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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman Doc Hastings**  
**Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs**

***“Oversight Hearing on the FY 2013 Budget Request***  
***for U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration***  
**March 6, 2012**

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As our nation faces a \$15.5 trillion debt that grows by over \$4 billion every day, the two agencies appearing today are responsible for managing national fish and wildlife and marine resources and are requesting a combined total of over \$200 million *more* than together they received last year -- including for more Endangered Species Act (ESA) listings and regulations.

Regrettably, the sizable portion of these agencies' budgets that already goes to managing endangered species programs focuses less on prioritizing and recovering species than on paying costly attorneys' fees, avoiding and defending procedural lawsuits, meeting court deadlines, and responding to court orders stemming from the agencies' own poorly drafted rules and regulations.

Last year, the Fish and Wildlife Service measured its budget performance on how many new ESA listings and critical habitat designations it could cram into deadlines it created for itself in behind-closed-door court settlements with two environmental groups.

The increase in federal funding sought by the Fish and Wildlife Service this year could result in an astonishing 88 *new* species listings this year and set the stage for hundreds more, all because of lawsuits.

The 2011 lawsuit settlements that require listing decisions for 700 species not only raises serious questions about the scope of the Service's authority, spending and lack of transparency, but highlights how the ESA, which has not been reauthorized by Congress for 20 years, is distorted and in dire need of updating.

Secretary Salazar recently could not even identify how many ESA lawsuits and attorneys fees are being paid by the Interior Department.

Also, I remain very concerned about the use of NOAA's funds to implement the controversial Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning initiative and National Ocean Council. This, together with the Fish and Wildlife's Strategic Action Plan for Climate Change, are executive branch actions that have I believe have no Congressional or statutory approval.

I look forward to a robust oversight of both the Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA's programs and activities to ensure that species -- and American jobs --are protected, and that these agencies decisions are based on sound science and proper authority -- rather than lawsuits and courtrooms.