



Town of Chatham

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For Immediate Release

Chatham Officials Continue Pursuit of Monomoy Refuge Western Boundary Resolution

On Monday officials from the Town of Chatham again traveled to Washington seeking a permanent resolution of the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) western boundary conflict.

In its final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP, 2016) for the Refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) made an illegal taking of almost 3,000 acres of submerged lands west of Monomoy Island. Since 1944 when the Refuge was created, FWS recognized the western boundary of the Refuge as mean low water (MLW) in accordance with the Taking document. Subsequent Congressional action in 1969-1970 designating most of Monomoy as Wilderness Area affirmed MLW as the Refuge boundary. The 2016 CCP represents the first time FWS claimed ownership over submerged lands belonging to the Commonwealth.

“We are pursuing every possible legislative, administrative, and legal option available to us” said Selectman Shareen Davis. *“Our meetings in Washington were informative and productive”*.

Joining Selectman Davis was Town Manager Jill Goldsmith and Director of Natural Resources Robert Duncanson, Ph.D. The delegation met with staff of the House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee, which held a hearing last spring on a bill (H.R. 1157) filed by Representative Keating to restore the boundary, as well as with staffers in the offices of Senator Markey and Rep. Keating.

The most important meeting was with the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and other staff, from Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke’s office. *“We had a very straightforward and productive meeting with Secretary Zinke’s staff who are extremely interested in the facts of our case”*, continued Davis. *“The Secretary’s staff recognized the commitment of the Town and Commonwealth to sustainable stewardship of this area and the fact that we have exercised this stewardship responsibly for generations.”* A member of Governor Baker’s DC staff joined the delegation in its meeting with Secretary Zinke’s staff demonstrating the bipartisan support that exists for rectifying the illegal taking.

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