

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 20, 1990

Mr. Bill Davidson
421 Wayne
Pocatello, ID 83201

Dear Bill:

Thank you for sharing your concerns with me about the trumpeter swan problem that occurred last winter at Island Park. In your letter you also expressed your frustration over what appeared to be a lack of responsiveness to the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society's (ICWS) petition to list the swan as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

It appears to me the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has made the proper decision on the issue at this point. Their finding that additional action "may be warranted" indicates they will be monitoring the situation and will take appropriate action for protection of the swans under the ESA when and if it appears to be necessary.

I have been kept advised about the negotiations to find a way to guarantee flows at Island Park Dam when necessary to prevent freezing that might result in the re-occurrence of last year's problem. It sounds like there is a good chance a workable agreement can be reached between the interests involved.

You state in your letter, "It seems obvious to me that politics has entered in to the process, and the welfare of Idaho's majestic Trumpeter Swan is about to become a political football." Your go on to charge that "...the present administration does not want to rock the boat of western water interests."

If those statements are intended to imply that some of my colleagues and I have tried to make certain the Administration understands the importance of water to western states, you are quite right. On the other hand, if your point is to insinuate there has been a political decision made regarding the swan situation, I would certainly invite you to provide me with evidence to support the accusation and I will be glad to look into it.

Water is the life blood of much of the west. Without it, millions of acres of arid and semi-arid public lands would be uninhabitable. Because of that, western water policy is critical to the economy of many states, communities and individuals.

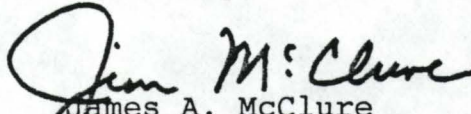
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It seems to me the current effort to find a way to help avoid a replay of the situation experienced last winter is in the interest of all parties concerned as well as that of the swans and I want to commend all the parties involved. Cooperative efforts like this are exactly what is necessary to avoid having the situation develop into a "political football" as you call it. I hope the effort will be successful and I support it.

In response to your charge that the ICWS petition had never even been acknowledged by the F&WS, I checked with the Director's office. They have provided a copy of a letter to Dr. Ed Garton dated June 9, 1989 and signed by Acting Regional Director John Spinks acknowledging receipt of the petition on May 12, 1989. On that basis it appears the F&WS did, in fact, provide acknowledgement to the ICWS.

Thank you again for making me aware of some of your concerns.

Sincerely,


James A. McClure
United States Senator

McC:cwm