

Mr. RUESS. And you don't know what the plans of the applicants are, whether they intend to pursue the other applications which are still pending after this has been granted, or what they intend to do?

Dr. UHLER. I do not.

Mr. RUESS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MOSS. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to include at this point in the record the letter from Dr. Uhler, addressed to my colleague, Congressman Reuss, and myself, under date of January 31, 1968.

Mr. JONES. Without objection, the letter will be received and printed in the record at this point.

(The document referred to follows:)

BOWIE, MD., January 31, 1968.

Hon. HENRY S. REUSS,

Hon. JOHN E. MOSS,

*House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.*

DEAR MESSRS. REUSS AND MOSS: Your recent request for additional information regarding the ecology of the waterfowl feeding grounds in the shallow tidal waters at the mouth of Big Hunting Creek along the Mount Vernon Memorial Parkway has been received. Most of the essential facts regarding waterfowl habitats in that area were presented in my report on observations made during the autumn of 1963, and quoted in your recent letter. The comments made at that time are even more significant today because of the continued destruction of the remaining tidal marshes in that locality.

I have been watching waterfowl in that vicinity for more than 40 years, and it has been an outstanding area for observing the important part played by the combination of shallow open waters, fresh tidal marshes, and semiaquatic woodlands in creating a haven for a great variety of aquatic wildlife. In spite of the severely polluted condition of the adjacent Potomac, and drastic changes in waterfowl feeding grounds of the broad, shallow cove that forms the mouth of Big Hunting Creek, this area still is the most important feeding grounds for diving ducks along the fresh tidal waters of the Potomac. It also attracts a great variety of other waterfowl, and the adjacent Belle Haven picnic grounds have become a mecca for bird students and interested visitors. The convenient accessibility of this section of the Mount Vernon Parkway for persons to enjoy aquatic natural history is unequaled in the Washington region.

With the continued destruction by sand and gravel dredging in the adjacent Dyke Marshes, and the recent elimination of the colorful natural aquatic gardens through trash dumping and filling the nearby Big Hunting Creek tidal marsh adjacent to the west side of Memorial Parkway, the preservation of the remnants of these unique wildlife habitats has become increasingly important.

The proposed construction of a 19-acre real estate development in the shallow waters of the mouth of Big Hunting Creek is certain to be detrimental, not only to waterfowl that now feed or rest in this shallow bay, but in the adjacent section where dredging will greatly alter existing depths. Unavoidable increases in turbidity, as well as disturbance by man, are likely to occur in neighboring waters.

Most important foods for waterfowl are produced in shallow waters, or those that are clear enough to permit sunlight to penetrate to the bottom. Under the polluted conditions that now exist in the tidal Potomac for more than 30 miles downstream from our Nation's Capital, shallow depths (less than 5 feet) have become doubly important in the maintenance of waterfowl feeding grounds. Adequate light penetration facilitates feeding as well as being essential for plant growth. Submerged food plants have been destroyed in all but the shallowest zones. Fortunately certain types of pollution-tolerant invertebrates such as midge larvae (Chironomidae), isopod crustaceans, and a few kinds of mollusks still furnish foods for diving ducks. These foods, together with the protection supplied by the shallow, sheltered waters at the mouth of the cove, continue to attract many kinds of waterfowl. For example, last week I had the pleasure of watching several hundred lesser scaups (blue-bills) and ruddy ducks, as well as smaller numbers of black ducks, mallards, common goldeneyes, buffleheads, oldsquaws, black-backed gulls, herring gulls, ring-billed gulls, and a whistling swan in this area although some sections were coated with ice.