauty Without Cruelty, NY Birch View Resort, MN Captain's Cove Motel and Marina, NY Danbury Fish Farms, TX Fisherman's Choice Charters, WI Fishin'World, TX Fish Partners, CA Fletcher's Bait Service, MN Flowers Fish Farm, MO Foster Management, TX Harry Saul Minnow Farm, Inc., AR Island Passenger Service of Flag Island, MN J-E Fishing Enterprises, WI KB Fish Farm, Inc., AR Keo Fish Farm, AR Kirchner's Fishing Kamp, NY Lake Fork Guide Service, TX Niagara Mohawk, NY R.E. Palmer, CPA, Inc., OK Sea Dog Charters, MI Ship to Shore Aquafarm, CA Triple Pugh Farms, AR West Central Bait, MN Wild Woods Charter Service, MN

Legislative officials

Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, U.S. House of Representatives U.S. House of Representatives, Marion Berry, Arkansas U.S. House of Representatives, Jay Dickey, Arkansas U.S. House of Representatives, Jack Quinn, New York U.S. House of Representatives, Bart Stupak, Michigan U.S. House of Representatives, Don Young, Alaska U.S. Senate, Blanche Lincoln, Arkansas U.S. Senate, George Voinovich, Ohio New York State Assembly, Michael J. Bragman New York State Senate, James W. Wright State of Arkansas House of Representatives, Sam E. Angel, II

Tribes

Kiowa Tribe of the State of Oklahoma White Mountain Apache Tribe, Wildlife and Outdoor Recreation Division, AZ Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), MA