

Testimony of Jimmy Anthony, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries: to be presented March 29, 2012

H.R. 1917, To Authorize Joint Ventures for Bird Habitat Conservation Act:

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is pleased to testify before the Natural Resources Committee on the authorization of the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures (JVs). Since organized JVs have played an invaluable role in wetlands conservation in Louisiana by helping to stimulate local partnerships of state and federal wildlife agencies, NGOs, academia, private corporations, landowners and citizens aimed exclusively at habitat conservation for migratory bird species and the many people who take enjoyment from them.

The origin of the JVs was the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), a landmark agreement signed by the United States and Canada to restore waterfowl populations to levels of the 1970s through wetland habitat restoration, enhancement and protection.

JVs are the functional units, including management boards, science teams, and habitat managers, that translate continental-scale waterfowl population goals into local-scale habitat conservation through integration of the best available science-based ecological information, habitat management experience and cooperative funding.

In Louisiana, Gulf Coast and Lower Mississippi Valley JVs provide science-based habitat objectives for waterfowl and shorebirds and invaluable resources to develop, fund, and deliver wetland conservation projects on public and private land in the state. The LMVJV was established in 1987 as the first JV to carry out bird habitat conservation in one of the six waterfowl habitat areas of major concern identified in the NAWMP.

JVs now include all migratory birds to create efficiency among multiple bird conservation efforts, and integrate with state wildlife action plans.

JVs develop, review, and recommend NAWCA grant proposals to fund wetland conservation projects that address scientifically-established habitat conservation goals as well as provide ecological and recreational benefits from those habitats.

The Joint Ventures provide a means of access for NAWCA funds to support our priority projects in Waterfowl management as outlined in the NAWMP. They also help Louisiana meet our bird conservation goals, including those in the State Wildlife Action Plan.

By partnering with the JVs, landowners get the personal satisfaction of making a sound investment in conservation that will benefit not only birds and other wildlife, but also future generations within their communities. In Louisiana one of our private partners allowed \$100,000 of his own work to be used to match a NAWCA grant on public land. He could have easily used that to offset his own monetary obligations, but instead donated it to the public.

Corporate partners' monetary contributions allow them to make valuable contributions to conserving our state's "natural capital" and the tremendous ecological goods and services they derive from them.

Through partnerships, JVs have leveraged every dollar appropriated by Congress 35: 1. The 2007 NAWMP Assessment commended the Joint Venture organizational/coordination model for impressive and innovative habitat conservation delivery, and the 25-year record of JV success has positioned them as the national model for partnership-driven conservation.

The Joint Ventures, along with NAWCA, are the most effective wetland restoration programs in the country, and we strongly support the legislation and urge the Committee to authorize the Joint Ventures for five years with annual appropriations of up to \$15 million.