

Chairman Mike Simpson  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
FY14 Budget Hearing: Fish and Wildlife Service  
April 18, 2013  
Opening Statement as Prepared

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Good morning and welcome to the subcommittee's hearing on the President's FY14 budget for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I'm pleased to welcome Dan Ashe, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and Chris Nolin, the Service's Budget Officer. I look forward to your testimony today and to working with you in the days ahead to enact a responsible though likely smaller budget that better balances what appear to be competing Administration and Congressional priorities.

The President's FY14 budget proposal for the Fish and Wildlife Service is roughly \$1.5 billion, which is \$168 million or 12 percent above the FY13 post-sequestration level. While I'm not a proponent of balancing the Federal budget solely on the backs of non-defense discretionary programs, I don't see this subcommittee's allocation headed in the same upward direction as your proposed budget any time soon.

It seems reasonable to assume that the House will write FY14 appropriations bills consistent with its budget resolution if the House and Senate cannot reconcile their differences soon. While we don't yet know what that means for this subcommittee's allocation, in all likelihood it will mean further cuts below FY13.

As I've said in recent hearings, I believe these continued cuts have driven us to the point where we need to get serious about letting go of the things we'd like to do and even the things we should be doing in order to shore up those programs that we absolutely have to do so that we can do them well.

No doubt these are tough choices to make, and, frankly, I'm not convinced this Congress truly has the stomach for it. But it is through this lens that the subcommittee will have to start considering these and future budgets.

So, what are the Fish and Wildlife Service "have-to-do's"? Are they still have-to-do's when compared to this subcommittee's other responsibilities such as educating and ensuring the health and safety of some of this nation's most impoverished people; helping to build and maintain our nation's drinking water infrastructure; or predicting, mitigating, and responding to natural disasters? Of those have-to-do's with statutory authorizations that have expired, should we continue to fund them?

These are values questions that will generate a variety of answers from around this table. And I look forward to those discussions today and in the days ahead as this subcommittee attempts to work together to craft a bill in spite of the partisanship and gridlock happening all around us.

Before turning to Director Ashe for his testimony, let me first turn to my colleague Mr. Moran for his opening comments.