



January 31, 2008

H. Dale Hall, Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Room 3258  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Re: FWS/DIC/033994

Dear Director Hall:

Thank you very much for providing the U.S. National Ramsar Committee (USNRC) the opportunity to comment on the nomination of the Wilma H. Schiermeier Olen tangy River Wetland Research Park (ORWRP) as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. On behalf of the USNRC, I am pleased to endorse enthusiastically this nomination.

As an initial matter, the ORWRP satisfies several ecological criteria necessary for Ramsar designation. Located in a state that has seen more than 90% of its historic wetland base drained, the site contains riverine marshes that were once typical but are now rare. It supports several bird species listed as vulnerable and/or endangered under state law, and the section of the Olen tangy River contains a diverse fish community. What distinguishes this site from others like it, however, is its cultural significance. Although small in size, the site has had a huge impact on wetland science and education in the United States and internationally.

The ORWRP is part of The Ohio State University campus and is fully integrated into the life of the university. Thirty-five university courses use the site annually, and it has led directly to more than a dozen university and college professors who now teach and study wetland science around the world. The ORWRP has been the subject of scores of scholarly publications. Perhaps one of the most important is the textbook "Wetlands" by William Mitsch and James Gosselink, which has been referred to as the bible of wetland science and has contributed to training an entire generation of wetland scientists and managers. The designation of the ORWRP as a Ramsar site would provide a tremendous opportunity to promote education and public awareness about the value of wetlands and the Ramsar Convention.

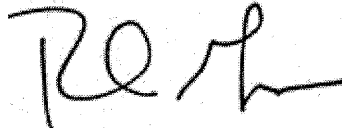
It is particularly appropriate to consider the cultural significance of a site that otherwise meets Ramsar's ecological criteria in light of recent resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Parties (e.g., Resolution IX.21: Taking into account the cultural values of wetlands). Indeed, the preamble to the Ramsar Convention itself recognizes the great scientific and cultural value of wetlands.

H. Dale Hall  
January 31, 2008  
Page 2 of 2

The ORWRP, to be sure, is relatively small when compared to other U.S. Ramsar sites. Yet there is ample international precedent for the designation of small wetlands. At least thirteen countries, including Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom, have Ramsar sites that are smaller in area than the ORWRP. Moreover, the designation of a site such as the ORWRP would emphasize the message that urban wetlands are important.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments and for your consideration of the ORWRP as the next U.S. Ramsar site.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RCG', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Royal C. Gardner  
Chair, USNRC  
Professor of Law and Director  
Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy

RCG/do