



DOOR COUNTY

ROLL CALL Board Members	Aye	Nay	Exc.
AUSTAD	X		
BEARDSLEY	X		
BULTMAN	X		
CHOMEAU		X	
D. ENGLEBERT	X		
R. ENGLEBERT	X		
ENIGL			X
FISHER			X
GAUGER	X		
GUNNLAUGSSON	X		
HEIM PETER	X		
KALMS	X		
LIENAU	X		
MILLER	X		
MORKIN		X	
NORTON	X		
ROBILLARD	X		
RUSNAK	X		
THAYSE			X
VOGEL	X		
ZETTEL	X		

BOARD ACTION

Vote Required: Majority Vote of a Quorum

Motion to Approve Adopted

1st Gunnlaugsson Defeated

2nd R. Englebert

Yes: 16 No: 2 Exc: 3

Reviewed by: [Signature], Corp. Counsel

Reviewed by: [Signature], Administrator

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact associated with the adoption of this resolution. STW

Certification:

I, Jill M. Lau, Clerk of Door County, hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a resolution that was adopted on the 24th day of February, 2023 by the Door County Board of Supervisors.

[Signature]
Jill M. Lau
County Clerk, Door County

Resolution No. 2023-20

REQUESTING THE U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE REMEDIATE AND REMOVE FUTURE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF BIRDS RESIDING ON PILOT ISLAND

TO THE DOOR COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1 WHEREAS, The Washington Island Sportsman's Club has requested the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
 2 Service (FWS) to change the use of Pilot Island solely as a colonial bird sanctuary to an island
 3 that benefits the public's best interest and considers local and environmental and ecological impacts; and
 4

5 WHEREAS, The Town of Washington and Town of Liberty Grove have sent letters to FWS about the
 6 issues associated with the use of Pilot Island as a colonial nesting bird site; and
 7

8 WHEREAS, FWS has failed to satisfactorily address concerns about environmental impacts, impacts
 9 to local fisheries, impacts to local wildlife and impacts to recreational activities; and
 10

11 WHEREAS, In 2021 there were 9,765 Pilot Island cormorants eating an average of 1.25 lbs. of fish a
 12 day (12,210 lbs. per day). This equates to the cormorants reducing our local fisheries through predation
 13 by approximately 1,111 tons (2,222,000 lbs.) of fish each year (over 182 days). To understand how
 14 many fish this is, let's assume that each car going to the ferry would hold 200 lbs. of fish in the
 15 trunk. You would need 11,111 cars to carry the fish. If each car was 15 feet long, the line of cars would
 16 span 31.56 miles if cars were bumper-to-bumper (FWS numbers were used in the fish calculations), and
 17

18 WHEREAS, The fish spawning grounds that once thrived in the Pilot Island waters no longer exist
 19 due to cormorant predation and the water quality issues from the bird guano; and
 20

21 WHEREAS, The E. coli levels near and around Pilot Island, as determined by the University of
 22 Wisconsin-Oshkosh and the Environmental and Innovation Research Center (ERIC), have made the
 23 waters surrounding Pilot Island unfit for fishing, swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, and diving; and
 24

25 WHEREAS, Testing will be performed in 2023 to determine if guano has infiltrated the Forest, J.E.
 26 Gilmore, and A.P. Nichols shipwrecks (National Register of Historical Places #92000103) to
 27 ensure divers will be safe in the potentially polluted waters; and
 28

29 WHEREAS, The historic value of the active Lighthouse (built 1858) and Fog Signal Building on Pilot
 30 Island (National Register of Historic Places #83004279) have been severely compromised since FWS
 31 acquired the Island in 2007; and
 32

33 WHEREAS, Tourists and visitors often ask, "what is that island that looks like it has been bombed."
 34 Then, a local resident or ferry worker will explain the devastation that birds have had on Pilot Island.
 35 Tourists, local residents, fisherman and boaters have complained about the smell emanating from Pilot
 36 Island, as far away as Detroit Harbor on Washington Island and the Town of Liberty Grove; and
 37

38 NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Door County Board of Supervisors strongly disapproves
 39 of the current use of Pilot Island as a colonial bird rookery, and asks that approval be given to the U.S.
 40 Fish and Wildlife Service to the restore the local environment, wildlife, fisheries and historical structures,
 41 removing the problems on Pilot Island that impact the surrounding Door County communities and its
 42 citizens, and
 43

44 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Door County Clerk shall transmit a copy of this resolution to
 45 Martha Williams, Director of Fish and Wildlife, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington DC 20240.

