



Jeffrey Powers <jpowers@powershardware.com>

Responding to your message

Representative Dan Benishek <MI01DBIMA@mail.house.gov>
To: jpowers@powershardware.com

Wed, May 11, 2011 at 2:30 PM

DAN BENISHEK
1ST DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2201

May 11, 2011

Dear Dr. Powers:

Thank you for making the effort to contact me regarding the double crested cormorant bird. As your elected representative, not only do I appreciate the opportunity to learn your views, I also agree with you.

As you may know, double-crested cormorants (DCCOs) are harmful to Michigan's environment. The impact of DCCO includes foraging on populations of sport fish and the forage base they consume, damage, through guano deposition, to private property and habitat used by other wildlife, and causing risks to aircraft through collisions.

In 2004, the USDA Wildlife Services (WS) program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating ways by which the agencies could work together to resolve conflicts with DCCOs in Michigan. The analysis was prepared in consultation with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Grand Traverse Bay Band of Odawa and Chippewa Indians, Bay Mills Indian Community, and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

In 2010, an updated EA on DCCO management in Michigan was released for public comment and will be finalized within the next two months. The plan documents the need for cormorant damage management in Michigan and assesses potential impacts on the human environment from various alternatives for responding to DCCO damage problems, including the take of birds under the Double-crested Cormorant Public Resource Depredation Order (PRDO; 50 CFR 21.48).

The final EA report will likely increase the cap on the number of DCCOs that can be taken annually under the PRDO and USFWS Migratory Bird Permits (the current cap is 10,500 birds). In addition to culling adults, eggs are oiled at most sites to decrease DCCO production and fish consumption. An Interagency Cormorant

Coordination Group meets annually to discuss where, when, and to what degree DCCO management is needed in Michigan.

In 2010, about 7,100 DCCOs were killed and 6,500 DCCO nests were oiled in Michigan. From 2004 to 2010, an average of about 6,100 birds were killed annually in the state. Michigan has the highest PRDO take of any state, accounting for about 36% of the national total from 2004 to 2010.

Areas where DCCO management has been targeted during the breeding season include the Les Cheneaux Islands, Beaver Archipelago, Bays de Noc, Thunder Bay, Ludington, and several sites in Lake Superior. Additional sites in the Upper Peninsula, where migrant DCCOs prey on spawning or newly-stocked fish in the spring, are subject to harassment and lethal control.

In response to DCCO management, the Michigan cormorant population has declined from about 30,000 pairs in 2005, to 28,500 pairs in 2007, and 18,000 pairs in 2009. Preliminary counts from sites where DCCO management was conducted in 2010 indicate there was an approximately 20% decrease in the number of nesting pairs between 2009 and 2010.

As an avid outdoorsman, I support active cormorant management. As your representative, I greatly appreciate your support on this issue. Again, thank you for taking the time to share with me your opinion—I value hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Dan Benishek M. D.
Member of Congress

P.S. I would also like to invite you to visit my website, www.benishek.house.gov, for further information. If you have not already done so, please submit your email address so that my office may keep you informed on issues in Congress.
