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September 3, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar,

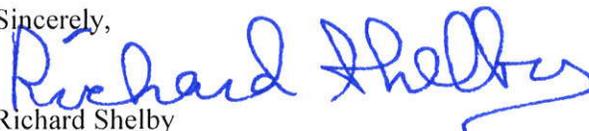
I am writing to express concerns regarding the proposed boundary expansion for the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge. The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is proposing an expansion of the Refuge to nearly 300,000 acres without full consideration of the potential effects this may have on landowners, stakeholders, and the local economy.

There has been great concern throughout the state regarding the lack of stakeholder participation in the process thus far. Only two public meetings have been held – the first of which was not made known to the public until it was too late for many to attend. It is my understanding that informal comments were solicited from only two environmental groups, while no business interests or landowners were asked for input on any aspect of the draft, including boundary lines.

While I certainly understand the importance of preserving this ecological treasure, this is a major expansion of the Refuge, which will not only cost millions of dollars in federal funds for land acquisition, but will also take a large portion of the tax base away from the State. According to the Alabama Forest Owners' Association, this expansive land acquisition will cost \$22.8 million in payroll contributions annually, \$778,958 in state tax contributions each year, and 702 jobs. Additionally, the federal government would be required to pay the affected counties in perpetuity for the acquired properties. We must ensure that this proposal is thoroughly reviewed and all who wish to comment have the ability to do so.

I respectfully request a meeting with Mr. Steve Miller, Refuge Manager for the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge, on the proposed expansion prior to FWS moving forward any further with this proposal. Additionally, I urge FWS to consider a further extension of the comment period to ensure that all interested parties have an opportunity to comment. I look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,


Richard Shelby

cc: Mr. Steve Miller, Refuge Manager, Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge