

Castle Tapped as Vice Co-Chair of Newly Formed Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus -- September 14, 2006

Wildlife Refuge Caucus will highlight importance of protecting and preserving Refuge System, such as Prime Hook and Bombay Hook

Washington, D.C. - Hailing the National Wildlife Refuge System as the premier wildlife land system in the world, Delaware Congressman Mike Castle has been tapped as a vice co-chair of the newly formed bipartisan Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus (CWRC). Today, Castle gathered with Co-Chair Reps. Ron Kind (D-WI) and Jim Saxton (R-NJ) and fellow vice Co-chair Mike Thompson and a diverse coalition of national conservation and recreation organizations today to celebrate the launch of the CWRC and highlight the importance of protecting and preserving the Refuge System. The CWRC membership is nearing 100 Members, represents 36 states and 168 refuges.

"The purpose of this caucus is critical-we are serving as a united voice aimed at protecting our nation's environmental treasures. Bombay Hook and Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuges conserve important segments of the Delaware Bay Marshes. They are vital stop-over sites for migrating shorebirds and wading birds and are considered some of the best existing wetland habitat areas along the Atlantic Coast. Every time I visit I am in awe of their beauty. I know others feel exactly the same about the refuges in their districts and that is why we are redoubling our efforts to conserve and preserve these pristine areas," said Rep. Castle.

The mission of the CWRC is to fortify, protect and preserve the National Wildlife Refuge System by supporting adequate Refuge funding, working for the strategic growth of the Refuge System through easements and targeted land acquisition and by promoting legislation to improve the Refuge System. The CWRC also aims to educate members of Congress about the increasing number of challenges facing the System through briefings and other forms of outreach.

Wildlife Refuge budgets have long lagged behind what is needed to keep up with fixed costs such as salaries and fuel. These chronic shortfalls have resulted in an overall backlog of \$3.1 billion, severely inhibiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) from carrying out the mission of the Refuge System.

In anticipation of the launch the caucus membership, the Caucus recently introduced legislation to help combat invasive species, the number one ecological and financial threat the Refuge System. The Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, & Immediate Response (REPAIR) Act (H.R. 5900) REPAIR Act, proposes an innovative and cost-effective approach to maximize eradication efforts and establishes a grant program to combat invasive species on and adjacent to Refuges.