



The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Partnership

Building Collaborative Action for Shorebird Conservation

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Ms. Demarys M. Mortenson, Acting State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
760 South Broadway Boulevard
Salina, KS 67401-4604

Dear Ms. Mortenson,

We recently learned that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was not convinced of the wetland designation of a 311-acre parcel, located on the southwest portion of the Cheyenne Bottoms Basin, which was purchased by Ducks Unlimited (DU) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Their intent was to expand the conservation footprint of Cheyenne Bottoms by enrolling the property in the Wetland Reserve Easement Program. Cheyenne Bottoms is a Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network site of hemispheric importance (see <https://www.whsrn.org/cheyenne-bottoms>) and one of only 38 sites designated under the Ramsar Convention as a Wetland of International Importance (see <https://www.ramsar.org/wetland/united-states-of-america>). As many as 600,000 shorebirds have been recorded at Cheyenne Bottoms during years when habitat conditions are favorable.

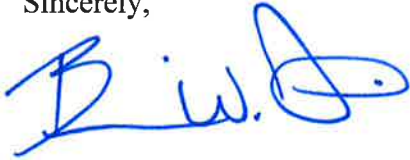
The U. S. Shorebird Conservation Partnership (USSCP) and its Council is a collective of individuals and organizations who are expert in the long-term conservation of the Western Hemisphere's shorebirds. USSCP representatives have extensive experience in shorebird conservation and include federal agencies, state agencies and non-governmental organizations. We work collaboratively to address shorebird conservation issues and propose solutions. Accordingly, we are interested in the fate of Cheyenne Bottoms because of the critical stopover habitat it provides shorebirds during their epic spring migration, and we ask that NRCS reconsider its position on whether the acreage in question is designated a wetland.

Historically, the tract had an intermittent stream that flowed through the property and contained numerous wetland basins that ranged from smaller ephemeral wetlands to a few larger basins that were most likely seasonal or even semi-permanent. We understand that TNC and the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism have solid records of the parcel's flooding and wetland conditions history and are willing to provide NRCS with the photographic data. Although the parcel's wetland soil characteristics have been degraded by decades of farming and draining, the parcel's location in the Cheyenne Bottoms landscape indicates its historical wetland

status. We recognize that the engineering actions proposed may not mimic natural restoration in the basin, but they are likely needed to reverse the intense modification of historical wetland conditions. The site has great potential for wetland restoration and still holds significant water after a heavy rain.

Because of the value of Cheyenne Bottoms to migrating shorebirds, the potential of the parcel to expand the conservation estate of the site, and the historical evidence that this site was part of the broader Cheyenne Bottoms wetland ecosystem, we ask you to reconsider whether the area in question is designated as a wetland. Thank you for consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a stylized "S" at the end.

Brian Smith, Chair
U.S. Shorebird Conservation Council