

Robert Langelius Sr.
EUSFFC
Response to Letter of
May 5, 2005
From
Congressman
Wayne T. Gilchrest
Reference
Hearing
May 26, 2005

The Honorable Wayne T. Gilchrest
Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Room 112-188 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 21, 2005

Re: Invitation to Testify at the May 26, 2005 Hearing of the Sub-Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Dear Chairman Gilchrest:

My name is Robert Langelius, I am the president of the "Eastern U.S. Free Flight Conference" (EUSFFC), a group formed to coordinate the competition activities and sporting efforts of those aeromodelers (and their clubs) whose model aircraft are designed to fly free, safely and satisfactorily without active control.

I want to thank you and the other members of the Sub-Committee for the opportunity to provide my feelings about public access to a specific unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The unit has been re-named "The Shawangunk National Wildlife Refuge" and was formerly known as "Galeville Airport" in Wallkill, New York.

The request asked six questions and my responses follow:

I would like however to make a brief comment at this time:

The aeromodeling community observed the transfer of the "Galeville Airport" site from the Department of Defense (DOD) to the National Wildlife Refuge System with disappointment, frustration, and anger!

During the General Services Administration (GSA) mandatory hearings, the aeromodeling community was excluded from testifying. No one heard of our ongoing activities, our historical usage, the maintenance we accomplished, the security and insurance protection we provided, and our critical dependency on the site!

That exclusion was wrong, it was ILLEGAL and the transfer should not have taken place!

When the transfer was completed we contacted the staff of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to regain access to the site. We were "stone walled", lied to, condemned, and roundly discouraged in every effort we made to resume what had been a productive and mutually cooperative relationship with West Point!

When we approached Congress for help we found many supporters and a particularly staunch advocate in Congressman Benjamin Gilman. However, all were treated with a similar cavalier attitude!

The years since the transfer have dramatically increased our disillusionment and frustration with the USFWS. They are consumed by a completely intransigent mentality from the top to bottom. The USFWS will stop at nothing to impose "Wilderness" on all!

Thank you!

Sincerely

Robert Langelius, Sr. President
The Eastern U.S. Free Flight Conference

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS REQUESTED IN CONGRESSMAN GILCHRESTS
LETTER OF MAY 5, 2005

* QUESTION NUMBER ONE: "HOW OFTEN WERE MODEL AIRPLANES FLOWN FROM THE "GALEVILLE" AIRPORT"?

INFORMALLY, THERE WAS A DAILY AEROMODELING PRESENCE ON THE "GALEVILLE" SITE (WEATHER PERMITTING)

FORMALLY, THE EASTERN U.S. FREE FLIGHT CONFERENCE (EUSFFC) WOULD NEGOTIATE WITH WEST POINT FOR APPROXIMATELY SEVENTEEN TO TWENTY DAYS ANNUALLY!

* QUESTION NUMBER TWO: "HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE INVOLVED IN THIS ACTIVITY"?

THE TOTAL COMBINED MEMBERSHIP OF THE CLUBS IN THE CONFERENCE WAS APPROXIMATELY FOUR HUNDRED FLYERS.

DAILY AND WEEKEND "WALK ON" FLYERS NUMBERED APPROXIMATELY FIVE TO TWENTY.

SCHEDULED CONTESTS DREW FROM FIFTY TO SEVENTY FIVE FLYERS.

MANY INTERNATIONAL FLYERS FROM JAPAN, ENGLAND, POLAND, ISREAL, GERMANY, FRANCE, TURKEY, HUNGARY, UKRAINE, RUSSIA, AND SWEDEN HAVE JOINED US IN MAJOR COMPETITIONS AT "GALEVILLE".

* QUESTION NUMBER THREE: WHAT STEPS WERE TAKEN TO PROTECT THE RESIDENT WILDLIFE AND SURROUNDING HABITAT?

THE EUSFFC ACTIVELY SOUGHT GUIDENCE FROM THE "WEST POINT" ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

INITIATE A PERIODIC MOWING OF THE FACILITY TO CONVERT IT TO A "SAVANNAH" TYPE APPEARANCE OF THE GRASSY AREAS.

THE REMOVAL OF SECOND GROWTH TREES DESIGNATED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER ALSO SUPERVISED THE INTRODUCTION OF MODEL RETRIEVAL PATHS TO CONCENTRATE GENERAL MOVEMENT AND REDUCE THE TIME SPENT IN THE GRASSY AREAS.

THE WEST POINT ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER WAS FREQUENTLY ON SITE AND WE HAD AN EXCELLENT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

ALL AEROMODELERS WERE REQUIRED TO REMOVE ANY AND ALL REFUSE FROM THE FIELD.THEIRS OR ANYONE ELSE'S.

PETS WERE CONTROLLED.

* QUESTION NUMBER FOUR: “WHAT IMPACT MODEL AIRPLANES HAD ON THE WILD LIFE”?

THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT “POSITIVE” IMPACT AS THE FIELDS WERE MOWED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DECADES AND THE REMOVAL OF THE BURGENING SECOND GROWTH TREES OPENED SIGHT LINES FOR THE NESTING BIRDS!

