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National Wildlife Refuge Association Condemns Introduction of Bill to Adjust Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge Boundary

(Washington, D.C.) - Yesterday, Congressman William Keating (D-MA9) introduced legislation (H.R. 1157) to effectively cut the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in half. The National Wildlife Refuge Association strongly opposes this bill, which would turn over 3,900 acres of submerged lands and waters to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts at a time in our country's history when public lands are under assault like never before.

Monomoy NWR comprises a string of barrier islands off the southern end of Cape Cod and is home to an abundance of wildlife like gray seals, red knots, piping plovers, and one of the largest common tern nesting colonies on the Eastern seaboard. The waters and submerged lands within Monomoy NWR and around nearby Chatham, Massachusetts, also support a vibrant shellfishing industry.

By introducing this legislation, Congressman Keating has succumbed to pressures from the local fishing community, who fear the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will eliminate shellfishing within the refuge despite the FWS explicitly stating they have no intention to do so. Last year, the FWS and the Town of Chatham engaged in months of dialogue in an attempt to resolve the issue by developing a system of joint management over the refuge's shellfishing resources. These conversations have been rendered worthless by the introduction of this bill.

The National Wildlife Refuge System has been under fire from a relentlessly belligerent Congress, and Congressman Keating's bill is yet another salvo in the ongoing offensive to systematically chip away at our nation's public lands. In fact, mere hours after this legislation was introduced the House of Representatives voted to roll back protections for predators such as wolves and brown bears in Alaska to allow extreme and unsustainable hunting practices on Alaskan national wildlife refuges.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association recognizes the importance of Chatham's shellfishing heritage, and encourages a resumption of dialogue between the Town and the FWS to reach a non-legislative solution to this issue. The National Wildlife Refuge Association strongly condemns the reckless introduction of this bill, which if passed would have long-lasting and far-reaching consequences not only for Monomoy NWR, but for the entire National Wildlife Refuge System.

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The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America's wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries.