

Blue Goose Alliance Bulletin

#40 - October 22, 2004

Alliance and Friends of Refuges Win One

In Bulletin #38, issued on May 21, 2004, the Blue Goose Alliance announced its opposition to the construction and operation of a large scale amphitheater adjacent to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge near Minneapolis.

Q-Prime, a New York-based entertainment corporation, was seeking approval from the Scott County, Minnesota, Board of Commissioners to construct and operate a 19,250-seat amphitheater immediately adjacent to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's Louisville Swamp Unit and the neighboring Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area. The Alliance opposed the amphitheater because it would generate degrading impacts harming the refuge, its visitors and visitor experiences, and deprive local and migratory wildlife of vitally needed seclusion and shelter within these sensitive wildlife habitats.

Recently, the Blue Goose Alliance was pleased to learn that the Scott County Board had decided to deny Q-Prime's application. The Board's vote came after about 25 hours of testimony before and deliberation by the Scott County Planning Advisory Commission and by the Board. "The vote was a major victory for the Refuge and the citizens of Scott County," said Ed Crozier, an Alliance Board Director who has worked tirelessly for many years in support of this refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Thanks to a cooperative effort by local citizens, the Friends of Minnesota Valley and two national refuge support organizations; the Blue Goose Alliance and the National Wildlife Refuge Association, the County Commissioners heard very compelling arguments by experts and the public about why this was simply the wrong project in the wrong place, and they did the right thing.

The Alliance commends the Scott County Board members for their fairness and willingness to gather all of the information they needed before making up their minds. During the discussion, the Friends, Louisville and Sand Creek Townships, and River Valley Citizens Concerned for Responsible Development presented evidence questioning the validity of Q Prime's noise, land use, and traffic analyses as contained in the Environmental Impact Statement. Earlier, the Blue Goose Alliance had submitted written testimony opposing the issuance of the permit.

These intervening parties, members of the public, and many of the commissioners voiced concerns about what faulty modeling could mean for county services and residents. Essentially, their comments centered on the problems the County and townships would encounter if any of the many assumptions under mitigation scenarios failed. It was apparent that the commissioners were not willing to take the risk.

The Alliance and the Friends were heartened by the amount of local support for the Refuge voiced at the hearings. According to Lori Nelson, Executive Director of the Friends, "The first night, you didn't hear anything about the Refuge from Q Prime. It was as if it didn't even exist. By the third night, people spoke up about their love for the Refuge and their desire to see it protected. It was very impressive."

The Friends of the Minnesota Valley is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and conserving the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the Minnesota River Valley. It is one of over 200 such local grass root organizations throughout the nation that support national wildlife refuges at the local level. The Blue Goose Alliance applauds such efforts and is pleased to have been able to assist in this local battle to protect a national wildlife refuge.