

PASS THE CORMORANT RELIEF ACT OF 2025

HR 2293/S 1255, Cormorant Relief Act of 2025, re-establishes the highly successful Aquaculture Depredation Order which existed from 1998 to 2016 under the authority of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.



This Order reduced the administrative burden for the FWS by eliminating depredation permitting on a farm-by-farm basis and created a successful collaborative effort with USDA to manage fish depredation.

This bill would allow the more than 1,500 fish farms that use ponds and raceways to combat millions of dollars in annual losses from cormorants, which threaten the livelihoods of aquaculture operations in AL, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, IA, IL, IN, KN, LA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NC, NJ, OH, OK, PN, SC, TN, TX and WI. The greatest annual regulatory cost burden on catfish farms, \$18 million, was caused by environmental regulations related mostly to the management of federally protected piscivorous migratory birds.

In March 2016, the Order was vacated due to a 2014 suit that challenged the Aquaculture Depredation Order renewal because of inadequate Environmental Assessment prepared by FWS as required by NEPA. In January 2021, FWS announced farms could apply for depredation individual permits. However, individual permits are only available through electronic application and may be more than 5 months late, subjecting farms to considerable risk.

Double-crested cormorant populations continue to increase, with little to no predation, an expanding prey base and growing rookeries in the Southeastern United States. The North American Breeding Bird Survey Trend Results estimated a growth rate of 1.52% through the U.S., with some areas as high as 8.11%. This increasing population, coupled with delays in obtaining depredation permits, has led to significant cormorant predation and economic losses of farmed fish.

The National Aquaculture Association requests House and Senate Offices join and support their respective bills. To join the House bill, contact Bea Valenti with Congressman Ezell's Office at Beatrice.Valenti@mail.house.gov. To join the Senate bill, contact Braxton Wenk with Senator Cotton's Office at Braxton_Wenk@cotton.senate.gov.