

**Jason Hill, Manager of Conservation Programs, Ducks Unlimited
TESTIMONY REGARDING HOUSE BILL 5854 AND HOUSE BILL 5855:**

Bills related to amending Section 30301 (MCL 324.30301) as amended by 2012 PA 247 and amending Section 30312 (MCL 324.30312d) as amended by 2013 PA 98, and by adding Section 30312f, respectively.

House Committee on Natural Resources Meeting: May 9nd, 2018

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the House Natural Resources Committee. My name is Jason Hill, Manager of conservation programs for Ducks Unlimited in the states of Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Wetland conservation is the heart of DU's mission since our founding in 1937. Our staff in our Dexter office is comprised of 40 plus biologists, scientists, engineers, construction managers and resource professionals needed to restore wetlands from dream to reality. A hallmark of DU's work is that our staff team up with partners and landowners to find sensible solutions to natural resource issues, resulting in improved habitat for waterfowl, other wildlife and fish, and society.

A majority of our work is conducted in altered or degraded wetlands – those that have been negatively impacted by humans, invasive species or natural impacts. This is the biggest area of conflict among wetland restoration experts and wetland regulatory agencies. DU and its many partners, including the MI Department of Natural Resources and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, see these altered and degraded wetlands as prime areas for restoration and enhancement, and our long track record of restoration across the state is indicative that you can restore altered and degraded systems back to productivity, as well as long term sustainability through management and maintenance. Michigan's highest quality managed wetlands, including Nyanquin Point, Fish Point, Maankiki Marsh at Shiawassee NWR, Harsen's Island, Pt. Mouillee, Maple River, Crow Island, and Pointe Aux Peaux are just a sampling of areas that have been restored through great partnerships. They haven't all experienced regulatory barriers, but several have that shouldn't have, and it cost us and our partners great time delays and tens of thousands of dollars, unnecessarily in our opinion.

The benefits of restoring and properly managing and maintaining wetlands is critical to so many species of wildlife. A recent study published in the Journal of Environmental Management comparing managed wetlands to unmanaged wetlands indicated that waterfowl and non-waterfowl species, including several at-risk and priority conservation concern species, was higher in the managed wetlands. This is what our professional wildlife managers and biologists in the DNR and FWS do best, and we are pleased this legislation will give them the flexibility and authority to manage species according to their mission and management plans.

These two pieces of legislation position voluntary wetland restoration in the correct policy and regulatory framework – making for good government that advances wetland conservation, outdoor recreation and local economies. These bills will change the paradigm of "hands off all wetlands" to "partnerships working to advance wetland restoration of altered and degraded wetlands". Quite simply, more wetlands, more wildlife, more hunting and outdoor recreation, and more investment in local communities".

Thank you for your support, and we look forward to working with you as these bills advance.