

***Timber Point Environmental Assessment
Public Meeting Transcripts
October 21, 2104– Afternoon Session***

Number of attendees from the public: 21

Meeting Format:

- I. Introductions by Roger Cole, Moderator***
- II. Presentation by Ward Fuert, Refuge Manager - Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, on alternatives in the Environmental Assessment***
- III. Question and Answer Session (transcribed below)***
- IV. Statements from Attendees on the Environmental Assessment (transcribed below)***
- V. Wrap up***

Question and Answer Session (Transcription)

(Start at recording 17:55) Roger Cole: It is almost 25 minutes to 3:00 pm. So, we can open it up now to some questions. If you have something to say...make your point. I mean to say to keep it brief. We will be watching the time. We would like you to state your name please, so it is going to be recorded.

Lisa Haith: I have a question about the presentation. Can I ask it? For Proposal C.... If it is a year round facility, what is the accommodation for bathrooms?

Ward Fuert: Right now, for instance, there is not a septic system there. So okay, so there's like a really early on thing that it would have to have. Alternative C is a build-out alternative. So it takes the existing structure, which has actually not been a year round thing in the past, and it would make it into something that is universally accessible that you and me and anyone in a chair could get into it. All the electricity and plumbing - everything would be brought up to all the standards, that just like your house has to have and my house has to have. And then there's that work involved—like insulation—it is not insulated right now. So there is a number of things that would have to happen. We did something that is called a Comprehensive Condition Assessment done for all the buildings, and it is this big thick document. So, some engineers from Oak Point in Biddeford took a look at the building and said that in order to bring it up to current standards, this is the kind of stuff you would have to do. That is the document we would go back to. We would go back to that document and say here are the things that we would have to do in order to have a bathroom, have lights that go on - to have something that isn't a fire hazard. All the normal things that you would expect in a building...

Mitchell Ross: “Did I hear in a report that....”

Roger: Hold on, hold on please. Can you say your name please?

Lisa Haith: Lisa Haith.

Roger: This gentleman had his hand up. Your name please:

Mitchell Ross: My name is Mitchell Ross. Alternatives A, B, D seem relatively modest in scope. How much would Alternative C cost? I saw in the Environmental Assessment an initial estimate of \$3,200,000 to renovate the building.

Ward: Yes.

Mitchell Ross: \$130,000 a year for just another employee? But, it is very hard to parse through the total cost of this proposal.

Ward: The estimates that you saw are in the Environmental Assessment. Thank you for having the numbers at your finger/tongue tip. We did this kind of high dollar study with these engineers from Oak Point. They do that sort of thing - it is a Historical Structural Engineering firm. They have done it in other places for Fish and Wildlife Service, too. In this case they happen to be located in Biddeford and they did the study in Biddeford. They have done it in Virginia and a bunch of other places, too. So, their track record is that they seem to catch the things that you have to look at in order to go from current conditions to this Alternative C condition. So, on the basis of what they submitted and their price estimates, an engineer architect in our Regional Office was able to translate that into what dollars it would be in order to do the initial thing that you just mentioned.. to the early operational cost. So that's where those figures are from.

Mitchell Ross: Right, but what I couldn't figure out is - what is it? I saw \$3.2 million just to get it going? What is the yearly operational cost?

Ward: I think that the yearly operational cost is \$130,000.

Mitchell Ross: I thought that was just for the employee?

Ward: I think, the employee is estimated to be a GS-7 or 9, and I can tell you that they do not earn \$130,000 a year.

Mitchell: What I am looking at is an annual estimated maintenance budget estimate thereafter of \$80,000. I believe that is in addition to the salary of the GS employee, which I thought was \$130,000?

Nancy McGarigal: Yes. That is \$130,000 is cost to government.

Mitchell: Cost to government \$130.... So the initial estimate is \$3,200,000 to convert it and \$200,000 plus a year to keep it going?

Ward: That is what I believe those figures are that you gave me are.

Roger: Ok, thank you. Yes, sir. Your name please?

Domenic Pugliares: Dominic Pugliares, 140 Granite Point Road. That was part of my question to begin with. Because the numbers just seem totally ridiculous. I actually have a couple of questions, but I will

start with this. What do you think the income is going to be for this \$3.2 million investment and \$200,000 a year operating budget, which we know is going to be more than that? What do you think the income is going to be?

Ward: We don't know. We are not a for profit organization. We are not looking for income.

Domenic: Well clearly, if you are willing to spend \$3.2 million dollars on a building that you could tear down and build a Taj Mahal at \$3.2. It is clearly not a – you are not thinking about the economics of the whole thing. Have you done a road study? Because the traffic now, since you have opened this up, which was supposed to only have six parking spaces, the road now is a disaster. Where I live, which is right before the curve before you get there, we have seen so many near accidents. You cannot, you can barely get two cars down that road. Never mind when there is a truck going down there with a car going the other way. There are old people walking there, the children walking there, the people with dogs, it is dangerous now.

Roger: Can you summarize your question?

Domenic: My question was, have you done a traffic study?

Roger: Okay, good.

Ward: Actually there is a roads engineer, I think that is what Jeff [Mast] is, with Fish and Wildlife Service, and he has been out and looked at just exactly what you talked about. Also, he looked at that parking area for fishermen that currently floods depending on how high the tide is. The Granite Point Road itself belongs to the town of Biddeford, so that is not our road. The six parking places, and there are still six parking places. We started with six, we still have six. That hasn't changed. The Chief of Biddeford came out and identified where those spaces would be, and just like the next week, their roads and grounds people came out, and painted the lines, so you could see them out there. So, that is the history of the six parking places, so there are still six.

Domenic: No, we understand....

Roger: Lets keep it to two questions coming in and so does anyone else wants to speak, so if you don't mind.

Domenic: No, but this is on the same question. It really is.

Roger: Go ahead, but no more after that. We will come back to you.

Domenic: And I appreciate that. But the parking, it is Biddeford's road. In order for you to go with your option C, you have to have your people travel across Biddeford's road. And you need to do a traffic study.

Ward: All I talked about was widening the road, what is currently the woods road, because that is what we own. I didn't address anything about what would happen with Granite Point Road. I take your point.

Roger: Great! We can come back to more questions later. Someone else has one right here???.... Your name please?

Deb Gott: I'm Deb Gott. I live on Heather Lane off Granite Point Road. How is the final assessment made? In other words, do you just vote on what everybody is for? Whoever, A, B, C, D has the most naysayers, that is the way you go?

Ward: No, that is not how an environmental assessment works. I manage the National Wildlife Refuge. That is what I do, and I am as good at that as I think I am, I suppose. There is someone else who manages environmental assessments and environmental impact statements and stuff like that, and she is here today. So (directed to Nancy), did you hear her question, in terms of how this decision gets made, following the process we are going through? This is Nancy McGarigal, she is the Chief Planner for Fish and Wildlife Service.

Nancy McGarigal: So the ultimate decision maker on this document is our Regional Chief, and that's Scott Kahn. He is in the office that I am in. I work out of the Northeast Regional office of the Fish and Wildlife Service in Hadley, Massachusetts. And so Scott, he has read this environmental assessment that's out now, and he sees what the team has proposed as the preferred alternative. We will, after the comment period is over, which I am not sure we mentioned was October 31st, then a team of us will compile and synthesize all the comments that came in regardless of how they came in. Including here tonight, we've also got letters already, email, whatever form. We will summarize those into topical areas to address, and we will draft a response. And Scott will consult that response and the comments that came in. So, he will see the numbers, but he will also see the substantive comments and how we feel they were addressed adequately, or not addressed, in the environmental assessment and he will make a decision. So, it is not necessarily numbers of people; that you know, everybody voted for Alternative D, for example. He'd still have to weigh that, the feasibility of it. He still evaluates the consequences that we talked about in the document. So, that would be really important to hear from folks in their comments as to whether they feel that the consequences that were portrayed in chapter 4 were adequate, you know, that you agree they were covered adequately. That's really a roundabout way to answer the question. It's not necessarily really about number of votes. It's really about substance.

Deb Gott: May I ask one other question?

Roger: I think you can, you are allowed two.

Deb Gott: What happens in the event of budget cuts? I mean, that is all we hear about is budget cuts. Would that be part of his decision? Like "Hey we have this huge building to maintain and if things get cut, is that a good economic use?"

Nancy McGarigal: I am sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt. One thing I wanted to draw folks attention to was, in the beginning of the environmental assessment, there is a Purpose and Need statement. It talks about the sorts of things, the kind of the criteria that he [Scott] will look at to evaluate the best alternative, or the alternative we recommend selecting. One of them has to do with the consideration of...let's see, sub Item 7. There are 10 criteria that the team identified. Again, I encourage folks to look at this in chapter 1- Purpose and Need. There are 10 criteria, and one of them talks about whether the alternative reflects a strategic investment. I'm sorry,... "reflects reasonable expectations for long term operational maintenance and staffing costs based on historic and projected future needs." So, definitely, that will be one of his considerations.

Ward: You know, budgets are, they are an annual event. Even if you have a critical need you cant help what its going to be next year. Congress is very jealous of that annual appropriation authority. So, they don't like it when you say, "Well I will pay you \$50 a shot and pay you another \$50 next year." They go "Not so fast, what if we don't give you \$50 for next year?"

Roger: I will take this next question here from this gentleman.

Kenny March: Kenny March of Heather Lane on Granite Point. I guess the big issue for me is that your platform is conservation. If you are going to start widening roads, you are filling wetlands, which I would think is totally against Rachel Carson's platform. Everything is going to get changed. You know all the wildlife that habitat area. The traffic issue that my neighbor brings up is huge. And now you are changing the roads. That's, you know, Granite Point Road. That road is Biddeford. But, you've got to get there to make this "C" work, which I am never going to vote for. I just don't see it...its an environmental issue. That's what you are basing this whole, your business on.

Roger: Now is a great time to just start taking comments. So maybe we should hear from the people that have just comments, and not direct questions. That is primarily why we are here, to hear your comments. So, we will move from the question part now. We won't do the number thing, its just a small number, I will just point to you and you can say your name and make a comment. Everybody understand?

James Hoover: Just a follow up...in a question though.

Roger: Your name please.

James Hoover: Hoover, from Granite Point Road, Heather Lane actually. Where do you anticipate the pressure, the economic pressure for your fiscal budget coming from? What direction is the pressure in the outlying areas coming from?

Ward: You know, when it comes to the budget, I am kind of like the end user. Oh, I can say "Thank you." I can tell you that my supervisor is here though. I would love to put him on the spot (background laughter)..... but he is my supervisor, so let's....

James Hoover: I'm not looking to toast anyone here. There has to be some type of feeling within U.S. Fish and Wildlife, as to the pressures on the budgetary process in the out years, the ones that are coming up.

Ward: And indeed you are right. We are in the United States Government budget fiscal year 15 right now. The budget for fiscal year 16 is pretty much all set. So fiscal year 17 is the budget year, the one you are talking about. It is the one they are working on now. So, what I hear, and you may have heard something different, but what we have is a continuing resolution. They did not pass a budget on September 30th and with October 1st beginning the fiscal year for the United States government, so they have passed what they call a continuing resolution. They essentially say "We didn't pass a budget so do what you did last year." What we hear is that the continuing resolution is going to pass again, it is going to go further, so this year is going to look very much like last year.

James Hoover: The status quo will prevail.

Ward: I am perfectly capable of eating those words though.

Statements from Attendees on the Environmental Assessment (Transcription)

Roger: So, now we are starting the comment portion of tonight.

Domenic: I actually have a question. I would like to know how you all are going to respond to the fact that we were blatantly lied to? When you went to buy that property, you said it was for conservation. It was for the birds, it was for wildlife, and nothing was going to happen to that building. That was very clear. You went out, you raised private funds, you took private money, and you did it for a reason, and now you are looking to change the purpose of that land. We were lied to. There is no way to couch this. There is no way....I can give you a euphemism... you can say maybe we were misled. But we weren't, we were lied to. And, I want to know how the government is going to respond to that question? When did you decide you were going to lie to us to? Was it before you did this, or was it after? I mean, when did this brilliant idea come up to take a building and increase traffic, and fill in wetlands, and widen the road? When did this all come about? And why?

Roger: Thank you. We will take that as a comment and you will get a response to that when the responses come out in a month or two.

Domenic: I don't think it's a comment.

Nancy M: Can I just answer that?

Roger: Yes.

Nancy M: What we put out on the street for public comment is a document that portrays four different alternatives. And, you are addressing... you seem very concerned about one of the alternatives. There has been no decision made. And, I don't know if you have had a chance to actually look the full document...

Domenic: I read the whole thing, cover to cover.

Nancy M.: The environmental assessment? You are sort of...you seem to be assuming implementation of an alternative that has not been decided yet. The sorts of things you are raising are things we need to take to our decision maker to consider amongst the four alternatives.

Domenic: Wouldn't it be good if the decision-maker was here to hear from us, so it doesn't come through a filter?

Nancy: We actually have about 10 environmental assessments going on. He is in Wisconsin this week. I guarantee he will want to know, actually hear a report tomorrow of what happened. I am sure Graham will be reporting in. I am recording it, so he can hear directly.

Domenic: Do you deny the fact that when you went to raise money, that this was never an option on the table? Option C. That is all we are talking about, Option C.

Nancy M.: I am not only talking about Option C....why are we only talking about option C?

Domenic: That is all that we are concerned about here – Option C.

Nancy M: This the kind of comment we would like to hear, and your response as to which alternative you support. Do you think A, being the status quo, keep it the same, keep it as is, no change in current management? I mean, that is the sort of comment we would appreciate...not to set you up, but for you to say that you like alternative A for these reasons, and that you don't like alternative C, or D, or B for other reasons.

Domenic: We are supposed to do that with this comment form?

Nancy M: That is a great way to submit your comment in writing. We like to, of course, get it in your own words. That way the decision-maker can look at it directly in your own words. And, we are taking these statements tonight. So...

Roger: Thank you Nancy, good. Anyone else that wants to make a comment, please state your name. We have yours, I think right?

Lisa Haith: Yeah, Lisa Haith for a comment. On the level of what Ken had mentioned earlier, which is the platform of conservation, wildlife and environment, It is the same wildlife environment that attracted so many people to this area and the purchase to Rachel Carson. We did a little research on the website for the National Wildlife Service. The purpose stated for the Service is to protect for breeding, migration and winter habitat for waterfowl, wading birds and shorebirds. What I'd like to say is, I don't understand how proposal C fits in line with that... where there is a widening of a road, the very road that leads to the habitat in question.

Roger: Thank you. Perfect. Anybody else with any comments first before we go back to somebody again?

Roger: Go ahead

Mitchell Ross: I have a question...Mind if I stand up? My name is Mitchell Ross. I'm at 42 Granite Point Road. I don't know my neighbors very well, but I share their concerns. The issue for us who live on the street is first and foremost, the fact that it is, as the report says, a residential street. It is very narrow. It is sometimes twisting. That is a bit of an understatement, with poor visibility, safety issues, with particularly difficult access in the winter. We were sold on the idea of contributing to help buy Timber Point – which I think everyone on Granite Point Road gave, at least to my knowledge, very generously– with the idea that it would be conservation land in line with the Fish and Wildlife Service standards. That is why this proposal C is so anger making, because it is directly contradictory to exactly what we thought that this land would be used for and directly contradictory to the mission of the Service is stated to be. Widening that trail will degrade the entire experience. Making it into a two-lane road, when what we really do on the land – and by the way, my family and I were there almost every day during the summer, most of the weekends – to degrade it into a use as a conference center really does makes us all very, very disappointed – that this was taken as a serious alternative. I know that there is a very able and well meaning, and very well organized group promoting the center, and they are politically, and on a marketing level, extremely able, and I am sure well meaning. But, it's just a terrible idea. It's good people in support of a bad idea. I have no qualms about myself at least – and I speak only for myself – about living with alternative B. Looking at them, there are buildings there, and extending the trail is a good thing. Interpreting them, I really don't have a problem with that, even though by the environmental assessment, the amount of traffic just from that alternative generated by the Timber Point area is going to increase traffic by almost 40%. I can live with that. My family and I enjoy Timber Point so much, it'd be nice to have a little more to do out there. But, I don't think we can live on Granite Point Road with 100% more traffic. And then Ward, you know, that there may be six spaces but there are plenty of times there are 9 or 10 cars. And when we anticipated, perhaps naively, that there would be limited access, we didn't think that one of the local resorts would bus people down there to take tours. You can't stop that, it's there. But in considering what alternative to implement, you are and do want to know, consider the effect on the local environment. And, if anything, at least in my view, the assessment of what impact a conference center would have on Granite Point Road is way understated in the report. I have other reservations as to the conference center that I think my neighbors have already brought up. We live in world with very limited dollars. I mean if we are going to spend more money on Timber Point, how about some things increasing things like handicapped access on areas of the trail where there is no way for anyone who is mobility challenged can get to? My family, much to my great pride, was the one who contributed money to that bench that's out there. It would be nice to have a few more places for those of us of a certain age, or perhaps even the infirmed, sit down and enjoy the area. Not to spend it on the center. So, I can live with B. I, frankly, think it is a little bit of waste to just let the buildings rot, but I could live with that also. I do think it might be useful to take the buildings away and put them in a setting where they can be appreciated, if there really is some value to them, which I think is a discussion that someone else with an architectural bend might want to address. And I can support B, but I cannot emphasize how strongly proposal C would hurt us.

