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December 2, 2016

The Honorable Daniel M. Ashe
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Ashe:

I am writing to express concern over a recent petition presented to your agency by the Center of Invasive Species Prevention (CISP) urging you to consider placing the *procambarus clarkii* (red swamp crawfish) on the list injurious wildlife under authority of the Lacey Act¹. CISP's claim that the red swamp crawfish is injurious to Louisiana is almost as outrageous as the fact that CISP stated in their petition that the red swamp crawfish offers no "essential economic or other benefits that outweighs their current or potential harm to the United States²."

The Lacey Act was signed into law with the intent to protect local environments from foreign species in order to promote the health of the diverse ecosystems in the United States. Consequently, the FWS Office of Law Enforcement is tasked with imposing punishment on those who buy, sell, or trade injurious species³. Ridiculously, the inclusion of the red swamp crawfish on the list of injurious wildlife would result in the arrest and prosecution of thousands of Louisiana business owners⁴.

Since the late 1800s, crawfish aquaculture has been a significant source of income for many Louisianians, and it holds a place significant role in the culture of Louisiana. The industry has grown immensely from trapping a wild product to a nearly year round industry that services restaurants across the nation⁵. Over the past 25 years, land area in Louisiana that has been dedicated to crawfish aquaculture has grown from 120,654 acres to 225,789 acres⁶. Additionally, production of the red swamp crawfish has increased from 61.1 million pounds a year to 127.5 million pounds, a \$138 million increase in farm-gate value over the last quarter

¹ Center for Invasive Species Prevention. "Petition: To Amend 50 CFR §16.13 to List 43 High Risk Fish, Crayfish, and Mollusk Species as Injurious Species under the Lacey Act." 19 September 2016.

² *Id.*

³ <https://www.fws.gov/International/laws-treaties-agreements/us-conservation-laws/lacey-act.html>

⁴ <https://www.fws.gov/le/injurious-wildlife.html>

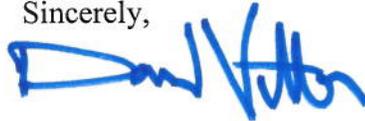
⁵ <http://www.lsuagcenter.com/profiles/lbenedict/articles/page1461854217505>

⁶ *Id.*

century⁷. Based on those facts, CISP's claim that the red swamp crawfish has no essential economic benefit is laughable. Any consideration of their petition to list the red swamp crawfish as injurious and to place it on the FWS list of injurious wildlife should immediately cease.

Making arbitrary recommendations that ignore the economic and cultural ramifications on a vibrant community illustrates how aimless CISP's objective is and how detached their recommendation is from the interest of the American people. I urge you to reject this and any similar attempt to deprive Louisiana farmers of their livelihood and to rob Louisiana of one of its most famous and celebrated culinary traditions.

Sincerely,



David Vitter
United States Senator

⁷ *Id.*