

**Statement of Chairwoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Legislative Hearing Regarding H.R. 509, the Marine
Turtle Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2009, H.R.
1454, the Multinational Species Conservation Funds
Semipostal Stamp Act of 2009, and H.R. 556, the
Southern Sea Otter Recovery and Research Act**

**Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife
Tuesday, May 5, 2009**

The Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife meets this morning to hear testimony regarding H.R. 509, the Marine Turtle Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2009, H.R. 1454, the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Act of 2009, and H.R. 556, The Southern Sea Otter Recovery and Research Act.

H.R. 506 and H.R. 1454 were both introduced by this Subcommittee's Ranking Member, Henry Brown. The Marine Turtle Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2009 provides a simple extension of the existing authorized funding level of \$5 million per year through Fiscal Year 2014.

Although this program has helped enhance our conservation of marine turtle species, the status of these seven turtle species remains tenuous at best, and reauthorization of this Act is warranted to maintain the progress that has been made.

It is my understanding, however, that other populations of freshwater turtles and tortoises have also declined dramatically. I will be interested to learn more about this situation from our witnesses.

Ranking Member Brown's other bill, the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp of 2009, would require the Postal Service to issue a Multinational Species Conservation Funds semi-postal stamp to generate additional funding to support the wildlife grant programs under the Multinational Species Conservation Fund.

Considering the high demand for grants under these programs, and the fact that they commonly leverage three or four times as much funding from non-Federal contributions, I am sure that any additional funding would be put to good use immediately.

Although the Postal Service has rarely issued semi-postal stamps, I remain optimistic that the administration will support this proposal to increase funding for the conservation of charismatic wildlife.

We also will hear testimony on Congressman Sam Farr's Southern Sea Otter Recovery and Research Act. Growth of the Southern Sea Otter population has been slow over the last decade because of high mortality rates. Otters die from myriad causes, including disease and parasites, malnutrition, and entanglement in fishing gear. Clearly, additional action is needed to ensure the recovery of these animals is a success.

H.R. 556 has been substantially revised since it was introduced in the 110th Congress and would direct the Fish and Wildlife Service to implement a program assessing important aspects of Southern Sea Otter population demographics, health, mortality and life history parameters; to develop measures to reduce or

eliminate factors related to marine ecosystem health or human activities that limit sea otter populations; and to do so in accordance with consensus recommendations made by the Service's published Southern Sea Otter Recovery Plan.

The bill is necessary to provide a stable and reliable source of funding for critically needed research, monitoring, and implementation of recovery actions. Its provisions would apply directly to sea otters, but because sea otters are a keystone and a sentinel species, H.R. 556 would also benefit the California coastal ecosystem as a whole.

I commend my colleagues, Ranking Member Henry Brown and Congressman Sam Farr, for introducing their bills, and I look forward to working with the Members of the Subcommittee on these issues.