

Des Lacs Waterfowl Refuge  
Kenmare, North Dakota

May 21, 1937

Mr. Burnie Maurek  
Acting Regional Director  
Biological Survey  
Minot, North Dakota

Dear Mr. Maurek:

Enclosed is a blueprint showing proposed work to improve and develop the Welsh pasture area (Unit #2) as a combination display pool, goose yard, banding station, and breeding area. A duck hospital, holding pens, and a boat house are also included.

The main work would consist of digging a number of interlocking channels by using the Linkbelt dragline. At present the area is traversed by one natural creek; a very fine creek bordered with bullrush and full of aquatic vegetation. The creek is very popular with all the ducks both divers and puddlers. The purpose of these channels would be:

1.) To increase the water area and thereby increasing the marsh area and aquatic growth. The spillway level is 1783.4. Consequently very, very little of this area would ever flood. The present creek would merely broaden slightly. Therefore, the channels would be permanent and are not a temporary improvement lasting only through the duration of the drought.

2.) By constructing the channels so that they interconnect and encircle the area, the pasture is broken up into several islands. These should make fine, safe nesting areas as it will be a simple matter to clean the weasels and ground squirrels off each spring and the channels will tend to keep the predators off.

3.) An incidental but desirable result will be that the channels will make grazing and haying so hazardous and difficult that the demand for the same will be greatly lessened.

The constructing of the channels is very important. Their profile should be that of a very wide open "U" and not that of a "V". The channel in unit 3 illustrates the undesirability of the latter type. The banks are very steep thus affording no footing for marginal marsh plants. The channel is too deep thus lessening the chances for aquatic growth.

The excavated dirt is piled in a ridge along each bank thus increasing the steepness of the banks and clearly marking the channel as an artificial affair. Furthermore the dirt taken out of these ditches does not seem to support vegetation to any extent thus making the ridges barren dikes bordering the channel.

In constructing the new channels every effort should be made to avoid these faults. It is therefore recommended that the top soil be stripped over and kept separate so that it may later be used to cover the excavated material. The latter material should be piled in low mounds here and there and not left to form banks along the channels. The channels should not have banks but gentle slopes.

The resulting islands will require very little improvement. The present grass will soon furnish excellent cover. Brush piles can be scattered about, a few points gravelled, and a few sections of the shoreline made into sandy beach.

The east shore of the present creek should be made into a sandy beach below the house and barn. There is a fine artisan well at the southwest corner of the barn. Below the barn, I would suggest a number of holding pens and a duck hospital on the far end. The water from the well would be run through the pens and the hospital out into the creek.

As the area is close to the public road it may be desirable to use it in part as a display pool with some wing-clipped birds. Also we should have some live geese to attract the wild birds. To keep these birds in and to keep out the dogs and small children from town and the large predators, I would recommend erecting a hogwire fence around the area. We have, I believe, sufficient salvaged hogwire for this.

The same channel development is also recommended for unit 3 extending back up into Niebe Coulee,

Very truly yours,

Seth H. Low  
Junior Refuge Manager

Enc.  
SHL/jb

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

IN REPLY REFER TO

Minot, North Dakota  
February 11, 1937

Matt Welch land

Mr. Seth H. Low  
Jr. Refuge Manager  
Kenmare, North Dakota

Dear Mr. Low:

Reference is made to your letter of February 10th regarding the developments of the creek on Matt Welch's land.

This appears to be a very desirable project. Would you please submit detail plans and sketch of the area and the estimated cost?

Very truly yours

Burnie Maurek  
Acting Regional Director

By J. C. Guller Assistant

FCG/h

Des Lacs Waterfowl Refuge  
Kenmare, North Dakota

February 10, 1937

Mr. Burnie Maurek  
Acting Regional Director  
Bureau of Biological Survey  
Minot, North Dakota

Dear Mr. Maurek:

I should like to submit for your consideration a proposal to develop the creek on Matt Welch's land (unit #2) into a combination duck hospital, banding station, goose yard, and display pool.

The area to which I refer is that portion of the creek and pasture bounded on the west by the railroad and on the east by the barn and truck trail and running from the highway bridge north to the fence on the north side of the pasture.

Although seemingly too close to the railroad and highway, the creek is actually a favorite concentration spot for the ducks. The railroad screens off most of the highway. Such disturbances as were created by the Welch family and their livestock will be eliminated. Last fall the diving ducks used to be scared out of the upper portion of the creek by coal trucks coming down the truck trail. This was eliminated by padlocking the gate. The puddling ducks are not bothered much by trains or by cars crossing the bridge. Hence it really is one of the few secluded areas on the refuge.

The outstanding feature of this area is the artesian well which gives a fine flow of fresh water at all seasons. Thanks to this well and a dam at each end this unit is probably the freshest in the refuge at the present time.

A stream of fresh running water is essential for a duck hospital. As it keeps a pool open during the late fall and early spring freezes it is a focal point for the ducks and hence an excellent location for a banding station. It also makes possible the wintering of live Mallard and Goose decoys. Ornamental species for display purposes could also be kept if such should be desired.

The lower end is clearly seen from both the road and railroad and hence is fine for a display pool. The broad pasture with the elimination of grazing will furnish good cover for nesting cover for both the wild and decoy birds and grazing for the geese.

To improve this area for the four purposes I would suggest enclosing the area with a fence capable of at least excluding the larger predators, cats, and dogs and confining wing-clipped

Mr. Maurek -2-

decoys. A hospital unit and holding cages should be built below the barn near the well. Banding traps should be built and placed along the creeks. One or two shelters would be needed for wintering the ducks. Biological improvements would consist of constructing one stretch of sand beach, gravelling a knoll, and possibly the creation of a few islands by ditching.

It should also be pointed out that the area is readily accessible to headquarters and easily watched by either a person at headquarters or living in the Welch house.

If this proposal meets with ~~Mr.~~ approval, I will get together with Mr. Lansing and draw up the details, make a sketch of the area, and estimate the cost.

Very truly yours,

Seth H. Low  
Junior Refuge Manager

SHL/jb