

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

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January 10, 2012

Mr. Dan Ashe
Director
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, District of Columbia 20240

Dear Director Ashe:

I am writing to you to request that the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) open additional areas at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (RRLNWR) to waterfowl and big game hunting.

For over four decades, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has been used to purchase lands from willing sellers for the purpose of conservation. In Montana, the LWCF has funded the conservation of key treasures such as the Centennial Valley.

As you may know, in 1985 I requested and secured \$1.2 million dollars from the LWCF to purchase critical private lands and waters in the Centennial Valley to ensure increased access to public lands and allow for Montana's sportsmen to pursue their hobbies.

These properties are now within the boundaries of the RRLNWR, which include the waters of O'Dell Creek – an essential aquatic component of a sustained Lower Red Rocks Lake aquatic system. It is my understanding that the USFWS decided a number of years ago to withdraw O'Dell Creek from waterfowl hunting opportunities. This was a sudden closure, with no public notice or input, that unilaterally closed doors to the area's waterfowl.

As the USFWS reaches a decision on the proposed Red Rocks Lakes Hunting Plan, post the December 16th, 2011 comment period, I would urge the USFWS to amend the plan to expand the boundaries the full stretch of O'Dell Creek from the point at which it enters the refuge just north of the South Valley Road to the point where it empties into Lower Red Rock Lake. Additionally, I would ask that Sparrow Pond and its adjacent wetlands also be opened for waterfowl hunting during the season.

It should be noted that there are currently more than 30 organizations that support expanding the boundaries such as, Wildlife Management Institute, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

Montana outdoorsmen and women have come to know and love the recreational activities Montana has to offer. Tradition is important to sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts because we, as Montanans, want to be able to pass along our heritage with the same opportunities to future generations. The USFWS play a major role in keeping this tradition alive in the Centennial Valley. I hope you will strongly consider the aforementioned comments and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Max Baucus
United States Senator

Cc: Bill West, Manager
Red Rock Lakes NWR
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