

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-2201**

July 20, 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Aurelia Skipwith  
Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt and Director Skipwith:

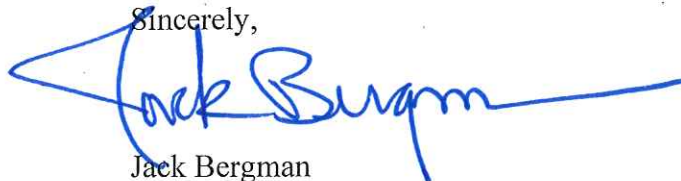
I write in regard to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's (USFWS) proposed rule for the responsible management of the double-crested cormorant in the United States.

I acknowledge the protections provided to double-crested cormorants under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and support the use of the best science and data to responsibly manage these birds. I have also seen the necessity for lethal take options; which had been established for both aquaculture and wild fisheries since 1998 and 2003, respectively. These longstanding management options proved successful until a 2016 court order rescinded these regulations. Since then, communities in the Great Lakes have felt the impact of the lack of lethal take options. Therefore, I support the highest level of take allowable, especially in wild and publicly- stocked fish areas.

The proposed rule makes specific efforts to alleviate conflicts with cormorants in both aquaculture and wild fisheries using a method that can determine the number of cormorants that may be taken at sustainable levels. This rule utilizes updated analyses and real-time information to make take determinations, which is necessary for the success of future management options. Additionally, the proposed special permit option which would allow our State and Tribal wildlife agencies to conduct the lethal take of double-crested cormorants to reduce: 1) conflicts involving depredation at State- and Tribal-owned or operated aquaculture facilities (including hatcheries); 2) impacts to health and human safety; 3) impacts to threatened and endangered species and listed species identified in State- or Tribal-specific legislation as threatened or endangered; 4) damage to State- or Tribal-owned property and assets; and 5) depredations of wild and publicly- stocked fish stocked by State agencies or Tribes.

I understand the USFWS' role and responsibility to protect the double-crested cormorant throughout the U.S. This proposed rule provides the transparency and accountability needed to address the negative impacts brought on by cormorant over-population without endangering the species overall. The lack of sound, data-driven management options threatens the livelihood of our recreational and commercial fishing industries, which are critical to our local economies. I support the USFWS moving quickly and efficiently to provide the highest levels of lethal take allowed under the proposed rule.

Sincerely,



Jack Bergman  
Member of Congress

