June 5, 2020

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Dear Mr. Vandermoer

As you know, by DEED OF DONATION dated August 15, 1974 and recorded September 12, 1974 in the Land Evidence Records of the Town of South Kingstown, ANN KENYON MORSE donated to the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, the first 365 acres to the Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge,

“...in consideration of her interest in the conservation of wildlife and in the preservation, distribution, and restoration of game birds and other wild birds, ...for administration by the Secretary of the Interior through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, as an inviolate sanctuary for migratory birds and/or as a refuge for wildlife...” (emphasis added).

In its Fact Sheet for Members of Congress the US Fish & Wildlife Service states that the purpose of the Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge “...was established as an inviolate sanctuary for migratory birds, and for incidental wildlife-oriented recreation, protection of natural resources and conservation of endangered and threatened species...” (emphasis added).

In its Trustom Pond description of the Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge, the US Fish and Wildlife Service notes that,

”...FWS established the primary objective of the refuge as preserving the resting, feeding, nesting, and wintering habitat of migratory birds, especially waterfowl and shorebirds. A secondary objective provides for outdoor recreation activities for the public when these activities are compatible with the primary objective of the refuge. Deed restrictions are other factors that must be considered in managing the refuge. The Rhode Island Audubon Society’s 1982 donation of 151 acres was accompanied by a deed restriction, which stipulates: “That the property be maintained in its natural state, except for haying or occasional cultivation of open lands, and with no hunting, as an inviolate sanctuary for migratory birds and a refuge for wildlife.” (emphasis added).

The Town of South Kingstown Code of Ordinances, Part III, Chapter 3, Section 3-5 (a) Hunting states “Restricted. No person shall hunt, take or kill any wild bird or animal at any time with the town...” (emphasis added).

Mr. Vandermoer, the US Fish and Wildlife Service cannot ignore the intentions of those who donated land to the refuge by deed, and by deed restriction, to create an inviolate sanctuary, one which barred hunting, and a Town Ordinance that does the same, as well as the Service’s
own stated purposes, merely to comply with a Presidential mandate to remove approximately 2,100 regulations and to simplify more than 2,900 refuge-specific regulations.

Moreover, hunting in the refuge has practical negative impacts on public use of the refuge. The trails and paths for walking, observation, photography, and meditation become public danger zones, and the refuge itself in part becomes a danger zone to wildlife for the proposed more than three months for hunters to stalk their prey. Private landowners whose property abuts or is in immediate proximity to the refuge would face danger from errant arrows. They have encountered hunters with loaded arms, in portable tree stands, on their posted property, without the property owner’s permission. They have found and reported hidden weapons caches on Trustom property. They have encountered hunters who were obviously drunk. They have found dead carcasses in the woods (only heads taken).

On behalf of the private landowners listed hereafter, I urge the US Fish and Wildlife Service to end its proposed plan to open to hunters an inviolate sanctuary created by generous donors for the protection of migratory birds and other wildlife. Hunting in an inviolate sanctuary is not a compatible purpose in this refuge. Hunting for the few is not compatible with the greater public use for walking, observation, photography, and meditation. Nor is it safe for the private landowners who abut the refuge or are in close proximity to it.

Thank you for acting on this Mr. Vandermoer.

Very Truly Yours, Coddington Way Land and Sea Association

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