

On numerous automobile trips over the causeway, carrying the road to Camp Humphreys—which is now known as No. 1 Highway, I saw the area typified by the exhibit dated 1917 as shown on the slide now before you. This area was covered by a beautiful body of generally clear water with wooded shorelines, dotted with boats of various kinds used for both commercial and recreational purposes.

Although the installation of the causeway to Fort Humphreys had somewhat reduced the use of the areas of navigation and recreation, no great amount of deterioration was evident in the trash or marshy areas created by this situation.

The second slide illustrates the condition prevailing generally between 1930 and 1940 indicating the beginning of noticeable deterioration of this waterway.

Due to the silt accumulation and further obstruction of the free flow of tide and storm waters in the period from 1930 to 1934, the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway was constructed with its causeway and bridge extending across the Hunting Creek estuary closer to its mouth. The 11-foot clearance at low tide under this bridge restricted the type of craft which could use the area between this highway and the No. 1 Highway, an area which was formerly available for the navigation of sailing craft.

In 1940, the presence of the rather narrow bridge at No. 1 Highway and the bridge under the Memorial Highway where there was one 44-foot-wide arch and two 38-foot-wide arches, caused impoundment of water above each of these two facilities into two sub-basins following high intensity storms, causing rapid sedimentation in each area due to the reduced velocity of the water passing through these ponds. These silted areas along the shorelines and in several places within the upper basin developed rapidly in the marshlands as shown by the shaded area.

In the next slide, we see on the north side of the inner basin—and I will refer to the area as east of No. 1 Highway, toward the left of the picture as you view it, as the upper basin—between the two highways is the inner basin—and there to the Potomac River as the outer basin. We see on the north side of the inner basin an area designated, "city dump" crosshatched at the top of the picture. This fill encroached upon the waters of Hunting Creek over an area ultimately of about 30 acres before this dump was closed in 1953.

The wide range of material deposited in this dump included organic and chemical generating wastes which found their way into the water and seriously deteriorated its quality. This added to the ever-increasing soil pollution caused by rapid development. This was added to by the ever-increasing pollution caused by the rapid development in the headwaters, accelerating and reducing the area of the waterway.

The increase of marshlands and the reduction of the quality of water in this area, dead aquatic life in both the upper and lower portions of these two basins increased noticeably. Private landfills were permitted along Telegraph Road in Fairfax County and further restricted the remaining channels which began to replace the open waters of the upper basin.

During the same period, and for several years following, a large gravel washing plant located west of Telegraph Road returned its wash water and silt into this basin. The rate of siltation in both the areas west of No. 1 Highway toward the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway underwent greatly accelerated deterioration due to the silt deposit, marsh-like growth, and trash.

In 1948, the Alexandria Sanitation Authority constructed a sewage treatment plant on what had been the city dump. The effluent from this treatment plant was returned to Hunting Creek flowing in part through the debris of the former dump. Additional dumping was permitted by Fairfax County along the southerly shores of the upper basin. The siltation of this upper basin between Telegraph Road and U.S. No. 1 became so intense, in fact, that during and after storms, the creek overflowed these channels, creating mud flats in that area which accumulated to a height from 2 to 5 feet above high tides.

There remained then two tortuous channels shifting about and the remainder of this portion of the basin. The rest of the area became a marshland covered by scattered debris and rank growth.

Stop there. When I mention debris, I mean the trash from dumps that were allowed to exist along that area, and the place was most unsightly.

East of No. 1 Highway, silting from these sources, and a creek running out of Fairfax County along No. 1 Highway began to build up along the south shore and extending partly along the land now occupied by the Belle Haven Country Club, to the extent that about 20 acres filled up above high tide and the remainder of that part of the basin had only a depth of 2 feet of water in the southerly portion between the highways.