

RESOLUTION 189

RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROPOSED KANKAKEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AND CONSERVATION AREA BY THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

WHEREAS, the Momence City Council held two Town Meetings regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, and;

WHEREAS, those meetings included representation from the Kankakee County Farm Bureau, citizens residing in and around the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, and a representative from US Fish and Wildlife, and;

WHEREAS, the Citizens in and around the City of Momence and the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area have clearly expressed opposition to the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, and;

WHEREAS, US Fish and Wildlife has failed to adequately and consistently pay all required property taxes due and payable to other existing taxing bodies, and;

WHEREAS, the Momence School District will likely face lower property tax revenues with the establishment of the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, and;

WHEREAS, the City of Momence will likely face increases in property taxes and a higher demand for services following the establishment of the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, and;

WHEREAS, the tax revenues lost by the City of Momence, the Momence School District, and other local government units will not be adequately addressed by revenue sharing payments or tourism revenue, and;

WHEREAS, nearly 18,000 acres in Kankakee County are included in the two proposed focus areas, including substantial farmland within or adjacent to the City of Momence, and;

WHEREAS, a majority of this land is in agricultural use, and;

WHEREAS, agriculture in Kankakee County accounts for nearly 17% of the Kankakee County's economic output, and;

WHEREAS, agriculture in Kankakee County accounts for 1 in 12 jobs in Kankakee County, and;

WHEREAS, Kankakee County farmers produce nearly 3,000 acres of high-value vegetable crops in addition to a similar amount of cropland devoted to nursery crops and sod, and;

WHEREAS, many of these high-value specialty crops are produced in or near the City of Momence, and;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's economic assessment report failed to account for the potential loss of this high-value agricultural production, and;

WHEREAS, agriculture and the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area would consistently have conflicting water management objectives, and;

WHEREAS, the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area conflicts with Kankakee County's land use plan for Pembroke township, and;

WHEREAS, irrevocable economic damage will result from the loss of high-value agricultural production, and;

WHEREAS, the introduction of the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area may interfere with the maintenance of, and prohibit the construction of needed highways, and other public works projects, in and through the proposed refuge lands. An additional concern is that any infrastructure or transportation improvements near an established refuge would be almost impossible to carry out. The US Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 USCS, 303, Section 4f) provides that approval of public works projects near a water fowl refuge be given only if there is no feasible alternative - that also includes all possible planning to minimize impact to the refuge. The planning efforts alone are exhaustive and often exceed a local government's limited financial resources. Frequently, there are court challenges posed by groups attempting to stop such public works and these proceedings are lengthy and difficult to litigate. As a result, local governments often avoid moving projects forward, foregoing transportation needs and the accompanying collateral benefits of job creation.

WHEREAS, there are concerns with the process of how the refuge has been officially established without an updated Environmental Assessment (EA) study. The EA is over 17 years old. There have been changes in population, residential areas, agriculture practices and land use, changes in land values, our environment, terminology and technology used in such an evaluation. All of these transformations warrant an updated Environmental Assessment.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City of Momence, Illinois that based on available information, pursuit of the proposed refuge is not in the best interest of the City of Momence, or its residents.

1. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should discontinue its pursuit of the establishment of the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area.
2. Entities working in concert with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including but not limited to the Nature Conservancy and Friends of the Kankakee should discontinue their unaccepted/undesired pursuit of acquiring land to either sell or donate to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the establishment of the proposed Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Clerk is hereby directed to forward a copy of this resolution to U.S. Senators Durbin and Duckworth, U.S. Representatives Kelly and Kinzinger, and Chief of Ascertainment & Planning, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111-4056.

ADOPTED AND PASSED this 6th day of February, 2017

Mick Porter

Mayor, City of Momence

Jenene Henson

City Clerk, City of Momence

CORPORATE SEAL