

October 6, 2009

The Honorable Benjamin Cardin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife  
Senate EPW Committee  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife  
Senate EPW Committee  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cardin and Senator Crapo:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing millions of America's conservationists and anglers, we write in support of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act (NFHCA; S. 1214) and respectfully request that the Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife hold a legislative hearing on S. 1214 this fall.

The NFHCA is a national, bipartisan effort to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people. Healthy waterways and robust fish populations are vital to the well-being of our society. They provide clean water and sustainable fisheries. They also are vital for less tangible reasons, as anyone who has fished wild waters or canoed a tranquil stream can attest. Unfortunately, in many waters around the country, aquatic habitats and the fish they support have been degraded. This is of huge concern to the 44 million anglers who pursue fish recreationally and countless others who depend on them for subsistence and commerce. The economic contribution of recreational fisheries alone surpassed \$125 billion in 2006.

Research has determined that many fish populations are in decline and half of our waters are impaired. As fish habitats come under increasing pressure, the current efforts to address habitat and population declines are not reversing these trends. The goal of the NFHCA is to foster landscape-scale, regional fish habitat conservation efforts.

The NFHCA will authorize \$75 million for fishery and habitat improvement, maximizing the return-on-investment by targeting much needed funding to priority on-the-ground projects. Based upon the highly successful North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the NFHCA will leverage state, local and privately raised funds to build regional partnerships aimed at fixing the nation's biggest fisheries problems. Funding will be awarded based on habitat need, strength of local and regional partnerships, and the likelihood of success. The NFHCA will put into statute the most comprehensive effort ever attempted to treat the causes of fish habitat decline, not just the symptoms.

Thank you for your support for this important legislation to protect, restore and enhance fish habitat and fish populations across the nation. We look forward to the Subcommittee's and the full Senate Environment and Public Works Committee's consideration of S. 1214 in the coming months.

Sincerely,

American Fisheries Society  
American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
American Rivers  
American Sportfishing Association  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society  
Berkley Conservation Institute  
Coastal Conservation Association  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Federation of Fly Fishers  
Izaak Walton League of America  
National Marine Manufacturers Association  
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association  
Shimano Sport Fisheries Initiative  
The Conservation Fund  
The Nature Conservancy  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Trout Unlimited

cc: Members of the Subcommittee