

## **Testimony of John Jones (4/16/26)**

Owner, Lochow Ranch Pond and Lake Management LLC

Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the *Responsible Cormorant Management and Control Act (H.R. 8195)*.

My name is John Jones, and I am the owner of Lochow Ranch Pond and Lake Management LLC. I have worked in lake and pond management since 1998, hold a degree in Fisheries Management from Texas A&M University, and founded my company in 2003. Today, we help manage more than 10,000 private water bodies across Texas and surrounding states, making us the largest firm of its kind in the south-central United States. I currently serve as Chair of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee, am a past president of the Texas Aquaculture Association, and serve on the Texas A&M Department of Rangeland, Wildlife, and Fisheries Management External Advisory Committee. I am also an avid hunter, angler, and conservationist, and a father of four.

Based on nearly three decades of professional experience, I strongly support H.R. 8195. This legislation provides a practical, science-based framework to address the growing challenges posed by overabundant double-crested cormorant populations, while maintaining the conservation successes achieved under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA).

Cormorants are highly efficient predators capable of consuming approximately one pound or more of fish per day, depending on environmental conditions and prey availability.<sup>1</sup> In managed systems, and particularly private lakes, aquaculture facilities, and intensively managed recreational fisheries, this level of predation can have immediate and measurable economic and ecological consequences. It is increasingly common for flocks of 25 to more than 200 birds to concentrate on individual water bodies, where they can rapidly deplete forage species such as shad and bluegill, as well as juvenile sportfish critical to sustaining balanced fisheries.

The impacts extend beyond simple fish loss. Many of the water bodies we manage represent significant long-term investments, with annual stocking and habitat management costs ranging from thousands to tens of thousands of dollars. When cormorants concentrate on these systems, they can undo years of careful management in a matter of days or weeks, often resulting in collapsed forage bases and imbalanced predator-prey dynamics. In severe cases, the only viable path forward is a complete fishery renovation—an outcome that is both costly and discouraging for landowners committed to conservation and stewardship.

The recovery of double-crested cormorants following the banning of DDT and the protections afforded by the MBTA is an undeniable conservation success. However, that success has also created new management challenges. Following the 2016 court decision vacating the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's depredation order (50 CFR 21.48), state agencies and private managers have been left with limited, often ineffective tools to address site-specific conflicts. Across Texas

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<sup>1</sup> [Glahn, J.F., & Brugger, K.E. \(1995\). The impact of double-crested cormorants on the Mississippi Delta catfish industry: a bioenergetics model. Colonial Waterbirds.](#)

alone, more than 1.3 million private lakes — and millions of additional acres across neighboring states — are now highly vulnerable to unmanaged cormorant predation.

While nonlethal deterrents such as hazing, exclusion devices, and habitat modifications can provide short-term relief, extensive research and field experience demonstrate that cormorants quickly acclimate to these techniques, significantly reducing their long-term effectiveness.<sup>2</sup> As a result, managers are often left without viable options to protect fisheries and aquatic resources.

The scale of the issue extends far beyond private waters. In the Pacific Northwest, studies have shown that double-crested cormorants consume millions of juvenile salmon and steelhead annually in the Columbia River Basin, with significant implications for already vulnerable populations.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in the Great Lakes region, cormorant populations consume tens of millions of pounds of fish each year, contributing to localized fishery impacts and ecosystem changes.<sup>4</sup>

Healthy fisheries, both public and private, are foundational to recreational angling, which in turn drives conservation funding through license sales and excise taxes. When fisheries are degraded by unmanaged predation, angler participation declines, along with the economic and conservation benefits it supports.

The *Responsible Cormorant Management and Control Act of 2026* builds on a proven model of success by mirroring the adaptive, science-based framework used in waterfowl management through the Regional Flyway Councils. Under Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM), federal and state partners collaborate to establish population objectives, monitor outcomes, and adjust management strategies based on the best available science. This approach has successfully sustained abundant waterfowl populations while providing recreational opportunities for millions of Americans. Applying a similar framework to cormorants would maintain healthy population levels at a continental scale while equipping states with the flexibility needed to address localized overabundance.

Importantly, this legislation does not replace existing management practices but instead provides an additional tool for aquatic resource managers. Nonlethal methods will remain an essential component of management strategies. However, by incorporating additional science-based options where appropriate, managers will be better equipped to respond to site-specific conditions and achieve balanced, effective outcomes.

In closing, H.R. 8195 represents a commonsense, science-driven solution that restores balance to a system currently lacking adequate management flexibility. By empowering states with additional tools while maintaining strong conservation safeguards, this legislation will help

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<sup>2</sup> [Dorr, B.S., Fielder, D.G., & Bur, M. \(2012\). Double-crested cormorant management and control methods. USDA Wildlife Services Technical Review.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Evans, A.F. et al. \(2012\). Quantifying the effects of avian predation on fish populations: impacts of double-crested cormorants on salmonids in the Columbia River estuary.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Testimony of Randall Claramunt before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources](#)

ensure that America's fisheries—both public and private—remain productive, sustainable, and accessible for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.