Roger: Thank you very much. Well said. Ok, yes, go ahead.

Lisa Haith: Lisa Haith, and I agree with him completely. I have a question, because the use of Timber Point is to increase...I'm sorry. Because the use has increased so much and there is all these traffic problems people are talking about, is there some point where the town of Biddeford will dictate to us – if it increases like the use predicted if we implemented option B – that the use grows so much that they would say we have to widen this road? I mean, can they come in and do that?

Roger: That is not really a question we can answer tonight. It's a municipal question.

Mitchell: But it is an impact on the neighborhood, and it is a useful question to be taking into account.

Roger: It is taken into account as far as the refuge road widening, but as far as the question regarding the town of Biddeford

Lisa: Well that's the question, I just wonder if it is going to impact us much more prominently than we think?

Roger: Yes.

Josephine Power: I am Josephine Power. I live at Timber Point, 1 Timber Point Road, and I just want to bring up one point. In regards to people who feel like they donated money and they feel like they were lied to – there is also a very large group of people, that when they gave money, they thought these National Historical Register eligible buildings would be put to good use. So, there's that opposite side of that comment.

Roger: Hmm. Yes sir?

James Hoover: A point well taken has been brought up twice, three times now. The misrepresentation that Wolfe Tone made during the fundraising in the very beginning. Is that misrepresentation going to be addressed by anyone in Hadley? That is where Wolfe Tone came from?

Roger: I think that is something we can't answer, but I think that is something we can observe as a comment. And there will be a response...

James Hoover: I was raising it as a question because he brought it up. Domenic brought it up. And I know it has been grinding on a number of people. A good number, many people, concerned about this misrepresentation that was presented to them by Wolfe Tone.

Roger: Graham, do you want to speak to that?

Graham Taylor: I will take a stab at it, but I wasn't involved in the purchase process because I had another job at the time and was not involved.

Roger: Please state your name again.

Graham Taylor: I am Graham Taylor, Refuge Supervisor, and my understanding from Ward is that Wolfe Tone works for Trust for Public Lands. He is not a Fish and Wildlife Service employee. Trust for Public Land is a private organization that does conservation efforts across the country. I think that at the time, the Service had been interested in Timber Point for many, many years. It has been inside the refuge boundary for about 20+ years or more. I don't think any of us really thought about it – you know– we knew these buildings were old and that they were seasoned in years, stuff like that, but none of us really thought that we would ever use those buildings for what has been proposed in some of the alternatives. So, when people say they were misled, I don't think they were misled. The purpose of the fundraising effort was to acquire and conserve that land. The future of buildings really hadn't been decided. In fact, you know, the former owners fully anticipated the buildings being torn down. But, subsequent to that protection of the property and acquisition by the Service, proposals were coming out for alternatives for those buildings other than tearing them down, I mean reuse. They were all talking about Timber Point Center as one concept that had been brought up, and there is a group actively engaged in that sort of concept. The EA is to address a range of alternatives, but we never anticipated saying that we were going to use these buildings. We hadn't really thought that process through completely, I think. We had these buildings. We thought and anticipated about tearing them down, or just leaving them as they currently are now in a caretaker status – mothball type of status– doing what we can, you know. This process now, is something that has come up. You know, the buildings are now eligible for the Historic Register so that's a whole host of things that we have to do, and a proposal was put forward for a reutilization of the building. So, we have to consider all these different things in a range of alternatives. So, a long answer to your question is that I don't think you were misled. I just don't think we fully analyzed it early on. I think everybody expected the buildings to remain or be torn down. A new proposal came forward that we have to consider in the NEPA process. The environmental assessment is developing a range of reasonable alternatives to look at different options, and then picking what the Service thinks is the best one for moving forward.

James Hoover: Okay, so Wolfe Tone was a subcontractor, not hired by U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

Graham: I don't want to say he was a subcontractor, because I don't know for sure.

James Hoover: I mean, in this environment, Wolfe Tone.

Graham: He doesn't work for the Service. I don't know, like I said, I wasn't involved, I don't know what the partnership relationship was with him. I know there were multiple folks involved in trying to come up with money to protect this land from a family that wanted to sell it.

James Hoover: You say that you don't feel that people were misled. They would line up shoulder to shoulder up Granite Point Road. I mean, they truly feel like they were misled, bordering on feeling like they were lied to.

Graham: Okay.

James Hoover: No, no, I am just telling you how the neighbors and I felt.

Graham: You know, I appreciate that.

James Hoover: Obviously, there is misunderstanding on both sides of the issue. Josephine mentioned it on her side as well. There is a huge chasm here on what you understand. I know we all have selective hearing. And, I am as prone to it as anyone else and to what I am talking to, and to what I am led to believe and my neighbors. And, that is one of the huge issues and my neighbors that is grating on the people. It is an underlying issue that involves conflict. Nobody wants to deal with conflict, and avoidance is the worst possible conflict resolution.

Graham: So, I think that's just a...

James Hoover: If a statement coming out of U.S. Fish and Wildlife that would address this point, it would go a long way in ameliorating the feelings that a lot of people have.

Graham: Sure. Yup.

James Hoover: And these are some very heavy hitter donors that stood up to the plate in the very, very beginning.

Graham: I hear what you are saying, and I appreciate that. I think it is a related issue and it's been recorded and I think that's a fair issue...

