



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge Complex
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3/30/98

United States Navy, Northern Division
10 Industrial Highway, MSC 82
Lester, PA 19113

Attention: Mr. Steve Hurff

Dear Mr. Hurff:

On March 12, 1998, I was part of a team conducting a site visit to Nomans Land Island. The purpose of the visit was to examine the island for the potential of burning the vegetation prior to removal of ordnance. The weather was cold and windy with temperatures in the 20 - 30 degree range. The weather changed from partly cloudy to cloudy with snow squalls in the 2 hours we were on the island.

The beach area was littered with debris which had washed up on shore. The most common items were lobster traps and floats. A dead dolphin and a dead young seal were also on the shore. Three pairs of Canada geese were observed during the visit as well as a small flock of cormorants (20 - 30).

The vegetation noted was suitable to carry a fire across the island. Abundant light fuels consisting primarily of grasses with some small woody vegetation were noted. A few piles of ordnance were noted in the area. However, the vegetation growth made it difficult to observe the piles from any distance. Several pipes were observed sticking out from the soil at the beach area. It is my guess that these were fuel lines to the Underground Storage Tank (UST).

The former building site was also visited. The buildings are in deplorable condition due to the ravages of time, and the obvious result of military actions. There was a boiler and steam pipes in the buildings and the walls were approximately 4 - 5 feet in height and the roofs have collapsed. In addition, the UST was located and a nearby underground bunker which was partially collapsed was found. In an area near the UST, piping (water?) was found laying on and going into the ground. Also noted were a target area ringed with old tires, a line of telephone poles going across the island, and various mechanical debris, consisting of old motors and parts in an outbuilding.

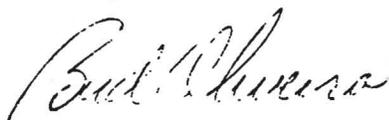
It is my impression that a prescribed fire can be set and will burn satisfactorily. This would open up areas where the vegetation has grown back after last year's burn. This will allow for the easy location and pickup of ordnance. I will work with the Navy to clear a prescribed burn through

the Conservation Commission of the Town of Chilmark. I do not foresee a problem if a burn is scheduled later than April 15. While the nesting season will be underway, any fire activities will not pose a threat to the nesting birds. They will merely leave the area and return after the fire passes. The potential loss of nests will be outweighed by the advantage of removing the ordnance and cleaning up the debris. In addition, I believe that any soil disturbance by equipment engaged in the cleanup operations will not have any long term effects on the site. Over the season, I expect these areas to re-vegetate rapidly.

From this review of the island, I request that the following items be handled by the U.S. Navy via their contractor:

- Remove exposed piping. This may mean cutting it back and capping it underground (if samples demonstrate that the area is not contaminated).
- Remove UST. The contractor, Wheeler and Foster, informed me that they would probably have a backhoe on the island to collect soil samples from the UST. If a backhoe is used, I request that the UST be removed rather than filled in place. The operator can remove and crush the tank so that it can be removed with the ordnance. The hole can be filled by pushing in the surrounding dirt without the need to haul in fill material.
- The underground bunker should be likewise collapsed in with the backhoe to avoid any potential accidents.
- The backhoe should also push in the walls of all the buildings after removing roofing materials and the metal engines, debris, pipes and boiler to avoid any safety issues.
- The old tires which were used to outline the target areas as well as any objects which were used as targets be removed.
- The telephone poles should be taken down as they will provide predator perches which will increase mortality in the ground nesting colonies. These do not have to be removed from the island, as they will rot in a short time.

I will be happy to work cooperatively with the Navy to assist in carrying out the details of the island's cleanup and/or prescribed burn. Please call if there are any questions.



Bud Oliveira

Project Leader, Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge Complex