

# NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Division of Fish and Wildlife

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April 13, 2017

Ms. Linda Fitzgerald  
5229 Moose Road  
Wyoming, NY 14591

Dear Ms. Fitzgerald;

Governor Cuomo has asked me to respond to your letter regarding Equestrians use of Carlton Hill Multiple Use Area (MUA). Carlton Hill MUA was acquired by NYS DEC in 1962 and has been managed by the DEC's Bureau of Wildlife since 1981. Since then Carlton Hill MUA has been managed to provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, particularly resident and migratory birds and to permit compatible wildlife dependent recreational use.

Management of Carlton Hill is funded primarily through federal excise taxes on sporting arms, ammunition, and archery equipment (Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration or "Pittman-Robertson" Act funds), and hunting and trapping license fees (Conservation Fund). There is generally no New York State General Fund (tax) dollars spent on the management of these lands. These funding sources dictate that these lands be managed for the benefit of wildlife and the sustainable hunting, trapping and wildlife dependent recreation of current and future New Yorkers.

In 2006, Carlton Hill was also designated as a Bird Conservation Area (BCA) because of its habitats that support a diversity of bird species including a number of species at risk such as Henslow's Sparrow (NYS threatened), Northern Harrier (NYS threatened), Grasshopper Sparrow (NYS special concern), Horned Lark (NYS special concern), and Yellow-breasted Chat (NYS special concern). There are also some upland forest, riparian forest, and small wetland areas that provide habitat for Pied-billed Grebe (NYS threatened).

When we began managing Carlton Hill MUA there were a few foot trails that existed on the property. These trails were also used by a few equestrians. As horse riding increased in popularity at Carlton Hill many more trails were developed without DEC permission or approval. The volume of trails presently in use at Carlton Hill has become unsustainable, and results in habitat degradation and conflicts with the primary management goals for the property.

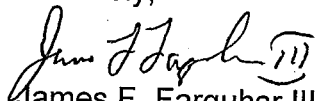


Nevertheless, horseback riding can remain a compatible activity at Carlton Hill provided it follows certain conditions and timing restrictions. Access to the trails at Carlton Hill for Equestrians and bike riders will continue to be allowed from June 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>. These activities will be prohibited from October 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup>. This is to address safety concerns during hunting seasons and to reduce degradation caused during the "wet" seasons. Additionally, a number of trails will be closed to all users to reach a sustainable number of trails that can be maintained, and to reduce impacts to the important habitat and wildlife species that use the area.

Recently we had a meeting to discuss our plans regarding the future use of trails at Carlton Hill by equestrians. Since we have a history of working with organized equestrian groups such as; NYS Horse Council, WNY Horse Council and the Aurora Trail Riders, representatives from these groups were invited to listen to our concerns and plans and to provide feedback. We agreed to work with the Horse Councils to develop a plan that meets our goals while still allowing use by equestrians.

If you have additional questions or concerns please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

  
James F. Farquhar III  
Chief, Bureau of Wildlife

ec: Abby Snyder, Regional Director  
Paul McKeown Supervisor of Natural Resources  
Ken Baginski Regional Wildlife Manager

bcc: CCU #201702130  
Gov. # 513823N