James Hoover: Like I said, a simple statement and it would go a long way for a great number of people.

Graham: I agree, and I will go back to our regional office and we'll talk to see how we, you know, can address that. But, I think, to focus on what we are here for tonight.

James Hoover: Good.

Graham: That would help.

James Hoover: No one is looking for a right or wrong here.

Graham: Yup, thank you.

Roger: Very good. Comments on the process – Are there any others? Good, state your name please.

Susan Amons: I am Susan Amons, I live at 8 Heather Lane. I have personal comments, and then I have a brief Conservation Commission of Biddeford comments that we drafted. And so, James Hoover is my husband. We live on 8 Heather Lane. We are full time residents. We have lived there for 35 years at Granite Point. I have served on the Conservation Commission for seven years, and my husband served on the Planning Board for three years and the Coastal Area Committee for six years. We have given land to conservation and a conservation easement to U.S. Fish and Wildlife. And, we donated toward the Timber Point acquisition fund. So, I support option A, which is to maintain the current level of environmental protections. Any further development of trails under option B will increase the use by 40 percent, and under option C, by 100 percent. Increasing use from 11,000 people per year to 15,000 or

20,000 people will create more unwanted, adverse impacts to the environment and the wildlife as described in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report. We strongly oppose option C under any circumstances. Option C proposes building a two lane, 20 foot wide, gravel road for two-way traffic, with 7,250 vehicle trips per year including delivery trucks driving directly into the heart of the refuge. This will create a permanent altering of the land itself and be a constant barrage of disturbance to wildlife and habitat and forever alter the quiet, nature trail experience – and that is what people are there to enjoy. An overnight meeting center is not needed at Timber Point and can be accommodated elsewhere. James Hoover supports option D which is to permanently remove the buildings and not spend any funds for building maintenance. We thank you for including an inclusive review process and exhaustive data on Timber Point. (signed) Susan Amons and James Hoover.

Susan Amons: And then I have just a brief comment from our Conservation Commission of Biddeford. We met and voted on this letter that we sent in. “The Biddeford Conservation Commission has reviewed the environmental assessment as presented. Our review and comments focus exclusively on our interests in preserving and conserving the natural habitat of Timber Point. From the outset of this project, from purchase to the milestone deliberation, we recognize this tract of land as one of the last natural, large parcels free of development in Southern Maine. Our goals and comments follow suit. So, increased human presence. Prior to the conveyance of this property there existed minimal human presence as the property was privately owned and posted. The EA estimates that there have been over 10,000 visitors in 12 months. Depending on the alternative chosen, that visitor future count could skyrocket up to 20,000. There is no doubt in our mind that this factor alone has already negatively impacted the natural habitat and will continue to do so at a greater rate of extent in the future, especially under alternative C. So, protect and conserve the existing habitat. This tract of land is undeveloped except for the structures and area around structures, and is free of improvements that accompany change of use in expansion or development. The bird life, animal life, plant growth, hydrology, and outcroppings have been undisturbed for decades. Natural disturbances caused by climate change, sea level rise, and storm surge will take its toll on this parcel apart from anything that we do to it. Let us not add to those threats. Let us focus on how we can minimize the potential loss of habitat and spend our resources wisely. Conclusion: The Biddeford Conservation Commission supports an alternative that is most conservative and supportive of the environment that exists on Timber Point and Timber Point Island. In light, we support alternative A, unless there is an opportunity to move the structures as part of alternative D, and then implement A. We do not support alternative C under any circumstances. And thank you. The Commission believes the environmental assessment to be extremely professional and comprehensive and balanced effort. We commend the authors and thank you for this opportunity to weigh in on this important decision.”

Roger: Mrs. Hoover, thank you. Those were really organized. Can we have a copy of both of them? Both of them were very helpful and succinct.

Susan Amos: You may.

Roger: That's going to be hard one to follow up on. Anybody? Who wants to try next? Go ahead. Name please.

Phil Bosenhard: Phil Bosenhard. Timber Point Road, Biddeford. Commenting on the EA, especially on the section on the federally and threatened endangered species. It's pretty informational, but not really relevant since none of these species occur on Timber Point. It is also interesting in the EA that Fish and Wildlife Service is using similar words that they used during the fundraising phase, that is, "likely to roost in the garage cupola." Why not check and know for sure? It is "likely that snowy egrets, great egrets, little blue heron, and glossy ibis visit Timber Point to feed and roost". Bird surveys were done all last summer. Do they or don't they? Northern long-eared bats, "possible but not documented". Why not documented? You have done bat surveys all summer. Just because a habitat type is on a piece of property doesn't mean that that species that uses that habitat is necessarily there. No eiders on Timber Island. No plovers on Curtis Cove Beach. There is no New England cottontail on the coastal strip. One thing that has bothered me right from the get go, the reference to the mature pine stand. When I first heard that, I walked the total piece of property. That would be prior to acquisition. And, there is probably less than two dozen mature pine trees on the whole property. The bulk of the soft wood that's there is spruce. I know maybe you want to have a dendrologist go out there and get you some tree identification, but I don't believe there is a mature pine tree stand on the property. To take this in another direction... several groups were listed as being contacted for the EA. Timber Point Center. Routine. No return of phone calls or emails from the refuge. Maine Preservation received one phone call and an email from the refuge manager. Maine DIFW (Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife) provided no comment because this is not a wildlife issue, other words.

Roger: Thank you, Phil. Yes, go right ahead.

Holly Culloton: Hi, I am Holly Culloton. I live in Biddeford and I am a volunteer for, I do a lot of downtown work. I am very nervous talking in public, this is the nature of who I am.

Roger: Sure. You can also submit the comments in writing.

