



United States Department of the Interior



U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex
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December 5, 2017

Dear Mr. Brandon Reich,

We received your request for comment on Case #CU17-043, a conditional use application to Marion County from Willamette Country Music Concerts, LLC for the proposed Annual Bi-Mart Willamette Country Music Festival.

Prior to receiving your request, we were aware of the potential for the music festival to change its venue to the private property adjacent to Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge. Tim Flowerday with Willamette Country Music Concerts, LLC (WCMC LLC) reached out to Refuge personnel in September and we met at Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge on November 1, 2017. The WCMC LLC was proactive in reaching out to us and seemed receptive to the concerns we shared with them. In our response to the county application we will share the same concerns we shared with WCMC LLC.

Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 565 National Wildlife Refuges across the nation; a network of lands dedicated to conserving a vast array of fish, wildlife and plants valuable for communities and people to live from and enjoy. Ankeny Refuge is well known for the rare Willamette Valley habitats we restore and maintain; the hundreds of resident and migratory bird species that depend on these lands, and for the many recreation options. It is from this basis that we put forward our response - in brief and in summary - on the proposed event. Our response centers on potential impacts, opportunities and safety concerns:

- In thinking about the potential impacts from the festival, we discussed the following: increased traffic and trash, disturbance to wildlife, increased risk of wildfires, volume of people, dust abatement measures, light and noise pollution, time/management costs on Refuge staff, displacement of Refuge visitors, trespass and/or misuse of the Refuge (e.g., entering the Refuge during closure hours, litter, driving in fields).
- Our safety concerns result from the short-term, high volume of people (40,000 – 60,000 daily) that would travel to and from the area, traveling around the Refuge, and the likelihood of high fire danger during the third week of August.
- In discussing the potential opportunities, we listed the following: increase in outreach and visibility, economic benefit to the area, and support for Refuges and the associated non-profit groups.

The applicant sought to address some of the concerns mentioned above in their application, as they did in our meeting with them.

Along with others in the community, we are in the initial phases of discussing the possibility of the Bi-Mart Willamette Country Music Festival occurring adjacent to Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge. We will continue to evaluate and be engaged in this process as planning continues.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Feel free to contact us if you have any follow-up questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Damien Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Damien Miller
Project Leader
Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex