



STATE OF ARKANSAS
ASA HUTCHINSON
GOVERNOR

September 23, 2016

Mr. Dan Ashe, Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1894 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Ashe:

Agriculture is Arkansas's largest industry, contributing billions to our economy annually. Aquaculture is at the forefront of that success. The State of Arkansas ranks second in the United States in aquaculture production. Aquaculture also plays a major role in stimulating the Arkansas economy, especially in the Delta region that is characterized by high rates of poverty and unemployment. Some of the largest businesses in Arkansas are fish farms, and as Governor, I take pride in our state's aquaculture success.

The legal opinion of the Court in the case against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by the group Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, in which the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia remanded the 2014 Aquaculture Depredation Order for the double-crested cormorant and directed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to expand its consideration of alternatives that had been included in its prior National Environmental Policy Act has created a burden on the aquaculture industry in Arkansas that our farmers can't afford.

In efforts to further support the Arkansas fish farmers who are experiencing oppression from the 2014 Aquaculture Depredation Order for the double-crested cormorant being remanded, I am requesting that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service take action to protect fish farmers in Arkansas and across the country from devastating losses that can occur as a result of these birds' fall migration.

By issuing individual depredation permits and adding double-crested cormorants to existing depredation permits issued to fish farmers by your agency, you can stay within the clear confines of the District Court, as the court expressly suggests “individual predation permits under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act” in its May 2016 opinion as a way to mitigate losses from the birds and as justification for remanding the Aquaculture Depreciation Order in the first place.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Asa Hutchinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "H".

Asa Hutchinson

cc: The Honorable John Boozman, United States Senator, State of Arkansas
The Honorable Tom Cotton, United States Senator, State of Arkansas
The Honorable Rick Crawford, United States Congressman, State of Arkansas
The Honorable Bruce Westerman, United States Congressman, State of Arkansas
The Honorable French Hill, United States Congressman, State of Arkansas
The Honorable Steve Womack, United States Congressman, State of Arkansas