Holly: Well, I think it is important to speak out loud about this too, because I have been coming to the Timber Point Farm now for a few years. I know Josephine. And in that time, I have witnessed the tender loving care that has been given to that Ewing family farm, and for the area in general. The actual ocean-front cottage, the 14 bedroom cottage... I have been to that place a number of times. There is a lot of history with that cottage. The Ewing family and the Parsons, they created a sense of place that I think is really important to preserve. Just the fact that it is a National Historical Registry eligible property says volumes to me. So, to consider just tearing it down, I think would be a crime. And I also, regarding tearing it down, I can't imagine what it would be like to have to bring in this heavy equipment and these bulldozers and excavators and dump trucks to carry off this incredible amount of material that would be left behind once the building is torn down. To have to carry it out of there. Now, whether they do it by an ocean vessel or by land, it is still going to be quite a cumbersome process. The plan for, I am proposing a fifth alternative, different from A to D. Timber Point Center, to me, is a good plan because

it provides for minimal use for people to come and gather for meaningful gatherings; environmentalists, artists, educators could meet there, maybe 15 to 25 at a time and they are vanned in, instead of bringing a bunch of cars. So maybe two to three vans per week, versus what other people are thinking would be a lot of automobiles coming in and out of there. The Winslow Homer Poutts Net property uses vans to transport their visitors to their facility and it seems to work well for that community. TPC would be grant funded. Let's see here. I have a couple other questions.

Roger: Can you sort of summarize. You are not comfortable with the four options?

Holly: I think people are still pretty unsure about what Timber Point Center is all about, but it is really about just to preserve the buildings, preserve a sense of place, and just allow for people from all over the world, and all over the country, to come and gather and celebrate what that means there. I'm sorry, I am very nervous about this.

Roger: No, you're good.

Holly: So I will, I will submit the rest of my comments in writing.

Roger: Thank you very much.

Ward: So that's a good reminder. Comments, however we get them, they are very welcome. Written long hand is fine, in-person, email, to rachelcarson@fws.gov, or we have a Facebook page. Handing in a piece of paper is ok. We really want them. Thank you.

Roger: Thank you very much. For those of you that have come in maybe a little late. Don't worry, there is no penalty for that, we are not going to charge you. What we are doing now is the comment phase. If you have a comment or thought, we had an earlier brief Q & A. But now we have a chance, if you have something you would like to say, we are hearing people express their views. It is not a direct question to the panel or anyone here. It is just to say your views and how you are feeling. So, feel free to join in if you want to anytime. We'll go to comments using a time limit of under 4 minutes. So, feel free to speak up. Anybody else feel like they would want to speak? Yes?

Domenic: I would like it if the Service would do a survey to the people who are directly affected. I would like them to go down Granite Point Road from beginning to end. Stop at every house and ask them whether or not they are in favor of A, B, C, or D, and do it that way. Because it is so nice that we have people from downtown Biddeford and from Kennebunkport weighing in, but they are not affected on a day to day, daily basis. The people that are affected are the people that live on Granite Point Road. And I think the Service needs to be cognizant of what their feelings are. I think the best way to do it is to have somebody go down the street, most likely when some of them are there in the summer, not you are holding these meetings allegedly when half the people aren't even there that are affected. But I think that would be a nice outreach for the Service to see what we think, because we are the ones that see it every day. The people in Kennebunkport and downtown Biddeford, they don't see the traffic. They

don't see what is going on. They don't see that those parking spaces are being used by a bunch of teenage kids that go drink on the beach. They don't see any of that. We see it.

Roger: Okay.

Domenic: So, I think that would be a nice gesture on your part.

Roger: Perfect, it has been recorded. Yes sir, name please.

Kenneth Buechs: My name is Ken Buechs. I live in Fortunes Rocks. I would like to remind Ward and others of somewhat of a precedent with this proposal, or some of these proposals. It was probably eight or nine years ago when that property on Old Pool Road in Biddeford was donated to Rachel Carson and there was a home there. I don't think it was in good shape. And it wasn't occupied at the time. But Rachel Carson or Maine IFW proposed converting that building into a classroom, not fully staffed, but just a classroom, where of course that classroom sat right on top of Biddeford Pool, there could be science classes, experiments, and the like. What I recall was that this was not an individual proposal, but this came from the agency. And the neighbors were very upset. It's interesting that Old Pool Road has some of the same contours as Granite Point Road. It's a very narrow road, it's a winding road. School buses go down there. And the concern of the neighbors was the increased traffic for safety, the parking, there would have to be expanded parking as part of the proposal. And very quickly, that proposal was withdrawn. I am feeling that it was primarily because of all the feedback that came from the neighbors, the people that would have to be somewhat put out by that kind of traffic, and disturbance, as well as the infringement on Biddeford Pool and the protection of those natural resources. So, I wrote about that in the first comments phase. I've written it in a second comments letter this time. So, that is something to reflect on.

Roger: Thank you very much. Let's see how we are doing, oh we have plenty of time. Go ahead.

Lisa Haith: Lisa Haith again. I just want to, it's worth taking note, being a resident on Granite Point Road, that the very road that leads into the refuge altogether, that is part of the City's domain and belongs to the city of Biddeford. It floods, washes out during and after full tides, and frequently we hear the drone of bulldozers rebuilding the sea wall, big huge blocks in the area that have been moved back from where they have been washed out during these types of tides that frequent Granite Point Road, in that area, right near Domenic's house. It is worth noting, because it's part of the access to this great place.

Roger: Any questions or any comments? Anyone else that just came in that might have a comment to make about the four alternatives, or about the environmental assessment? Go right ahead, sure. Thank you.

