Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to express concern about your Fiscal Year 2012 Budget proposal to cut $6,288,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) National Fish Hatchery Operations, where the production of fish is for the purpose of mitigating the effects of federal water development projects. Under this proposal, two trout hatcheries in Arkansas, Greers Ferry and Norfork, are scheduled to lose their FWS funding. We ask that you reconsider this proposal and work with us to provide the appropriate level of FWS funding to maintain these hatcheries and prevent the unnecessary loss of jobs in Arkansas.

With a total annual operations budget of approximately $1.6 million, the Greers Ferry and Norfork National Fish Hatcheries in Arkansas are responsible for creating a total local economic impact of well over $150 million. They employ fourteen Fish and Wildlife experts; they account for nearly 2,000 jobs in rural Arkansas communities; and according to Arkansas's Department of Parks and Tourism, they generate approximately $5.5 million in federal tax revenues. The release of more than one million fish annually from these hatcheries contributes to our state's world-renowned reputation for trout fishing. Simply put, the investment into Arkansas's trout hatcheries pays for itself.

Please know that we understand and share your desire to take on our nation's fiscal challenges by reducing federal spending. However, we fear that allowing these facilities to terminate operations would cause further fiscal harm due to the drastic, negative economic impact that would surely follow such a cut. We ask that you reconsider the approach outlined in your budget and move to support these vitally important FWS projects in our state. We look forward to working with you on this matter as we continue to consider funding levels for fiscal year 2012 and beyond.

Sincerely,

Mark Pryor
Senator Mark Pryor

John Boozman
Senator John Boozman

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Congressman Rick Crawford

Congressman Tim Griffin

Congressman Mike Ross

Cc: The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior; The Honorable Rowan Gould, Acting Director, United States Fish and Wildlife Service; The Honorable Jo Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of Civil Works, Department of the Army