

## Rep. Bergman Testimony

### House Natural Resources—Subcommittee on Federal Lands

- I want to thank the Chairman and the Committee for holding this hearing today to consider my bill--HR 4429, the Cormorant Control Act—to address a growing problem in the Great Lakes region.
- For those of you who might not be aware of what a double crested cormorant is, it's a large water bird that spends most of its day either resting or eating. They can consume several pounds of fish per day, and my district in Michigan is where one of their largest breeding populations likes to spend its time during certain parts of the year.
- Cormorants are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service.
- While Fish and Wildlife gives states the authority to control cormorant populations through a federal Depredation Order, a May 2016 court order stopped my state of Michigan—among others—from being able to effectively manage these bird populations.
- This has ultimately led to a troubling situation for our fish populations in the Great Lakes.

- Without the ability to effectively manage cormorant populations, the livelihood of our recreational and commercial fishing industries is threatened—which is critical to our local economies.
- Since coming to Congress, I've heard from stakeholders throughout my district on this issue.
- One of my very first meetings back in the district after being sworn in was with a gentleman names Gary Gorniak and several other members of the Upper Peninsula Sportsman's Alliance regarding this very issue.
- Everyone from Captain Ed of Trout Scout Charters in Alpena, Michigan and business owners in the Les Chenaux or Drummond islands, to biologists throughout the State have shared similar sentiments about the negative impact this court order is having.
- And while the Fish and Wildlife Service has been working diligently to bring some relief to certain aquaculture facilities, it is clear that its hands are tied when it comes to free- swimming fish areas.
- For this reason, I introduced the Cormorant Control Act, to rescind the court order and reinstate the double crested cormorant depredation orders.

- Effective cormorant management is a truly joint effort with federal, state and local input--- and the state of Michigan has been an excellent example of “how to.”
- There can be a balance between protecting one species, without doing severe harm to another. We can balance scientific fact with basic economic consequences.
- I support the underlying basis of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and I understand there is a value in protecting this species.
- But right now we are doing **nothing**, and that is threatening our fisheries—a \$7 billion dollar a year industry which is critical for Michigan.
- In Michigan’s First District, we pride ourselves on being responsible stewards of all our natural resources. Our heritage, our economies, and our special way of life depends on it.
- And this issue is critical to our state and the 23 other states that now no longer have management plans in place.

- HR 4429 recognizes how important it is for states to have proper management plans for controlling this bird population, which is why it simply allows for the order that had been previously successful in protecting our fish populations without threatening cormorant population levels
- And again I want to thank the Committee for holding this hearing today, and for Mr. Randy Claramunt from Michigan's Department of Natural Resources who is here testifying on the Cormorant Control Act.