

Chairman Fleming and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here to testify today. As you know, my district hosts two of the largest mitigation hatcheries in the United States, the Norfolk and the Greers Ferry National Fish Hatcheries. These hatcheries were built, and have been operated, to mitigate the damage to the sporting fish in Arkansas streams and rivers directly caused by Federal Water Development Projects. And further, to ensure that the towns and communities that have depended on these world-class fisheries from well before the construction of the water development projects, can continue to serve the tens of thousands of visiting anglers every year.

These hatcheries play an important and central role in the lives of many of my constituents, the communities where they live, and the continued success of countless businesses. In 2010 a study was conducted in cooperation with the US Fish & Wildlife Service on the economic impact of the Norfolk and Greers Ferry Hatcheries. This study revealed the truly astounding impact that the Norfolk and Greers Ferry hatcheries have on the maintenance of our fisheries, especially the now cold-water fisheries which have replaced the once rich warm-water fisheries destroyed by federal water development projects.

The study took a deep and truly revealing look into the economic impact these hatcheries bring to the state of Arkansas. For instance, the Greers Ferry Hatchery is responsible for over \$36 Million of retail expenditures, for over 750 good jobs, jobs which themselves generate almost \$20 Million. Greers Ferry generates over \$2 Million in state and local tax revenue and over \$2.3 Million in federal income tax. The total economic output is over \$68 Million a year. The 2010 budget for Greers Ferry, the year of this study, was \$606,000. That's a return on investment of about \$113 for every dollar spent.

The numbers for the Norfolk Hatchery are even bigger with \$47 Million in retail expenditures, almost 1,000 jobs with over \$25 million in job income, State and local taxes of over \$2.8 Million, federal taxes of over \$3 Million, for a total annual economic output of over \$90 Million. Norfolk National Fish Hatchery's 2010 budget was \$950,000. That is a return on investment of close to \$100 for every dollar spent.

Altogether, there is over \$150 Million in annual economic output, and over 1,700 jobs directly at stake. And that's just my district.

Five years ago the Fish & Wildlife Service bore the entire cost of running these hatcheries. With some gumption and the example of western hatcheries which operate on a reimbursement arrangement, the Service began negotiating in earnest with Water Development Agencies to recapture part of the cost of running the mitigation hatcheries. The US Army Corps of Engineers began to contribute, and this day contributes almost two-thirds the cost of running the mitigation hatchery program. Not long after, the Bureau of Reclamation followed the Corps of Engineers and began to contribute. Just last year the Tennessee Valley Authority has begun to contribute as well, to the tune of \$900,000 per year. Five years ago there was no reimbursement at all and Fish & Wildlife paid all of the cost, today the mitigation hatcheries are operating at close to full reimbursement.

Unbelievably, just as this hard work has begun to really pay off, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has begun to look at making significant cuts in the mitigation hatchery program. Pulling resources from the mitigation program now, at a time when we are so close to fully reimbursed, is short-sighted and foolhardy. A hatchery manager once told me that running a hatchery is like running a battleship – it takes years to shut it down, and years to bring it back online. Once a hatchery begins the shutdown process, it can take years to complete, and even more years to bring back to full operational status. To even entertain shutting down any of the mitigation hatcheries when we are so close to fully, 100% reimbursed is to me the kind of short-sighted thinking that makes people back home shake their heads and wonder just what we are doing here in Washington.

These hatcheries play a significant role in the lives of business owners who serve the tens of thousands of anglers who continue to come to Arkansas from all over the Country, in the lives of my constituents who have learned from a young age about responsible fishing and being careful stewards of our natural resources, in the lives of the thousands who have jobs either directly or indirectly because of these two hatcheries. People like Leon Alexander, who is the head of the Friends

of the Norfolk National Hatchery, and many others have tirelessly volunteered and given generously to help make these hatcheries more than just a place where fish are grown before being released. They have become places to visit and learn how fish grow from egg to fry, to fingerling to mature adult, to see and experience firsthand the lifecycle of fish. Places where young men and women learn the value of conservation and respect for hunting and fishing laws. These hatcheries play host to festivals and events that draw our communities closer together, programs to bring fishing to handicapped and disabled children, and are staffed by some of the most dedicated and hard-working people I have had the pleasure to meet.

I am truly astonished that the Service is even considering taking resources away from the mitigation hatchery program. A program that delivers so much, from thousands of jobs and millions in local, state and federal tax revenue, to the very things that throughout our Nation's history have brought families and communities together. This at the very time when the net cost to the Service is approaching ... nothing. I strongly urge the Service to carefully reconsider these things before any actions are taken to cut these programs, and further to give thought to the language in our appropriations which has specifically stated that it is the intent that this program be funded until full reimbursement can be reached. Fortunately, it looks like we are very, very close to that.