

**STATEMENT OF TOM STRICKLAND, ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
FOR FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS  
BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR,  
ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES  
ON THE 2011 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST  
March 17, 2010**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to be here today to introduce the 2011 budget request for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and assist Rowan Gould and other members of the Fish and Wildlife team to answer your questions. As you know I am also Secretary Salazar's Chief of Staff. In that role I see the breadth of the influence of this Subcommittee and I want to share my appreciation for your support. In my role as the Assistant Secretary that works with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service, I also have an appreciation for your leadership in park and fish and wildlife issues. Your support is helping us to build a strong foundation in these agencies to tackle climate change impacts, conserve our treasured landscapes, support energy development, and engage America's youth in natural resource programs. I look forward to working closely with you to continue to advance these priorities.

**Introduction**

The mission of the Department of the Interior is as simple as it is profound: we protect America's natural resources and cultural heritage. The Fish and Wildlife Service has a very big part of that mission -- conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Through extensive partnerships across the Nation, the Service protects and conserves migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, certain marine mammals, and inter-jurisdictional fish, and administers the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Service's 9,000 employees are a dedicated cadre of professionals that face enormous challenges. Challenges they confront every day to protect fish and wildlife, adaptively manage in the face of climate change, support accelerated energy development, and restore our treasured landscapes. Last week we announced our decision on the conservation status of the greater sage-grouse. As with every decision, the Service utilized extensive scientific and commercial information to ensure that its decision was based on the best possible, current information.

Most recently, the Service's employees were faced with perhaps their biggest challenge-- the loss of their Director, Sam Hamilton. Sam was a visionary and a professional whose years in the Service and passionate dedication to his work have left an indelible mark on the lands and wildlife we cherish. His forward-thinking approach to conservation, including his view that we must think beyond boundaries at the landscape-scale, will continue to shape our nation's stewardship for years to come. He was a remarkable leader and a compassionate, wise, and eternally optimistic man

When Sam became the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service on September 1, 2009, he brought over 30 years of experience with the Service, beginning when he was 15 years old working as a Youth Conservation Corps member on the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi. Throughout his career, Sam exhibited outstanding leadership and fostered creative and innovative solutions to the

challenges facing wildlife conservation. In the Southeast Region, he supported efforts leading to the establishment of a carbon sequestration program that has helped biologists to restore roughly 80,000 acres of wildlife habitat. His emphasis on partnership activities bolstered the Service's fisheries program and helped establish the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership to restore vital aquatic habitats across the region.

Sam provided key leadership and oversight to restoration work in the Everglades and oversaw the extensive recovery and restoration efforts following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which devastated coastal wetlands, wildlife refuges, and other wildlife habitat areas along the Gulf of Mexico.

Sam believed that the sustainability of the nation's fish and wildlife resources require our cooperative efforts and he worked tirelessly toward building collaborative partnerships for conservation of resources for this and future generations. We will miss Sam.

### **Overview of the 2011 Budget**

The 2011 budget for the Department reflects the challenges of our constrained economic situation. The overall budget request for current appropriations is essentially level with the 2010 enacted level. We recognize the significant increase that the Congress provided in 2010 that we sustain in this budget. The 2011 budget for the Service is \$1.6 billion, \$4.6 million below 2010. This is \$194 million above the 2009 enacted level.

The tough choices we made across the Department are reflected in the Fish and Wildlife Service's budget. Department-wide we identified reductions of \$750 million that enabled us to direct funding to maintain progress on a set of key priorities for a new energy frontier, climate change adaptation, treasured landscapes, WaterSMART - our water sustainability initiative, youth in natural resources, and empowering tribal nations.

Funding increases for these initiatives in the 2011 budget will allow the Service to:

- Confront the realities of climate change and continue to implement an integrated strategy for **Climate Change Adaptation**;
- Develop a 21<sup>st</sup> Century conservation agenda that protects **Treasured Landscapes, including funding for** Land and Water Conservation Fund programs and investments in major ecosystem restoration projects in the Chesapeake Bay, California's Bay Delta, the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Mississippi, and the Everglades;
- Support the **New Energy Frontier** strategy that creates jobs, reduces the Nation's dependence on foreign oil, and reduces environmental impacts; and
- Engage America's **Youth in Natural Resources**.

The Service's contributions to these initiatives and their importance to ensure success cannot be overstated.

## **Climate Change Adaptation**

The Service created the Landscape Conservation Cooperative approach that is now one of the organizing principles for the Department's climate change program. The Service has moved out quickly to establish LCC's and will have nine created this fiscal year. They are working collaboratively with the other Interior bureaus, other Departments, States, Tribes, and partners based on a well thought out and comprehensive strategy.

This Subcommittee supported a robust 2010 budget for the Service's Climate Change program and we are moving swiftly to execute the program in a way that honors your request that we be strategic, efficient and avoid duplication. I would like to assure the Subcommittee that we responding to your request to develop a National Fish and Wildlife Adaptation Strategy.

## **New Energy Frontier**

As the stewards of the Nation's natural and cultural resources, we are also mindful of your concerns that we ensure careful consideration of potential impacts of energy development. The 2011 budget includes an increase of \$4 million to carry out endangered species consultation and other wildlife conservation efforts and provide timely environmental review of renewable energy projects. The Service is contributing to this effort to protect our Nation's resources along with other bureaus and agencies.

## **Treasured Landscapes**

I grew up hunting and fishing with my father and brother and bring the perspective of a sportsman to this job. Our system of wildlife refuges span all 50 states and play an invaluable role in preserving and protecting countless species. Yet these vital lands face enormous pressures from population growth and climate change. We must develop a long-term strategy to assure that these challenges are addressed so that we have a vibrant 21<sup>st</sup> century wildlife refuge system.

The 2011 budget proposes \$106.3 million, an increase of \$20.0 million, for Federal land acquisition at 44 refuges and wildlife management areas funded out of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. These additions will protect endangered species, migratory birds, and plants while providing increased areas for wildlife viewing and other recreational pursuits.

The budget also includes increases targeted to key ecosystems for restoration and renewal—the Everglades, California's Bay-Delta ecosystem, the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Mississippi, and the Chesapeake Bay. These increases will be discussed further during Mr. Gould's testimony.

The budget also continues important programs that complement these efforts. The North American Wetlands Conservation Fund budget request is \$42.7 million, matching the 2009 enacted level but a slight reduction of \$5.0 million from the 2010 level. This program leverages Federal funding by more than one-to-one and funds partnerships with others to protect wetlands and waterfowl habitat

## **Youth in Natural Resources**

A bright spot in the 2011 budget is our Youth in Natural Resources initiative, which will reach young

people from all backgrounds. The Service's budget includes an additional \$2.0 million for youth employment programs at national wildlife refuges and \$1.0 million to partner with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in public-private partnerships to engage youth through conservation projects on public and private lands. Emphasis will be on getting youths from urban and minority communities. In 2010 the Service will increase youth employment by 50 percent and by an additional 25 percent in 2011.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the President's 2011 budget request for the Fish and Wildlife Service. I want to reiterate my appreciation for the long-standing support of this Subcommittee and to say I look forward to working with you throughout the 2011 budget process. We have a tremendous opportunity to improve the future for our children and grandchildren with developing wise investments in clean energy, managing the impacts of climate impacts, conserving treasured landscapes, and engaging our youth in natural resources. This concludes my written statement. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.