



Steve Moyer

Vice President for Government Affairs

July 22, 2014

The Honorable Paul Gosar
U.S. House of Representatives
504 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0304

Dear Representative Gosar:

On behalf of more than 153,000 Trout Unlimited (TU) members, I write to thank you for attention to the funding and management issues regarding the hatcheries of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), some of which are at risk of closure. These facilities provide a wealth of recreational fishing and youth education opportunities, and support thousands of jobs. We appreciate the goals of your Bipartisan Fish Hatchery Protection Act (HR 5026), the hearing to be held by the subcommittee on the bill, and your ongoing efforts to compel the FWS to do a better job of coordinating its hatchery decisions with state, federal, and conservation group partners.

The FWS Fisheries Program is a vital component of the Nation's fisheries conservation efforts. The Fisheries Program provides numerous benefits, including fish habitat restoration, invasive species management, and recreational fisheries. The state fishery management agencies also play an essential role in fisheries management across the Nation, and increasingly groups such as Trout Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy are working with the states and the FWS on fish habitat restoration projects.

As budgets have tightened over the past several years, a fundamental problem has arisen: while the FWS continues to do exemplary work with TU and its partners on fish habitat, invasive species, and other projects that benefit recreational fisheries, it has fallen short in other areas. In particular, it has failed to work effectively with the states and other partners to maximize the benefits of its hatchery system.

This problem has resulted in annual threats of disruptive hatchery closures, which thankfully have been avoided by effective directives and funding provided by

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Congress, and increasing amounts of funding provided for FWS mitigation hatcheries by federal dam operating agencies such as the Army Corps, Bureau of Reclamation, and TVA.

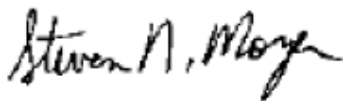
Congressional consideration of HR 5026 will help compel action on two needed solutions. First, Congress, FWS, state fishery agencies, and the federal dam operating agencies need to work together to find the funding needed to keep the hatchery system functioning for the next several years to allow development of longer term solutions. For example, last year we commended TVA for its decision to fund its share of mitigation costs for hatcheries in the southeast for three years to allow for longer term solutions to be developed. Also, we support the strong language recently unveiled by the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee in its FY 2015 bill and accompanying committee report to do just what we recommend: add \$5 million to the Administration's request for the hatchery program, and direct the FWS to do a better job of working with its state partners to find long term solutions.

Second, FWS must engage in a meaningful dialogue with its federal agency (Corps, TVA, and Bureau of Reclamation), state, and conservation group partners to develop long term solutions. TU doesn't have all of the answers. In some cases, state agencies, perhaps aided with FWS funding, may be the best entities to operate some of facilities currently run by the FWS. What we do know is that agreement among partners on how to proceed is critical for future success. FWS must lead the dialogue and find the solutions that are supported by its partners.

Having worked on these issues for 25 years, we are confident that viable long term solutions are within reach, and the modest funding needed to enable them is available. We appreciate your bill, the hearing on it, and the constructive role you continue to play to solve the problem.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven A. Moyer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Steve Moyer