

March 18, 2010

Rowan Gould
Acting Director, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Proposed Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge

Dear Mr. Gould:

The Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan is closely aligned with the concept of the proposed Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge. The proposed refuge would protect remnant prairies, woodlands and wetlands that are considered of regional and statewide ecological significance (by both the Wisconsin and Illinois Departments of Natural Resources), and possess even global ecological significance.

The Chicago Wilderness region encompasses more than 360,000 acres of protected natural lands in southeastern Wisconsin, northeastern Illinois, northern Indiana and southwestern Michigan. The Chicago Wilderness alliance is a partnership of more than 250 public and private agencies dedicated to preserving, restoring, protecting and managing these natural resources in order to contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity and enrich local residents' quality of life. A strategic priority of Chicago Wilderness is implementing the Green Infrastructure Vision. Through this initiative our alliance works to safeguard and nurture the greater Chicago region's green infrastructure — the interconnected lands and waters outlined in our Biodiversity Recovery Plan, which seeks to “protect the natural communities of the Chicago region and to restore them to long-term viability, in order to enrich the quality of life of its citizens and to contribute to the preservation of global biodiversity.” The proposed Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge lies within a resource protection area identified in the Green Infrastructure Vision that includes nearly 8,000 acres of public land owned by either the McHenry County Conservation District or the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and private lands protected in Illinois by The Land Conservancy of McHenry County.

Creation of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge would build upon that legacy of land protection, and further support important elements of both the Wisconsin and Illinois Wildlife Action Plans; plans that have been crafted to support species in “greatest need of conservation.” And, creation of the proposed refuge would help meet recommendations of the Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Basin Region Joint Venture Plan and meet conservation priorities identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Region 3.

Recently, establishment of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge was identified as one of 21 Green Legacy Projects celebrated at the Burnham Plan Centennial. Those Green Legacy Projects seek to build upon the vision of the renowned city planner

Daniel Burnham, who wrote a century ago that “the time to secure the lands necessary for (regional parks) is now, while as yet the prices are moderate and the natural scenery is comparatively unspoiled.” Burnham’s “call for action” is even more compelling today than it was then!

Chicago Wilderness seeks to fulfill Burnham’s call for “securing the lands necessary for regional parks” through implementation of the Green Infrastructure Vision. The Chicago Wilderness Alliance welcomes the proposal of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge as a milestone in the Biodiversity Recovery Plan and stands ready to assist with this designation.

If we can be of any additional assistance or you have any questions you can contact me at 312.580.2156.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melinda Pruett-Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Melinda Pruett-Jones
Executive Director

CC:

Senator Richard Durbin
Senator Herb Kohl
Senator Russ Feingold
Senator Roland Burris
Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar
U.S. Representative Melissa Bean
U.S. Representative Paul Ryan
Governor Pat Quinn
Governor Jim Doyle