

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PREPARED FOR THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON
DISCUSSION DRAFT – MIGRATORY BIRD PROTECTION ACT, H.R. 1446 – MULTINATIONAL
SPECIES CONSERVATION FUNDS SEMIPOSTAL STAMP REAUTHORIZATION, AND H.R. 2685 –
WILD BIRD CONSERVATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2019
JUNE 13, 2019

The Department of the Interior (Department) appreciates the opportunity to present views on the discussion draft of the Migratory Bird Protection Act, H.R. 1446, and H.R. 2685.

Discussion Draft - Migratory Bird Protection Act

The Department has not had sufficient time to assess the discussion draft legislation and has not developed a formal administration position on the bill. Should the draft bill be introduced, we would be happy to provide the Committee with our views upon request. .

H.R. 1446 – Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Reauthorization Act of 2019

The Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp provides a unique opportunity for individuals to directly support the conservation of iconic wildlife species across the globe. As detailed below, many Americans have taken advantage of that opportunity, purchasing tens of millions of the stamps, to the benefit of conservation abroad.

H.R. 1446 would amend the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Act of 2010 to require the United States Postal Service (USPS) to offer all printed copies of the Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamp available for sale to the public. H.R. 1446 also requires the USPS to notify Congress when all copies of the stamp have been sold. If the USPS destroys any of the stamps prior to enactment of H.R. 1446, the USPS is required to sell that number of stamps after enactment of the legislation. The stamp is also known as the Save Vanishing Species Stamp or the Tiger Stamp, with a reflection of the image of an Amur tiger cub and the phrase “Save Vanishing Species” on the face of the stamp.

Following enactment of the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Act of 2010, the USPS began selling the Tiger Stamp on September 20, 2011. The stamp sells at a first-class postage rate, with an additional small premium. Proceeds from sales of the stamp are equally divided between the five current Multinational Species Conservation Funds (Funds), which are managed by the Service, and supplement appropriations for the Funds. Through the Funds, sales of the stamp directly support conservation of African and Asian elephants, marine turtles, great apes, rhinoceroses, and tigers.

The USPS has sold nearly 51 million stamps, generating over \$5.7 million for the Funds, and supporting nearly 100 on-the-ground conservation projects in 35 countries targeting anti-

poaching, illegal wildlife trade, habitat protection, and capacity building. These projects leveraged more than \$19 million in additional matching funds provided by partners, supplementing resources provided through the Funds, including revenue from sales of the Tiger Stamp, appropriations, and donations.

Projects receiving funding from sales of the Tiger Stamp cover the globe and support a range of critical conservation projects. Examples include supporting a volunteer patrol unit for leatherback sea turtles on Mani Beach in Cote d'Ivoire; a Rhino Protection Unit in South Africa's Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park; reintroduction of orangutans in East Kalimantan, Borneo; construction of a rehabilitation center for Sumatran tigers in Bengkulu, Indonesia; software to improve law enforcement efforts to protect Asian elephants in Myanmar's Rakhine Yoma landscape; and acoustic monitoring technology for African elephants in the Congo Basin.

In September of 2014, Congress extended the requirement for the USPS to sell the Tiger Stamp through September 30, 2017. In October of 2014, the USPS announced that they would sell the stamp through December 31, 2018. Citing a lack of congressional reauthorization, USPS stopped sales of the Tiger Stamp beginning on January 1, 2019.

The Department supports H.R. 1446. Sales of the Tiger Stamp generate significant non-appropriated resources for the Multinational Species Conservation Funds, enabling the Service to have a greater impact to conserve some of the world's most imperiled wildlife species and their habitats. Initially, 100 million copies of the Tiger Stamp were printed. More than 49 million stamps remain. If they are all sold, they would generate nearly \$5 million in additional funding for conservation, at no additional cost to the U.S. taxpayer.

H.R. 2685 – Wild Bird Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2019

H.R. 2685 would amend the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992 (WBCA) by extending the authorization of appropriations for \$5 million annually from fiscal years 2020 through 2025.

The WBCA is an important tool enacted by Congress to help conserve bird species abroad. The law, implemented by the Service, limits imports of exotic bird species to ensure that their wild populations are not harmed by unsustainable trade into the United States. The WBCA prohibits the importation of bird species listed under the three appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), with a few exceptions, including permitted specimens, species from countries with approved sustainable-use management plans, and specimens from approved captive-breeding facilities.

The WBCA also established the Exotic Bird Conservation Fund to provide assistance for projects to conserve exotic birds in their native countries. The Fund was authorized to consist of penalties, fines, or forfeitures from WBCA violations; donations; and appropriated funds. However, the Fund has never received funding to assist in delivering on-the-ground bird conservation projects.

Exotic birds face a variety of threats, including habitat loss, poaching, and wildlife trafficking. Through existing funding sources, the Service supports efforts to protect exotic bird species and their habitats. For example, with Resource Management funds, the Service supported an

initiative in Honduras to create the largest community-patrolled scarlet macaw conservation area in Latin America. Prior to the community patrols, chicks and eggs from every nest in the area were poached for the lucrative illegal pet trade. Since the patrols were established, there has been an 80 percent reduction in the number of chicks and eggs poached.

The Department supports H.R. 2685. While the WBCA has been successful in prohibiting the trade in exotic birds to the United States, there is much more that can be done to protect bird species from threats in their native countries. Extending the authorization for appropriations under the WBCA will give Congress the opportunity to provide dedicated funding for the Exotic Bird Conservation Fund, which in turn would enable the Service to expand our conservation work for the world's most imperiled bird species and their habitats.

Conclusion

The Department is committed to the conservation of the world's biodiversity. Thank you again for the opportunity to present these views.