

The Department of the Interior in 1964 opposed the conveyance of the submerged lands and the issuance of the fill permits on the grounds that the bulkhead and fill would adversely affect fish and wildlife and park and recreation values in the area, and might adversely affect the riparian rights of the United States as owner of Jones Point Park. Revised applications filed in July 1964 which reduced the area of the proposed fill were opposed on the same basis as the original applications.

Recently, the Department reconsidered its interests in this matter in the light of existing conditions in the area and concluded that the granting of the applications would not significantly affect recreation or conservation values in the Hunting Creek area.

An important principle—that is, the preservation of our fast disappearing natural environment, which you have creatively defended with great honor and high distinction—would appear to me to be involved here.

The bills before Congress to preserve estuarine areas, and the Potomac River study as well, highlight the need to preserve the natural environment along the Potomac estuary. Moreover, further studies of the area are being recommended.

The alterations of wetland areas and the consequent loss of natural values and environmental quality in an area where they are at a premium by virtue of riparian ownership could set a precedent which might have disastrous consequences along the Potomac estuary and elsewhere. In short, this small concession at Hunting Creek might be pointed to as a precedent for the right to undertake far larger and more destructive high-rise projects in other embayments along the Potomac.

All things considered, I recommend the desirability of the Department restudying its recent decision at Hunting Creek.

GEORGE B. HARTZOG, Jr.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, April 8, 1968.

(BLUE ENVELOPE) MEMORANDUM

To: Director, National Park Service.
From: Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.
Subject: Proposed landfill at Hunting Creek.

I have read and surnamed your April 4 memorandum to the Secretary, through me. I would like to clarify my role, which has not been an enviable one. I was told by BSWF that the original field report on the area under discussion was in weak opposition to the permit and that the fish and wildlife values claimed for the area were "upgraded" here in Washington. It was further stated that this was at least partly in response to certain congressional opinions. This was before I was Assistant Secretary. When the matter was brought to my attention some months ago by BSWF, I was informed that some of the congressional objections had been withdrawn. John Dingell had done so in writing to the district engineer of the Corps. It was implied that others were no longer opposed. It was at that point that I withdrew Interior's opposition, a decision based first on political considerations and second on the feeling that the values were not great in the area to be filled.

Congressmen Moss and Reuss have let me know their displeasure. More recently, I have asked BSWF to make a field examination of the area, since it had not been looked at for several years. I have not had a report on this yet.

I am sending a copy of this memorandum along with yours to the Secretary. Several weeks ago when I discussed the problem with him briefly, he said at that time that he was leaving its solution to me.

I will be happy to reverse myself if BSWF makes a strong case and if NPS can give me evidence of the important values.

STANLEY A. CAIN.