SUBMITTED BY: ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

[Signature]
David Lienau, Chairperson

[Signature]
David Englebert

[Signature]
Daniel Austad

[Signature]
David Enigl

[Signature]
Elizabeth Gauger

[Signature]
Nancy Robillard

[Signature]
Todd Thaysse

Town of Washington

Door County

www.washingtonisland-wi.gov

(920) 847-2522
Fax (920) 847-2303

P.O. Box 220
Washington Island, WI 54246

July 17, 2019

Ms. Cathy Nigg
United States Fish & Wildlife Service
5600 American Blvd.
Bloomington, MN 55437-1458

Dear Ms. Nigg:

The Town of Washington sees tremendous value in the partnership of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) with the Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands (FOPPI). It has been very productive for Plum Island. Both organizations are to be congratulated for their joint efforts. Protecting wildlife and their habitats, hosting public events, and preserving and restoring the historic structures on Plum Island are positive steps that provide visitor enjoyment, education and economic value to the Township. We also appreciate the partnerships work with our school system and support for our local events. Opening Plum Island to the public has been very beneficial for visitors to our area.

Our citizens are concerned about your treatment of Pilot Island. Many had family members who lived and served on Pilot Island where the lighthouse, now abandoned, stood as a reminder of days gone by when ships and lives might be lost sailing through Death's Door. In years past, residents had social gatherings on Pilot Island. It was lush and green then with a wonderful ecosystem that included prolific fisheries and clear waters just off the island's beaches. The situation with Pilot Island is much different today. The island is radically changed as a result of the population explosion of double-crested cormorants who nest and roost there. The purpose of this letter is to make USFWS aware of our serious concerns over the current use of Pilot Island as migratory bird breeding ground. A few of the key concerns follow. (References, Support Materials, and Photographs appear in the attachments)

- It looks like a bomb hit Pilot Island. The cormorant guano has become so toxic and extreme that Pilot Island's once beautiful flora and fauna along with the lush vegetation for herons, egrets, colonial water birds, and migrating song birds has been totally destroyed. The only thing left on Pilot Island are stumps, barren trees, weedy invasive plants, 587 herring gull nests, and 3,767 cormorant nests.
- Depending on wind direction and speed, the putrid stench from the cormorant's guano may travel to Plum Island, Detroit Island, Washington Island, Northport, and Northern Door County. USDA states that on a local scale, decreasing property values and reduced tourism and recreation may cause economic losses for area residents and businesses that rely on tourism.
- The Town is concerned that the contaminated soil and attendant surrounding waters is a risk to health and safety as well as to poultry on the Island. In 2016, USFWS reported between 100-500 cormorants died on Pilot Island from Newcastle disease. USFWS has stated that the possible transmission of Newcastle virus from free ranging birds to domestic poultry is a concern. In addition, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) states people can contract Newcastle disease. Symptoms, including conjunctivitis, fever, headache, and malaise, are usually mild and last 3-4 days. Further residents are concerned that E-Coli may be a problem.
- Both sport and commercial fisherman complain about decreased catches. Cormorants eat about one pound of fish a day. Based on these numbers, they consume between 3.8 to 11.3 tons of fish each day

feeding on what use to be one of the best spawning grounds in the Great Lakes. The effect has been a decline in the fishing industry and its attendant tourism boost for Washington Island.

- Cormorants are now seen daily in all harbors on Washington Island. Detroit, Rock, and St. Martins islands are not immune to the cormorant either. This spring season alone, approximately 500 cormorant nests have been destroyed by Fish and Wildlife personnel on Hog Island which lies beside Washington Island. Clearly these birds are undesirable and beginning to spread all over the township. Without very early and aggressive prevention measures they will be difficult to contain. Visitors to Rock Island have to literally walk around the cormorants in order to leave the dock. A sign the cormorant is losing its fear of humans or is sick creating an open door to undesirable roosting in the future.

