



**News from the Office of
Congressman Rob Wittman**
First District, Virginia



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WASHINGTON WEEKLY UPDATE

This week has been full of great developments for the First District and especially the Chesapeake Bay. I am excited to report that I have been appointed as one of two members of the House of Representatives to serve on the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. Additionally, as many of you know I have authored legislation to bring transparency and accountability to the funding of cleanup for the Chesapeake Bay. Thursday, the House unanimously agreed to add my legislation to the Water Quality Investment Act of 2009, which then passed the House with bipartisan support 317-100.

First, I am honored to have been chosen by the Speaker of the House to serve on the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission which is so important to both waterfowl and outdoorsmen alike. The Commission was created and authorized to consider and approve any areas of land and/or water recommended by the Secretary of the Interior for purchase or rental by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and to fix the price or prices for how the areas may be purchased or rented. In addition to approving purchase and rental prices, the Commission considers the establishment of new wildlife refuges.

I have already attended my first Commission meeting and will continue to serve alongside the Secretaries of the Interior Ken Salazar and Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Blanche Lincoln (D-AK) and Congressman John Dingell (D-MI) at meetings throughout year. Congressman Dingell is the longest serving Member of the House and he has been very gracious in bringing me up to speed with the work of the Commission. Since the Commission's establishment, over 4 million acres have been acquired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by fee purchase, easement, or lease with dollars from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund; including areas in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed which provides vital habitat for waterfowl. Preserving habitat for waterfowl not only benefits bird species but also contributes to improving water quality and restoring the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

Next, I offered an amendment to the Water Quality Investment Act of 2009 which requires the Office of Management and Budget Director to report to Congress on an interagency budget for Chesapeake Bay restoration activities. This amendment also requires the Environmental Protection Agency to develop a Chesapeake Bay restoration management plan. This amendment is very similar to my already introduced Chesapeake Bay Accountability Act which leads an effort to fundamentally alter the management of Chesapeake Bay restoration activities. The Amendment received unanimous support and praise from both sides of the aisle during debate on

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Thursday. It was later passed along with the overall bill with over seventy percent of the House's support.

To date, the complexity of a wide variety of efforts among, federal, state, and local governments has resulted in a muddled effort. My legislation, using tools which have been successfully implemented in the Great Lakes and the Florida Everglades will bring clarity to those efforts. The Chesapeake Bay restoration is at a tipping point and without a renewed commitment that increases the cleanup effort by a great deal, we will not see any level of improved water quality in our future. This however, is just the first step in an ongoing process to restore the health and viability of our Bay.

We will continue to work here in Washington on the next steps for the Bay, which will include restoring fisheries and waterfowl habitats for future generations. From my perspective as an environmental scientist and a legislator this has been a very promising week for the First District and the Chesapeake Bay. I look forward to continue working on your behalf to lead the efforts that are so vital to the health and viability of our natural resources.

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

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