

HCR57, As Adopted by House, January 16, 2008

Reps. Walker, Booher, Hansen, Casperson, Meekhof, Huizenga, Proos, Elsenheimer, Palsrok, Hildenbrand, Ward, Farrah, LaJoy, Rick Jones, Stahl, Moolenaar, Pastor, Agema, Calley, Moss, Marleau, Ball, Acciavatti, Emmons, Pearce, Caswell, Moore, Garfield, Gillard, McDowell, Lahti, Nofs, Hoogendyk, Brandenburg, Brown, Cushingberry, Dean, Hammon, Lemmons, Nitz, Opsommer, Palmer, Shaffer and Simpson offered the following concurrent resolution:

House Concurrent Resolution No. 57.

A concurrent resolution to encourage the federal government to remove the double-crested cormorant from the list of protected species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

Whereas, The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a domestic law, was enacted to implement international conventions between the United States and Canada, Japan, Russia, and Mexico. In 1972, the cormorant was added to the convention between Mexico and the United States and subsequently to the federal act because its numbers had declined significantly due to pollution in the Great Lakes; and

Whereas, In the past 15 years, the populations of double-crested cormorants have exceeded acceptable levels and are disrupting the ecosystem in many areas of the Great Lakes region and beyond. Once an uncommon species, the birds can now be found throughout the Great Lakes. The double-crested cormorant's numbers are at historic highs in the Great Lakes region, with an estimated population of greater than 600,000 birds in 2005; and

Whereas, The return of double-crested cormorants to such high numbers has brought significant problems, especially to commercial fishing and the Michigan economy. The double-crested cormorant feeds on small fish, including fry. The cormorant population has caused significant devastation to Michigan's Les Cheneaux Islands, destroying vegetation and depleting the yellow perch population. Due to the decline in recreational fishing opportunities, several businesses have had to close, causing undue hardship on the local economy; and

Whereas, There is also a large and growing population of double-crested cormorants in the Ludington area along Lake Michigan. The Little Manistee, Manistee, and Pere Marquette Rivers all enter Lake Michigan in this area. These rivers provide some of the best steelhead, salmon, and walleye spawning rivers in northern Michigan. Each adult cormorant can consume 1.0 to 1.5 pounds of fish per day, including small steelhead, salmon, and walleye. Cormorants have established a nesting ground on the Consumers Energy Ludington Pump Storage Facility breakwall, historic lighthouses, the Beaver Island Archipelago, and many other islands in and around the Great Lakes, causing environmental damage and depleting the local fish population; and

Whereas, The United States Department of Agriculture has undertaken limited pilot projects in Michigan to control double-crested cormorant populations. While these initial projects have shown some success in controlling cormorants, the nonlethal controls used in these projects just touch the surface of the cormorant problem in Michigan. The Les Cheneaux pilot project called for killing just 15 percent of the nesting adult birds. Adult cormorants typically lay three to six eggs each year; and

Whereas, The need for protection initially established in 1972 is no longer relevant and, in fact, hinders efforts to control double-crested cormorant overpopulation. By removing the double-crested cormorant from the protection of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, states can take over management of the birds, ensuring a population that is acceptable to the resources of the individual states; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That we encourage the federal government to remove the double-crested cormorant from the list of protected species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the members of the Michigan congressional delegation, and the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.