

SR-132, As Adopted by Senate, March 28, 2012

Senators Booher, Casperson, Walker, Moolenaar, Green and Hansen offered the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 132.

A resolution to provide public comments to the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service to guide the preparation of a supplemental environmental impact statement or environmental assessment on the development of revised regulations governing the management of double-crested cormorants.

Whereas, Double-crested cormorants are depleting the public and private fishing industry throughout the Great Lakes and inland lakes and streams. The destruction of the fisheries population is wreaking havoc upon our recreational, tourist, and commercial industries; and

Whereas, The cormorants are also causing tree and vegetation destruction at an accelerated rate. The destruction is not limited to natural resources, but includes bridge and lighthouse deterioration. Public swimming beaches are being closed due to cormorant feces, which poses a public health hazard in addition to its excessive and unpleasant odor; and

Whereas, Under current regulations, cormorant damage management activities are conducted annually at the local level under the depredation orders issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Depredation orders are scheduled to expire on June 30, 2014. The USFWS requested public comments on revising regulations concerning the management of double-crested cormorants on November 8, 2011. Comments are due by April 6, 2012; and

Whereas, We recommend that the depredation orders be continued and the review date be extended to 20 years. The cost of continuing to review data on a shorter time frame is unwarranted. In addition, any state that is currently covered by the depredation orders should continue to be authorized under the orders, allowing these states to manage the double-crested cormorant population through approved means. We recommend that states not currently included in the depredation orders also be authorized. These states should not have to wait until their fish populations are destroyed before being allowed to manage cormorants. Double-crested cormorants are highly mobile, and birds removed from a location may readily be replaced by birds hatched at another location. Additionally, birds foraging at a location may not be roosting or nesting nearby, making it difficult to conduct targeted foraging reductions through removal of birds at breeding locations; and

Whereas, The double-crested cormorant is a relatively long-lived species and often will not breed at one year of age. Subadult birds may range far from the location where they hatched while foraging, hindering the efficacy of breeding site-specific management actions; and

Whereas, All saltwater states should be included in the depredation order. Hundreds of thousands of cormorants winter in the Southern states from Florida to Texas. Again, waiting for the fish populations to be destroyed will only compound the management problem at a later date; and

Whereas, Cormorant control should have a regional management plan. All states within a flyway system should be involved in the plan for that flyway. The National Wildlife Refuge and Park System should also be included in cormorant control. Addressing local and state lands, but not surrounding federal lands, will only increase management difficulties; and

Whereas, We recommend that cormorant control begin as soon as possible rather than waiting until eggs have hatched and the population expanded. Removing birds before the breeding season starts will reduce costs and the number of birds to be removed; and

Whereas, The training of agents must continue, and the certification should cover a period of at least five years unless an agent is not performing his/her duties per the written rules. Michigan Department of Natural Resources officers should be given authority to train new agents while the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services Division retains oversight; and

Whereas, The state of Michigan has a statewide coordination group that guides cormorant management. Michigan should serve as a model to other states to develop similar coordination efforts. We recommend that the USFWS actively use the services of statewide coordination groups to reduce planning and management costs of cormorant management. Using the services of such groups could help reduce the cost of planting fish only to be devoured by flocks of cormorants, which can cost taxpayers thousands of dollars. Michigan has developed a tremendous partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and tribal governments; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we encourage the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service to incorporate our recommendations in its preparation of a supplemental environmental impact statement or environmental assessment on the development of revised regulations governing the management of double-crested cormorants; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.