



Protecting
America's
Wildlife

National Wildlife Refuge Association

1010 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20007
202.333.9075 ♦ Fax 202.333.9077 ♦ www.refugenet.org

June 19, 2003

The Honorable Bill Owens
Governor
State of Colorado
136 State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203-1792

Dear Governor Owens:

On behalf of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA), and its nationwide membership consisting primarily of refuge professionals and members of the 240 refuge Friends volunteer groups representing an estimated 40,000 individuals, I am writing to express our strong concerns about the proposed RS 2477 decision in Moffat County, specifically as it relates to Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge.

As you know, RS 2477 is a civil war era statute that authorizes "roads" on federal lands to be improved at any time. Often these roads are nothing more than single-track trails or jeep roads that haven't been traveled in decades and are virtually non-existent. If approved at Browns Park, RS 2477 claims could result in more than 50 miles of roads through the refuge, a significant amount considering the refuge covers just over 13,000 acres.

Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge is one of our nation's premier waterfowl and upland bird production areas, supplying more than 220 avian species with over 13,000 acres of undisturbed breeding habitat. Nearly 1,500 acres of wetlands provide excellent breeding habitat for teal, widgeon, gadwall, mallards, other ducks and Canada geese. It is estimated that nearly 2,500 ducklings and 300 goslings hatch annually in the refuge. The refuge's shrublands provide vital habitat for several species of concern. Namely, the loggerhead shrike, sage grouse, sage sparrow, sage thrasher, and Brewers sparrow. The Green River that runs through the heart of the refuge provides excellent habitat for wintering bald eagles, nesting osprey, endangered river otters, beaver, and the endangered Colorado pikeminnow.

Additionally, Browns Park NWR serves as an important area for wintering moose, elk and deer. Several hundred animals can often be seen feeding on the open grasslands found throughout the refuge. The remoteness of the area allows an astounding number of animals to prosper off of the rich resources available in the refuge.

In our view, approval of RS 2477 claims would run directly counter to the mission and purposes of Browns Park and the broader National Wildlife Refuge System, threatening a nationally significant biological resource. Accordingly, we respectfully urge that your administration reject any RS 2477 claims on Browns Park NWR. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Evan Hirsche", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Evan Hirsche,
President