

Opening Statement
The Honorable Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife
Thursday, May 6, 2010
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 2864, *Amendments to the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 1998 to Provide Hydrographic Data and Services for the Arctic;*
H.R. 3805, *The Electronic Duck Stamp Extension Act of 2009;* and
H.R. 4973, *The National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer Improvement Act of 2010*

In today's legislative hearing we have the opportunity to revisit one of our nation's oldest programs, the Office of Coast Survey. Established in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson and housed today under NOAA's National Ocean Service, the Office of Coast Survey has been providing information about the nation's water bodies critical to safe navigation, environmental research, and offshore resource development for more than 200 years.

H.R. 2864, introduced by my colleague Mr. Young from Alaska, would amend the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 1998 to authorize appropriations specifically for the acquisition of hydrographic data and coastal change analysis in the Arctic Ocean. As recent scientific evidence shows, melting Arctic sea ice is drastically changing the Arctic landscape. The collection of data authorized by this bill would help NOAA delineate the U.S. extended continental shelf, monitor coastal and ice pack changes, and provide information critical to international commerce, national defense, and natural resource management in that area.

We will also hear testimony this morning on two pieces of legislation that would further our commitment to improve our National Wildlife Refuge System, protect our valuable wildlife, and encourage public participation in the outdoors.

H.R. 3805, the Electronic Duck Stamp Extension Act of 2009 was introduced by our colleague from Virginia, Mr. Wittman, and extends a pilot program that allows the on-line purchase of duck stamps. This popular and successful program was established under the 2006 Electronic Duck Stamp Act—which was authored by our good friend and colleague Mr. Kind from Wisconsin, a long-time champion of the entire Duck Stamp Program. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has expressed its intent to maintain the E-Duck Stamp, and I look forward to hearing how this program can be most appropriately continued, as well as the challenges and successes it has had.

H.R.4973, the National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer Improvement Act of 2010, was introduced by Mr. Kratovil from Maryland and would amend existing statute to make the Volunteer and Community Partnership programs permanent within the Refuge System. With over 37,000 volunteers donating time last year, this program is highly successful and has contributed greatly to not only maintaining our refuges in the face of a large maintenance backlog, but also to bringing young people and adults alike outdoors to enjoy some of our nation's most beautiful places.

I commend my colleagues for introducing these bills, and reaffirming this Committee's commitment to conservation and prudent management of our natural places. With that in mind, I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses.