

1 State of Arkansas
2 93rd General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2021

HCR 1014

4
5 By: Representatives Wardlaw, Perry
6 By: Senator M. Pitsch

7
8 **HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

9 TO EMPHASIZE THE VALUE OF WATERFOWL AND WATERFOWL
10 HABITAT IN ARKANSAS TO THE ECONOMY, RECREATION,
11 HERITAGE, AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE STATE; AND TO
12 SUPPORT EFFORTS THAT BOOST THIS CRITICAL PART OF THE
13 STATE'S ECONOMY.

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16 **Subtitle**

17 TO EMPHASIZE THE VALUE OF WATERFOWL AND
18 WATERFOWL HABITAT IN ARKANSAS TO THE
19 ECONOMY, RECREATION, HERITAGE, AND
20 QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE STATE; AND TO
21 SUPPORT EFFORTS THAT BOOST THIS CRITICAL
22 PART OF THE STATE'S ECONOMY.

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24
25 WHEREAS, Arkansas has some of the most important landscapes in North
26 America for waterfowl and habitat resources, including the Grand Prairie of
27 Arkansas and alluvial floodplains of the Arkansas River and the Mississippi
28 River and their tributaries, the Ouachita River, Red River, White River,
29 Cache River, Black River, L'Anguille River, St. Francis River, Little Red
30 River, Bayou DeView, and Bayou Meto, which harbor some of the most important
31 bottomland hardwood forests in the United States; and

32
33 WHEREAS, Arkansas leads the country in rice production and produces
34 approximately fifty percent (50%) of the rice grown in the United States,
35 which contributes over six billion dollars (\$6,000,000,000) annually to the
36 state's economy and employs more than twenty-five thousand (25,000)



1 Arkansans. These flooded rice fields provide more than one-third (1/3) of
2 the calories available to wintering waterfowl and thereby support our
3 reputation as the Duck Capital of the World; and
4

5 WHEREAS, there are more than fifty thousand (50,000) acres of greentree
6 reservoirs in wildlife management areas across the state. The levees, water
7 control structures, and other infrastructure used to manage these greentree
8 reservoirs are critical for providing habitat and waterfowl hunting
9 opportunities; however, after many decades of use, water management
10 capability has become outdated and is in need of renovation and upgrades; and
11

12 WHEREAS, the consequences of this situation are dire for waterfowl and
13 hunters, as desirable trees are being lost or damaged. According to forest
14 health data collected by the Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission, a
15 significant proportion of oaks in these greentree reservoirs are undergoing
16 severe water stress and damage; and
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18 WHEREAS, outdoor recreation is a major economic driver in Arkansas,
19 generating an estimated nine billion seven hundred million dollars
20 (\$9,700,000,000) in consumer spending and supporting more than ninety-six
21 thousand (96,000) jobs in this state, according to a study conducted by the
22 Outdoor Industry Association; and
23

24 WHEREAS, according to the Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission,
25 Arkansas hosts more than one hundred thousand (100,000) waterfowl hunters
26 each year, many of whom hunt our iconic flooded timber and rice fields; and
27

28 WHEREAS, these hunters support Arkansas's economy by contributing an
29 estimated economic impact of over seventy million dollars (\$70,000,000)
30 annually or about one million dollars (\$1,000,000) each day duck season is
31 open; and
32

33 WHEREAS, in 2013, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and USA Rice Federation formed
34 a private-public partnership, known as the "Rice Stewardship Partnership",
35 which has achieved great success in helping farmers implement sustainable
36 practices on their lands. Through these and other practices, Arkansas rice

1 farmers have worked hard to decrease land use by thirty-five percent (35%),
2 energy use by thirty-eight percent (38%), and water use by fifty-three
3 percent (53%). These practices have been vital for protecting farmlands and
4 sustaining rice production in Arkansas while also benefiting waterfowl and
5 waterfowl hunters; and

6
7 WHEREAS, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and the Arkansas State Game and Fish
8 Commission have embarked on a similar private-public partnership to conserve
9 Arkansas's flooded timber legacy. In 2020, they, along with other private and
10 corporate partners, invested significant resources to begin repairing and
11 replacing outdated infrastructure at Earl Buss Bayou DeView, Dave Donaldson
12 Black River, and Henry Gray Hurricane Lake wildlife management areas to
13 ensure water can be moved more efficiently to encourage growth and
14 regeneration of desirable oaks, with similar projects planned at other
15 wildlife management areas across the state; and

16
17 WHEREAS, it is not just duck hunters who stand to benefit. These
18 forests, many of which occur in our wildlife management areas and national
19 wildlife refuges, should be viewed as a form of natural infrastructure that
20 protects our communities from the harmful effects of flooding and also stores
21 and sequesters carbon. For reference, the one hundred seventy-five thousand
22 (175,000) acres of bottomland hardwood forests in wildlife management areas
23 store approximately one hundred twenty-three thousand (123,000) acres of
24 carbon or the equivalent of one million (1,000,000) barrels of oil, ninety-
25 seven thousand (97,000) passenger cars driven for a year, or fifty-seven
26 billion five hundred million (57,500,000,000) smartphones charged; and

27
28 WHEREAS, the One-Hundred-Sixteenth United States Congress enacted the
29 Great American Outdoors Act, which prioritizes maintaining and improving our
30 existing public lands through permanent funding of the Land and Water
31 Conservation Fund at nine hundred million dollars (\$900,000,000) annually,
32 and also enacted America's Conservation Enhancement Act, reauthorizing the
33 North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which supports voluntary habitat
34 conservation projects that benefit migratory birds and waterfowl and supports
35 hunting opportunities on Arkansas's public lands like Earl Buss Bayou DeView
36 and Henry Gray Hurricane Lake wildlife management areas. In Arkansas alone,

1 the North American Wetlands Conservation Act has conserved more than seventy-
2 seven thousand (77,000) acres of wildlife habitat, in addition to conserving
3 critical breeding grounds in the Prairie Pothole Region, the area in which
4 most of Arkansas's ducks are hatched; and

5
6 WHEREAS, additional private, state, and federal investment is needed to
7 fund essential infrastructure improvements, and private-public partnerships
8 are the most successful method for delivering these resources to conserve
9 waterfowl habitat on public and private lands,

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11 NOW THEREFORE,

12 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-THIRD GENERAL
13 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN:

14
15 THAT the General Assembly support collaborative efforts that conserve
16 waterfowl and waterfowl habitat on public and private lands and that promote
17 hunting opportunities as well as recognize the benefits these resources
18 provide for the state's economy.

19
20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the General Assembly encourage the Department of
21 Parks, Heritage, and Tourism to work with the Arkansas State Game and Fish
22 Commission to ensure that the priorities of the Arkansas Statewide
23 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan include bottomland hardwood restoration
24 projects that support waterfowl hunting opportunities.