

His conclusion 3 years ago, which I will read and make a matter of record, is as follows:

"Because of the importance as a diving duck feeding ground of this shallow, open water section in the embayment at the mouth of Big Hunting Creek, every effort should be made to protect this feeding area against destruction by either filling or dredging. These shallow, open waters, together with adjacent marshes, compose an unsurpassed opportunity for conservation, enjoyment, and study of aquatic life in the vicinity of our Nation's Capital."

Wishing to bring the observations of the Fish and Wildlife Service up to date, I have obtained a current finding from Mr. Uhler. His finding, dated January 31, 1968, 3 weeks ago, is again worth quoting. He says:

"The comments made in 1963 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 the water for 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 unequalled 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, isopod crustaceans, and a few kinds of mollusks still furnish food 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 or bluebills and ruddy ducks, as well as smaller numbers of black ducks, mallards, common goldeneyes, buffleheads, old-squaws, black-backed gulls, herring gulls, ring-billed gulls, and a whistling swan in this area although some sections were coated with ice."

That is the statement of the career biologist with special knowledge of the area and it is too bad that apparently Mr. Uhler was not allowed by his superiors to appear here this afternoon, but his statement which I have read seems to me quite definitive on the proposition.

Particularly he feels with the point of pollution. Of course, we all know that the Potomac is polluted. We all ought to get on with the job of getting rid of its pollution. But the important thing is that even with the present pollution of the Potomac, the Hunting Creek estuary area is a prime diving duck, waterfowl resting area.

Park values are also involved here. The National Capital Park Service has plans and even initial funds for the development of a park on Jones Point, a 50-acre tract located right in the heart of the metropolitan area. It affords beautiful views up and down the Potomac as a great potential for picnicking and scenic walks and could make a major recreational asset for the people of this region.