Unidentified female speaker: When I first did the walk through, and I read the alternatives, I thought B was fine because I am an antique dealer and a historian and I thought let's preserve the house. After reading the assessment though, which I thought was fabulous – I am really leaning more and more, and

it's because it is just a great assessment and these comments, towards James Hoover's. You know, this is supposed to be about the environment. That is why people gave money, not for a building. And there is always a chance that the building can be moved, and yes it would take some big equipment to get everything out of there. But, to turn it into a center, you are going to have to use big equipment too. The difference is that if you are going to take the building down, that equipment is going in there once and there is ways to do it benignly. I am just definitely for keeping the environment, and not spending money on buildings, I don't think that is what it is about. As far as educational buildings, we've got Scarborough building. We've got this building on Bradley Brook Road. I mean how much closer can we get? We've also got Log Home Farm. This area isn't that big that we have to have that many buildings to maintain, to teach kids to go outside and run around. That is my position.

Roger: So which alternative would you want?

Unidentified female speaker: You know I still haven't 100%, but I am leaning more towards tearing the building down.

Roger: Okay. Thank you very much. Yes sir, your name please.

Ken Putney: My name is Ken Putney. I live in Granite Point. During the fundraising to buy the property, I participated in that and made a donation. During that whole process, the Fish and Wildlife Service was asked several times what was going to happen to the buildings. They said several times that there was no guarantee about what was going to happen to those buildings. They said in fact, it was not within their charter to maintain those. So it was never believed by anybody who participated in those fundraisers, that those buildings would be protected or preserved. It's only after the whole fundraising ended, several months after, that anybody raised a question about, you know, protecting the building and saving it. I reviewed the different options, and I agree that plan D would be the way to go with this. And it spells out in there that there would be a lot of steps involve in doing that, to allow someone that is particularly interested in the building to take possession of it and relocate it off the Rachel Carson land, and that there would be other steps involved to ensure that the natural habitat was not damaged beyond reason, and that it would be restored to its natural state. I think that the way it is right now under plan A, they are protecting, they are preventing access out to that area. I mean one of the most beautiful areas on that walk, would be going out and being able to look at the ocean, that end of Timber Point. Under option A, as it is today, they don't allow access out there and during one of the tours I asked why not, and they said that they are concerned about the building. So if the building weren't there, it is my assumption that the trail would be allowed to go all the way out to the ocean. They all want to protect the building. Secondly, by spending more and more money on the building and its maintenance, it is a very high maintenance area. It's right on the water. When nor'easters hit and rocks and tree stumps get blown up, I've seen it happen frequently and it happens more and more now as the storms seem to get more frequent and more powerful. I think that the cost of maintaining the building is only going to up every year, or especially after storm damage. So, I think options A and B are less desirable from that standpoint. I think their estimates are actually low from a cost standpoint to maintain those buildings. Having it relocated would also be beneficial to the building if it was relocated to a safer place, or if it has

to be dismantled, there are businesses that specialize in protecting and preserving old buildings. You would probably find it very easy to find a company that would come in and take it apart piece by piece and preserve the old planks and the old slate roof and that could be reused in a historical reconstruction of perhaps another building. In order of my preference, I prefer option D. Second choice would be option A, if there is a possibility to extend the trail out to building. I don't understand why only under option B that they will allow to extend the trail out to the building. Why not extend the trail out to the building under option A, and then put web cams or some kind of alarm system, or maybe a fence around the building to protect it, but still allow people to walk out to that end of Timber Point. So, it would be A with that modification, in my preference. And then option B, I think is also a good option as my third choice. And, under both A and B, it does save the building which is what the historical building people are advocating that came into this conversation after the whole fundraising ended and everything closed and they brang up the building. It does preserve the building. I don't believe that option C is a worthwhile option at all. I oppose option C. I don't see any reason for that location to become a training facility or an overnight facility or a conference facility or anything of that kind. If the building is kept, it could be opened a couple of times a year on a weekend sort of like the Wood Island Light House is open occasionally. People can go in on tours, but it would be supervised when it is open, and then closed and locked up afterwards. So that's my opinion.

Roger: Thank you very much. That was very clear, clearly stated. Thank you. We appreciate that.

Nancy: May I say something. You made me think about something because you said about picking and choosing from the alternatives. Feel free to submit your comments that way, that you prefer...what you said was, "I prefer alternative A with the addition of this aspect of alternative B, right? So our decision maker can end up picking and choosing aspects from the various alternatives. And, so, if that combination is what you would like to see, that is what we would like to hear. For example, "I like A except I like the trail extension that's in proposed Alt B." So feel free to do that. All's I am suggesting is to feel free to do that in your comments - state that you like bits and pieces of one.

Roger: Just to follow-up with that. You follow up we will receive it will come in comment forms. You go to what is referred to as a very immediate comment otherwise, be otherwise it will be a longer narrative. That is a great way for the reviewer to look at it and give immediate responses. Plus, I hope you all record your emails with it in it because that is how the [Park Service] will keep track of you and email you updates because that is pretty important. Okay, so. So, I think it was a tie, so a tie goes, ladies first.

Josephine Power: I just want to - Josephine Power again. I just want to be clear that in addition to the refuge and US Fish and Wildlife Service's stated mission and goals, they also have policies and executive orders that should guide their work. Under Executive Order 13287 they are directed to preserve heritage resources while assessing land management agencies. They should provide leadership in preserving America's Heritage by actively advancing the protection, enhancement, and contemporary use of a historic property that is managed by the Federal government, promote intergovernmental cooperation and partnerships for preservation and use of historic properties, direct Federal agencies to

increase their knowledge of historic properties under their care and enhance their management of these assets, better combine historic preservation and nature tours by directing the agencies to assist in local and regional tourism. So, yes, their primary mission is wildlife, but they also are directed under many, many different rules and regulations like the Historic Preservation Act, to take care of the buildings that are on their property. That is part of their mission also.

Roger: Okay, thank you for that. I think you were next, sir.

