

GERALD E. CONNOLLY
11TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

327 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-1492

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

COMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

SUBCOMMITTEES:

FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, ORGANIZATION,
AND PROCUREMENT

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEES:

TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION AND TRADE

MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-4611

FAIRFAX OFFICE:

4115 ANNANDALE ROAD
SUITE 103
ANNANDALE, VA 22003
(703) 256-3071

PRINCE WILLIAM OFFICE:

4308 RIDGEWOOD CENTER DRIVE
WOODBIDGE, VA 22192
(703) 670-4989

July 15, 2010

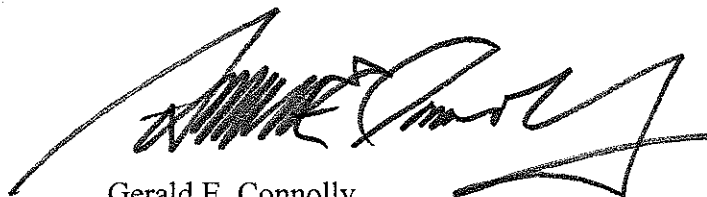
The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C St, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Mr. Greg Siekaniec
Acting Deputy Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar and Mr. Siekaniec,

Thank you for Mr. Siekaniec's response to my inquiry regarding public access to Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge. I was pleased to learn that the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) intends to open the Refuge to public access. However, I am concerned that the opening of the Refuge could be delayed indefinitely by contingencies related to designated parking, completion of trails, and dedicated access. Mr. Siekaniec's letter states that FWS will open the Refuge when "parking and access issues have been resolved, and a safe environment for refuge visitors can be provided." None of these should be a precondition for opening the refuge, nor have they been a precondition for opening other national, regional, state, or local parks in the area. The Potomac Heritage Trail is incomplete and has lacked bridge connections across large creeks in the George Washington Parkway and Great Falls NPS units, but the existence of a rough trail is nonetheless an amenity for Northern Virginians. Neither trails nor dedicated parking nor dedicated right of way should be preconditions to allowing the public to visit the land that they already own. While dedicated parking, clear access, and a developed network of trails is desirable for the Refuge, none of these should be required before FWS grants public access. This Refuge is owned by all Americans, and they should have access to it now. Thank you for your interest in pursuing this objective expeditiously.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
11th District, Virginia

GC/ZF



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240



In Response Reply to:
FWS/ANRS/R5/044726

MAY 21 2010

*Letter back
- good, but a bit
wait till drafts
are done*

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Connolly:

Thank you for your April 12, 2010, letter regarding Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge), and your interest in opening the refuge to public use. The refuge has never been open to public use due to the lack of legal public access across privately owned land. Over the past several years, the refuge manager has worked closely with Prince William County to develop a plan that would accommodate such access.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) focus has been on evaluating ways to route the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) through the refuge, allowing safe access across the CSX railroad tracks and providing refuge users with parking at the planned development of the current Virginia Rail Express parking area. When parking and access issues have been resolved, and a safe environment for refuge visitors can be provided, the Service's intent is to proceed with administrative procedures to open the refuge to compatible public uses. Refuge staff will continue working with Prince William County to develop the PHNST.

The Service is preparing a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for the refuge. The draft CCP is expected to be released for public review and comment this summer. In the draft, the Service describes three alternatives for the future management of the refuge. Among the alternatives, a range of public use opportunities is proposed and evaluated. The Service will provide your office with a copy of the draft CCP as soon as it is available.

If you have any further questions please contact me or Mr. Marvin Moriarty, the Service's Northeast Regional Director at 413-213-8300.

Sincerely,

Gregory E. Sutermeister

Acting Deputy DIRECTOR

TAKE PRIDE®
IN AMERICA 