I BELIEVE THERE WAS NO NEGATIVE IMPACT BY MODEL PLANE ACTIVITY AT “GALEVILLE”!

THIS OPINION IS SHARED BY MANY NOTED BIOLOGISTS AND ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO TOOK THE TIME TO VISIT AND STUDY THE “GALEVILLE” SITE!

THESE SAME BIOLOGISTS STATED OUR FLYING ACTIVITY WAS “BENIGN”!

* QUESTION NUMBER FIVE? “LIKE TO KNOW OF YOUR EFFORTS TO CONTINUE THIS RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY AFTER THE REFUGE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1999?

THE CLOSING OF THE “GALEVILLE” SITE WAS A DISASTER FOR AEROMODELING AND MANY FLYERS LEFT THE HOBBY!

THERE IS NO COMPARABLE SITE IN NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES.

MAJOR QUALIFICATION EVENTS SHIFTED TO MUNCIE INDIANA, DAYTON OHIO, AND NORTHERN FLORIDA.

WE HAVE HAD TO CONSOLIDATE OR ELIMINATE OUR MAJOR ANNUAL CONTESTS THEREBY REDUCING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES.

A LARGE FARM SITE IN ENGLSIDE MARYLAND IS USED, BUT THE FARM IS ONLY AVAILABLE FOR ONE WEEKEND IN EARLY SPRING, AND ONE WEEKEND IN THE LATE FALL, WHEN THE WEATHER CONDITIONS ARE POOR TO IMPOSSIBLE!

A MEMBER OF THE “EUSFFC” PURCHASED A SOD FARM IN WAWAYANDA NEW YORK, AND GENERAL FREE FLIGHT ACTIVITIES HAVE CENTERED ABOUT THIS LOCATION SINCE THAT TIME.

THE SITE HAS VERY SERIOUS FLAWS! THE AREA IS “CRISS-CROSSED” BY CANALS AND A RIVER. THE SOD IS SURROUNDED BY CORN AND WHEAT FIELDS WHICH MAKES MODEL RETRIEVAL VERY DIFFICULT.

SENIOR AEROMODELERS HAVE MAJOR PROBLEMS TRAVERSING THE CANALS AND MODEL LOSSES ARE HIGH!

TRAVEL DISTANCES ARE EXTREME AND PROHIBITIVE FOR YOUTHS
AND THOSE ON LIMITED BUDGETS!

* QUESTION SIX: THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE “USFWS” FOR DENYING
YOUR REQUEST.

THE AEROMODELING COMMUNITY HAS BEEN VERY DISSAPPOINTED
BY THE FINDINGS OF THE “USFWS”!

THE COMPATIBILITY REPORT WAS SIMPLY A “LEXUS NEXUS”
SEARCH AND ALL NEGATIVE INFORMATION FOUND PERTAINED TO “FULL
SCALE” AIRCRAFT BUT WAS CREATIVILY PROJECTED ON TO OUR MODELS!

THE “USFWS” LURIDLY EMBELLISHED THOSE RESULTS.

THEY NEGATIVELY DISTORTED OUR RETRIEVAL ACTIVITIES AND
SUGGESTED TALES OF MODELERS IN “OFF –ROAD” FOUR-WHEELERS
GRINDING UP NESTS AND SCATTERING FLOCKS, AND RACING ABOUT!

THE “USFWS” NEVER TOOK THE TIME TO OBSERVE OUR ACTIVITIES!

THEY SAID THE FIELD IS AT NO TIME CAPABLE OF
ACCOMMODATING OUR ACTIVITY, YET THE MONSTROUS
TRACTOR/MOWER THEY USE (PICTURE ATTACHED) MAKES AN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT FAR IN EXCESS.OF OUR RETRIEVAL ACTIVITY!

THE “USFWS” STAFF REJECTED OUR OBSERVATIONS OF POSITIVE
BIRD RESPONSES DURING MODEL RETRIEVAL YET THEY CLAIMED THEY
OBSERVED SIMILAR RESPONSES WHEN THEY MOWED “GALEVILLE”!

THE PROPOSED BUDGET IMPACT WAS A COMPLETE FABRICATION!
THE ONLY EXPENSE WOULD BE FOR A LOCK AND A “PRIVY” (FOR PUBLIC
USE) AND WE HISTORICALLY PAID FOR THEM BOTH!

THERE WAS NO TRUTH IN THE REPORT!

I WOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE WITH THE OBSERVATIONS OF A
RETIRED EMPLOYEE OF THE “USFWS” (HIS COMMENTS ARE QUOTED IN
“THE MISSING LYNX” ARTICLE ATTACHED)

HE OBSERVED ”...THE AGENCY PUSHED OUT PEOPLE THAT DIDN’T
FIT THE ANTI-HUNTING, ANTI-FISHING, ANTI-LAND MANAGEMENT
PROFILE.

THEY’VE GOT TO GET BACK TO SCIENCE...”

HOW PROPHEMIC!!!

ROBBERT LANGELIUS, PRESIDENT, THE EASTERN U.S. FREE FLIGHT
CONFERENCE