

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 11, 2013

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:


We write today with grave concerns over the future of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's mitigation hatchery program. As you know, the mitigation hatcheries are vital to the economic health of communities impacted by the construction of power-generating and flood control water development projects. Mitigation hatcheries replace fisheries destroyed by the construction of these federal water development projects, and guarantee that the vital economic benefits from world-class fisheries will not be lost or interrupted. The vital economic benefits gained from fisheries, both prior to construction of water development projects and after mitigation, mean thousands of critically-needed jobs and tens of millions of dollars of irreplaceable economic activity in rural communities.

It has come to our attention that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) recently completed an internal propagation hatchery review study that examined allocations for the hatchery program based on several budget scenarios. News of the existence of this study, and the insufficient communication from the Service regarding its intent and goals, have caused a great deal of concern in communities near mitigation hatcheries and along the rivers and streams served by mitigation hatcheries. It is our understanding that this study is soon to be released, along with decisions about hatchery closures. We are gravely concerned that Congress has not been consulted on the matter.

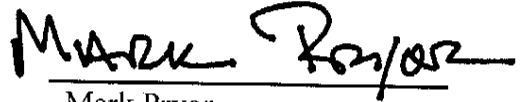
Given that any cuts or consolidation within the mitigation hatchery program pose the very real potential for significant negative economic impact in our communities, we are formally requesting that the Service grant at least a 60-day review period between the public release of the study, or any reorganization plan arising from it, and the initiation of any action, or preparation for action, arising from or recommended by the study or related reorganization plan. We believe it is critical that all federal, state, local, and private stakeholders be granted this time to both fully evaluate the study and its findings, and to adequately prepare for recommendations that may threaten our local economies.

We look forward to reviewing such a plan, discussing its findings and recommendations with our constituents, and providing the Service with valuable feedback. In the unfortunate circumstance you are unwilling to grant this requested 60-day public review period, please immediately contact our offices. We hope to have your response by 5pm, Thursday, September 12th.

Sincerely,



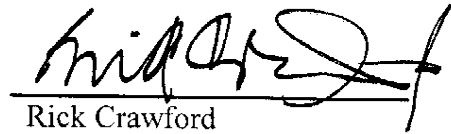
Lamar Alexander
United States Senator



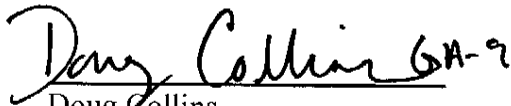
Mark Pryor
United States Senator



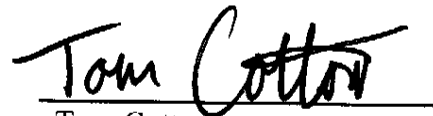
John Boozman
United States Senator



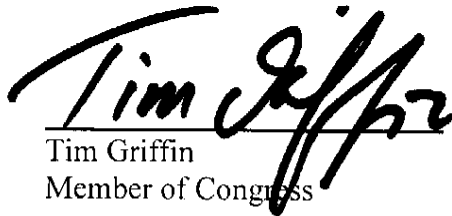
Rick Crawford
Member of Congress



Doug Collins
Member of Congress



Tom Cotton
Member of Congress



Tim Griffin
Member of Congress



Phil Roe, MD
Member of Congress



Steve Womack
Member of Congress

Cc: Dan Ashe, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service