



DAVID A. PATERSON
GOVERNOR

ALEXANDER B. GRANNIS
COMMISSIONER

STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12233-1010

JUN 30 2009

Honorable Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate
Room 313 – Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senate
Room 531 – Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3204

Dear Senators ~~Schumer~~ and Gillibrand:

Chuck,

Congress has appropriated federal funding to manage cormorants in New York since 2004. The President's fiscal year 2010 budget proposes to eliminate this funding. The United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service - Wildlife Services program (Wildlife Services) has used this funding to assist the State in protecting local economies, recreational fisheries, nesting migratory bird populations and rare terrestrial habitats from impacts by cormorants. I am writing to ask for your help in continuing to provide funding to the Wildlife Services program to manage cormorants. The benefits are significant and irreparable harm may occur to some recreational fisheries and migratory birds in New York if this program ends.

The Cormorant Management Program is a partnership between DEC's Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Marine Resources, and Wildlife Services. Staff work together on lakes Ontario, Erie, Champlain and Oneida, and the St. Lawrence River to minimize cormorant damage.

Cormorant predation fostered the collapse of the walleye and yellow perch fisheries on Oneida Lake which resulted in the loss of an estimated 12,000 jobs and \$539 million in revenue during the 1980's and 1990's to the four-county area bordering Oneida Lake. Since 1998, the Wildlife Services program has managed the cormorant population on Oneida Lake, and the walleye and yellow perch fishery has shown some recovery, resulting in a documented savings of approximately 5,000 jobs and \$171 million in revenue over the last five years in the four-county area. Additionally, common tern populations, a species of special management concern in

New York, have increased on Oneida Lake since these birds no longer need to compete with cormorants for nesting sites. If the cormorant management program stops, it is likely that the local economy will suffer significant harm due to the loss of the walleye and yellow perch fisheries.

DEC also works with Wildlife Services staff on Lake Champlain to reduce cormorant damage to native vegetation on the lake's islands and shorelines. Cormorant feces kill trees and eliminate rare habitats used by black-crowned night-herons and great blue herons in New York and Vermont. DEC works with the State of Vermont and a coalition of bird conservation and sportsmen organizations to manage cormorants to protect our natural resources. Recently, Wildlife Services agreed, at the states' request, to chair the Lake Champlain Cormorant Technical Committee. They are leading an effort to produce a management plan for waterbirds on Lake Champlain and to arrange a workshop of fisheries experts to instruct local organizations how to assess the impacts of cormorants to fisheries resources.

Although migratory bird management is primarily a federal responsibility, the Wildlife Services program has effectively partnered with the State of New York to protect a range of current interest. The loss of the critical funding used by Wildlife Services for their operations would significantly impact ongoing projects to protect local economies around Oneida Lake, set back management and partnerships on Lake Champlain, increase costs for state agencies to manage cormorants on Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and the St. Lawrence River, and further strain DEC's limited budget. The State of New York would be unable to pick up all the projects Wildlife Services implements.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Grannis", written over a circular stamp or mark.

Alexander B. Grannis



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Alexander B. Grannis