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Resolution 2013-02-06 Urging Congress to Pass a Five-Year Farm Bill with Strong Conservation Provisions in 2013

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

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Resolution 2012-02-06

RECOGNIZING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's "Wetland Reserve Program" has helped private landowners voluntarily restore, protect and enhance wetlands and wildlife habitat on their lands since 1992. This voluntarily, non-regulatory easement program has partnered with more than 11,000 private landowners who have enrolled over 2.3 million acres to protect, enhance, and restore our nation's wetland values and functions.

WHEREAS, the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetland Reserve Program is a significant contributor to the restoration and maintenance of habitat essential to sustaining our Nation's wetland-dependent fish and wildlife resources; and

WHEREAS, wetlands are among the most biologically productive ecosystems in the world, and although they occupy only about five percent of the continental U.S. land surface which is half of historical acreage, up to one-half of all North American bird species feed or nest in wetlands; and

WHEREAS, more than one-third of threatened and endangered species in the U.S. rely on wetlands such as those restored, enhanced and protected through the Wetland Reserve Program to complete their life cycles; and

WHEREAS, the Wetland Reserve Program provides restoration, enhancement and protection of important fish and wildlife habitat and helps recover at-risk species; and

WHEREAS, wetlands restored through the Wetland Reserve Program provide opportunities for outdoor education, reconnecting people with nature, and provide outdoor recreational opportunities such as wildlife-watching, hunting, fishing, and trapping which also positive economic benefits to local economies; and

WHEREAS, the Wetland Reserve Program through wetland restoration improves our nation's water quality, abates flood waters, restores natural hydrology and tidal flows, mitigates natural and man-made disasters; and

WHEREAS, the Natural Resources Conservation Service has worked in partnership with States and other federal agencies to achieve shared goals in fish and wildlife habitat conservation and management; and

WHEREAS, the Wetlands Reserve Program will achieve its **20th Anniversary** in 2012.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recognizes the valuable accomplishments of the Wetland Reserve Program and its valuable contributions to the conservation of our nation's fish and wildlife resources. And, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies reaffirms its support for the Wetland Reserve Program to the Administration, the Congress, and the American people.

Submitted by the Agricultural Conservation Committee

Adopted September 12, 2012
Hilton Head Island, South Carolina