

Mr. VANDER JAGT. That is all I have, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. FROME. I would like to offer Mr. Black's letter for the record.

Mr. JONES. Without objection, the letter will be inserted in the hearing record at this point.

(The letter follows:)

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,  
Washington, D.C., April 26, 1968.

Mr. MICHAEL FROME,  
Alexandria, Va.

DEAR MR. FROME: Secretary Udall has referred to me your letter of April 11, concerning a bulkhead and fill permit application now pending before the Corps of Engineers as it would affect Hunting Creek. As you may know, the responsibility for final departmental action under the interagency memorandum of understanding has been assigned to me.

Having completed its public hearing on the matter and on the basis of the last recorded position of this Department, the corps has been free to proceed with a decision for over 2 months so far as our interests are concerned. Solely on the basis of informal indications of renewed concern within the Department, however, we were accorded a belated and eminently reasonable opportunity to review the matter again. To compress a 4-year proceeding into a short space, there is enclosed for your information a copy of a letter which I have today forwarded to the responsible Army official.

In response to the specific questions you have posed, the following information is provided:

1. The National Park Service has expressed concern over the general impact of high-rise development on the Potomac scene, but in such general terms that I would hesitate to term it "professional judgment." As to impact on Jones Point or other park areas, I have inspected those sites in the company of the Park Service representative most knowledgeable about the area. Structures on the proposed project would be visible from only a small segment of the Jones Point property and no more so than the existing buildings on higher ground. From the picnic area on the south side of the creek, those existing buildings will be the backdrop of any new structures; the view will therefore be essentially unchanged.

2. Similarly, the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife has cited reduction of waterfowl habitat as the basis for objection. Again, however, no specific evidence of actual waterfowl displacement has been presented and no persuasive explanation has been provided as to how this particular project would have adverse impact on other areas that have demonstrated wildlife value. In both instances, I am convinced that professional judgment has been influenced more by the possible precedent effect of this permit than by its direct and immediate impact on conservation values. This concern is fully appreciated, but its relevance is highly questionable since all but a relatively short stretch of the undeveloped downstream shoreline to Mount Vernon is under Park Service jurisdiction and control. You will recall that the Department entered vigorous opposition to intensive development at the south end of Dyke Marsh and, in conjunction with local citizen effort, prevailed. Our response to the corps with respect to already developed areas north of Hunting Creek in no way alters that policy.

3. The Federal Water Pollution Control Administration is on record with the corps as of December 15, 1967, to the effect that the proposed project would not have adverse effects on water quality. This evaluation was reviewed as recently as April 17, and reaffirmed. Moreover, the corps proposes to insert in any permit which may issue a condition requiring compliance with any requirements or instructions of Federal or State pollution control agencies.

4. I cannot, of course, express Secretary Udall's personal views on the significance of this site. However, based on a visual inspection in the company of professional park and wildlife representatives, I am of the view that modifications of natural conditions on the north side of Hunting Creek over the past half-century have reduced its conservation or scenic significance to a very minor level. With the exception of lands in actual Federal ownership (e.g. Jones Point), in fact, there seems to be little prospect for sound preservationist argument on that side of the creek. So long as any further encroachment can be held to the boundary line described in the enclosed letter (east line of South Royal Street projected to the thread of Hunting Creek), the situation will now become stabilized.