

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE,
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE,
Washington, D.C., April 9, 1968.

MEMORANDUM

To: Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.
From: Director.
Subject: Hunting Creek dredging permit.

In response to your memorandum directive of March 15, we have reviewed the effects dredging and filling in Hunting Creek would have on fish and wildlife. Specialists in ecology and waterfowl management from our Division of River Basin Studies and Wildlife Research and a representative of the National Park Service participated in the field investigations.

Dyke Marsh and the associated waters at the mouth of Hunting Creek are intertidal, much of which is emergent at low tide. Vegetation is composed of fresh marsh and swamp species. Waters of the immediate area of Hunting Creek are mildly polluted. This has added to the food supply of a variety of waterfowl and other aquatic birds. Primary use of the area is by mallards, black ducks, shovelers, pintails, scaup, ruddys, and teals. Canada geese also frequent the area. Fishery resources in Hunting Creek are of low quality and use is restricted to an occasional angler for catfish or carp.

Although the present permit application of the Howard P. Hoffman Associates, Inc., would result in significantly less fill than the original 1964 application, the effects on waterfowl use of the area would not materially change. The diversity of the wetland habitat provided by Dyke Marsh and Hunting Creek would be altered by the project and its resultant development to the detriment of waterfowl and other aquatic birds.

In addition to our concern over direct effects on fish and wildlife habitat and utilization in the area, we are also concerned over the effects the proposal will have on the overall environment, the long-range scenic qualities of the river shoreline, and the outlook from the Federal parklands to the east of George Washington Memorial Parkway.

In these times, we believe it is particularly important that we preserve or create open areas in the immediate vicinity of large urban centers which will afford the citizens an opportunity to observe and enjoy wildlife and other works of nature. The Hunting Creek area presently provides such an opportunity which will become increasingly important in the future.

The preservation of this area represents the type of action contemplated under the current Federal-State proposal for protection and improvement of the Potomac River.

The study just completed confirms the position taken in 1964 by representatives of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the National Park Service that issuance of the permit by the Corps of Engineers would not be in the public interest. As a matter of fact, we believe that the present emphasis given to urban recreational developments, beautification of the Potomac River and preservation of wetlands adds to our position of opposition to this project.

Regardless of protestations to the contrary, granting this permit will have the effect of opening the way for a succession of similar actions both above and below the mouth of Hunting Creek. I make that positive statement in the full knowledge that it will be challenged as an opinion, which it is. It is an opinion, hardened after watching situation after situation in which the natural scene has become a victim of the "nibbling" phenomenon, one characteristic of which is that each "nibble" is used as justification for the next. At Hunting Creek the baylet remaining between Jones Point and the proposed fill area will be completely vulnerable. Below Dyke Marsh private interests are already starting a dredge and dump project without any Federal approval. This action must be halted, but our reluctance to support a permit denial by the Corps of Engineers at Hunting Creek has made them question our position elsewhere on the Potomac.

I think we must urge the corps not to grant this permit. We might say, as Webster did about Dartmouth College, that "It is a small thing, but there are those who love it."

JOHN S. GOTTSCHALK.