James Hoover: Linda Haith here actually jogged my memory. She spoke of storm surge. And, on 3 or 4 occasions, now this goes back thirty something years, I think Linda is probably one of a few people in the room that remembers that. I've been there long enough to remember it. That causeway was washed right out. I mean, it was gone. Curtis Cove was part of the Little River. And Mr. Ewing had to bring in excavators, bulldozers, and this wasn't when, I mean there was, you could get pedestrian traffic through, but that was it. And they brought from the quarries those giant pieces of granite that you see there now. Many have which have actually been going to the Little River side, and the excavators, they've pulled them up and put them on the beach side. They've poured that cement. There is a section of wall there that's been poured. I think U.S. Fish and Wildlife is going to have their hands full just in stabilizing that causeway in the next coming, you know whatever ten years, twenty years. I am going back now thirty, forty years now. That causeway, truly, on three or four occasions, did not exist. It was gone, and it was with huge pieces of equipment, D9s and big excavators and big trucks from the quarries, that were coming in, stabilizing it on each successive storm. And then, of course another storm would come, it would all get rearranged, and then would have to do it again. And that is just in the thirty, forty years that I've been there. So, if you guys are looking long term, which environment, I mean environment is, that is something very few people have mentioned and I don't believe there have been that many people that this issue then, would recall those events.

Roger: Looking forward, that is looking back that is thirty or forty you history you have that is invaluable. So, I am glad we have it on record and I hope you include it in your comments as well. Ok, yes go right ahead.

Lisa: Lisa Haith again. On, what Jim just said, the more recent attack on that causeway was in 2007 when it was washed out once again, so it happened as early as 2007 in history. But, also worth noting, in the EA itself, every 2 to 5 years you could expect quote "a 100 year storm" unquote. Okay, every 2 to 5 years, that causeway is sure to get washed out and the cost incurred to repair it will be there.

Roger: Thank you. Anybody new? Before we are back to other comments. Anyone else that hasn't spoken? We are getting around to quarter to. Anyone else before we go around to other questions or other comments? There is a hand over here. Ladies first again.

Unidentified female speaker: That is why I have come around, because I belong to Maine Preservation, and all these historical houses, but the fact is— I've been a leader of Historic New England. The fact is, you don't have access to it like these other historical properties. And that can't be ignored. That road,

that causeway, and all these factors limit access to the property. And I don't think that can be looked at as another building in Biddeford for that type of thing. I think you have to be realistic.

Roger: Very good. Thank you. Yes, Sir.

Mitchell Ross: Mitchell Ross, again. I also wanted to address the value of preserving that building, and in addition to simply the financial cost. The question is whether it is really worth it at all to preserve that building. I know that in the environmental assessment, Charles Ewing is called a renowned architect. I am not an architectural historian, but I have been involved in real estate for way over 40 years. But what I heard, it doesn't matter much, but I don't find him reference books, I don't find him in anything as broad as Wikipedia, and with due respect to the Ewing family, I don't believe that he is the architect of any other building that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or that he has been recognized as a historic figure as a architect in any context. The building itself, from the reports that I read, is fairly eclectic in nature it doesn't represent a pure form of an architectural style. It was not winterized, it was certainly not well maintained, and it was not donated to the Fish and Wildlife Service. It was sold after, after what, as I understand it, the family removed items of value, architectural details, greenhouse, whatever was of some particular value. So, in choosing among the alternatives, I think the Service should take into account any alternative that involves preserving this particular building may simply be wasting money.

Roger: Anything else or is that it? That is very good.

Ward: I am going to try to not to get into too much trouble with you here. The Ewing family from the 1930's, who sold it in 2011, and then the family before that, we think really think they did a tremendous job taking care of the 157 acre piece of property. We really think there are wonderful resources at Timber Point. You had mentioned, Sue, here a little while ago, someone that has a historical perspective. I just wanted to say something in favor of the Ewing family.

Ken Buechs: Ken Buechs again, I said some complimentary comments to the authors of the environmental assessment. I don't want to take my words back now, but I would like to offer an opportunity for it to be a bit more comprehensive. I served for 4 years on a state funded study of the rise in sea level, and our state geologist has produced some incredible projections of what we are going to see in the next 50 to 100 years, certainly beyond our lifespan. In terms of the impact on infrastructure and the shoreline of southern Maine. And that would, and those are some interesting drawings, that portrays Biddeford Pool as being an island, and obviously 4 mile stretch is gone, and it portrays the same kind of projection on Granite Point. So, I just want to say that if you want to get more information, you should get access to those projections, if you can.

Ward: It's in the environmental assessment.

Nancy: We reference the study.

Roger: The study is referenced, the study meaning climate change?

Nancy: It may not be the same study, but we reference a study for climate change for southern Maine. I can show it to you after we break.

Roger: Okay, how are we doing? Anyone else have any comments they want to make? I think we have gone around the room pretty well. Everyone has spoken very clearly. The EA process like any government process can appear cumbersome and convoluted and frustrating but from listening to the comments, this is why we do it. The stakeholders, the people that know the history of the area and know how they would like to see it look in the future can come out to these meetings like the one we held today and it very much helps others, not myself, but the planners and thinkers on this make the final decisions. Thank you for making this effort on this rainy day to speak in public. That is all I have. Would Nancy or Ward like to summarize anything?

Nancy: No, just a reminder, the end of the public comment period is October 31st and we are going to be right on it to try to compile it and respond, summarize, and consolidate the comments. But, that will probably take the month of November. So with that, I think we are hanging around for a few minutes if you have any questions. I am kind of the process person, I helped write the EA, so if you have any questions on that, please see me.

Ward: We certainly appreciate your comments. We appreciate getting your email addresses so we can get back to you. So, now we can go back now and consolidate your comments.