

Now, Colonel, something that I have seldom encountered in asking the corps to review permits which I have submitted is the matter of wildlife in this kind of an estuary.

A question has been raised by certain organizations as to the value of this area as a game refuge, particularly as to waterfowl.

I can clearly remember over a long span of years that portions of this estuary were occupied by various migratory waterfowl in season and in large number. But that time has long since passed, gentlemen.

For the past several years, the incidence of any number of this type of bird resting or feeding in this area has become more and more rare.

The fact that the silt forming the muddy bottom of this area is so unsuitable, so unstable, that no vegetation has yet appeared on any area away from the shore in this outer basin. It may in part explain its unattractiveness to waterfowl.

Under average weather conditions, much of the area is above water several hours out of each 24-hour period. Normally, such exposure would tend to encourage marsh growth. The upper basins have always shown substantial growth of vegetation when accretion reached the point where the land was exposed consistently during low tide.

I can only surmise that the poor quality of the water, rapid accretion of new silt, is deterring the growth in this outer basin. It would seem most unlikely that any natural foods, either for aquatic life or waterfowl could accumulate in this area under these circumstances.

Three or four feeder stations on poles were erected in this area in 1964 or early 1965, in the water, in the vicinity of the proposed bulkhead which is the subject of this application.

Although I visited the area several times, I never saw any birds on these feeders with the exception of one or two seagulls. Even they generally preferred to use the abandoned piers to roost on. I found them there in some number.

In the winter of 1966-67, beginning December 5, my son, a member of our staff, visited the site each morning at sunup and each evening at sundown while there was still light in each case to take photographs.

In the period through December 19, he took photographs from various positions each day looking across Hunting Creek in the area in question here today.

I will show you slides of a few of the typical pictures submitted to you from the complete set which I have already turned in. You will note that when any birds are visible in the northerly portion of the estuary, they appear in small groups of from six to 12 birds, some days. This is the maximum he or I ever viewed in this area during this period.

The last two slides in this group are taken from the picnic area. This picture is taken from the north shore looking across the dock area and toward the parking and picnic area owned by the Park Service on the south.

This picture is taken from the south, I believe looking along the Memorial Highway.

Now in this picture, if you look closely, there are quite a few birds. This is taken from the picnic area which I previously mentioned to you borders on some of the waters of Hunting Creek that has not been completely erased by siltation, and it is down at this end next to the park, next to the public area, available to people who might want to go there and view these birds. We do find down at that end from time to time a few birds, no great flocks except on rare occasions which I will mention.

You can see, as you look from the south, in greatly foreshortened picture, that structure in the rear is the memorial, has the 495 bridge over Jones Point, and that is Jones Point Light. You are approximately three-quarters of a mile from Jones Point and the only visible birds are in the near foreground within 200 yards of the picture.

No birds appear in any of these pictures with the exception of the ones I have previously mentioned in the north area.

I have had other reports that occasionally small flocks of birds are seen in the southern area.

On at least one occasion, however, some thoughtful person did provide the birds in the southern area with a hearty feed by spreading grain on the water in this area which did attract a number of birds for a day or two until the food was gone.

Even special feeding could not last very long and had very little effect on this area generally since the silt was moving so rapidly that it covers up the food before the birds can get very much of it even when it is planted there. Such