The Town of Washington includes Washington Island, Rock Island, Detroit Island, Plum Island and Pilot Island. As the Town Board we represent them all. It seems that your department clearly understands the issue with Pilot Island and chooses to study it and report it without taking serious action to resolve it. The Town Board requests that you take immediate action to return Pilot Island to its original state. Eradicating the cormorants from the Island will prevent their accelerated population growth and reduce the current and potential impact on fishing, tourism and the Town's economy. We believe this ounce of prevention, will be well worth the pound of cure required in the future.

Pilot Island should have a much more meaningful and beneficial use for the public. It could provide historical maritime and environmental education as a museum that would quickly communicate the isolated life style Keepers and their families experienced while attending the light during their service.

The Town Board believes this is a reasonable and prudent request, USFWS should take seriously, and act in the Towns best interest. We look forward to your feedback.

Sincerely,



Richard E. Tobey
Town Chairman

2 Attachments

Attachment 1: References

Reference 1: Retired U. S. Coast Guard Officer, June 2019.

Reference 2: Washington Island Residents Feedback, June 2019.

Reference 3: *Habitat Management Plan*, Green Bay and Gravel Island National Wildlife Refuge USFWS, Pages 2-10 and 2-11, October 2017.

Reference 4: United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Last Modified: May 24, 2019.

Reference 5: Virulent Newcastle Disease (vND) Alert - Letter from the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture, May 21, 2019.

Reference 6: Washington Island Residents Feedback, On-Going.

Reference 7: U. S. Department of Interior, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Place Inventory – Nomination Form (approved), November 21, 1983.

Reference 8: *Flora and Vegetation of the Grand Traverse Islands (Lake Michigan), Wisconsin and Michigan, The Michigan Botanist* by Emmet J. Judziewicz, *Conservation Biologist*, Bureau of Endangered Resources Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Madison, WI 53707-7921, Pages 129-130 and Figures 23, 24, and 25. Fall 2001.

Reference 9: *Habitat Management Plan*, Green Bay and Gravel Island National Wildlife Refuge, Page 2-4, October 2017.

Reference 10: *Plan Your Visit*, U. S Fish and Wildlife Service, Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Wisconsin, Last Updated: Mar 21, 2019.

Reference 11: Washington Island Residents Feedback, June 2019.

Reference 12: *Field Notes Entry*, Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge Acquires Plum and Pilot Islands, Midwest Region, U.S Fish and Wildlife, October 17, 20017.

Reference 13: Washington Island Chamber of Commerce Member Comments, Washington Island, Wisconsin. June 2919

Reference 14: U. S. Department of Agriculture Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services Double - crested Cormorants, Issues and Management, Page 17 by Brian S. Dorr, Kristi L. Sullivan Paul D. Curtis, Richard B. Chipman, and Russell D. McCullough, Department of Natural Resources Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 2006

Reference 15: *Habitat Management Plan*, Green Bay and Gravel Island National Wildlife Refuge, Page 2-5, Figure 2.2, October 2017.

Reference 16: University of Nebraska - Lincoln DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln Symposium on Double-Crested Cormorants: Population Status and Management Issues in the Midwest USDA National Wildlife Research Center Symposia. Symposium on Double-Crested Cormorants, Nesting Populations in the United States and Canada By Laura A. Tyson, Jerrold L. Belant, Francesca J. Cuthbert, and D. V. (Chip) Weseloh, Page 17.

Reference 17: Cormorant conundrum, Island habitats feel the pressure as populations of these once-endangered waterbirds grow, Wisconsin Natural Resource Magazine, February 2008.

Reference 18: *Habitat Management Plan*, Green Bay and Gravel Island National Wildlife Refuge, Figure 2-2, Number of nests for waterbird species observed at Pilot Island 2008-2016, October 2017.

Reference 19: Washington Island Residents Feedback, June 2019.

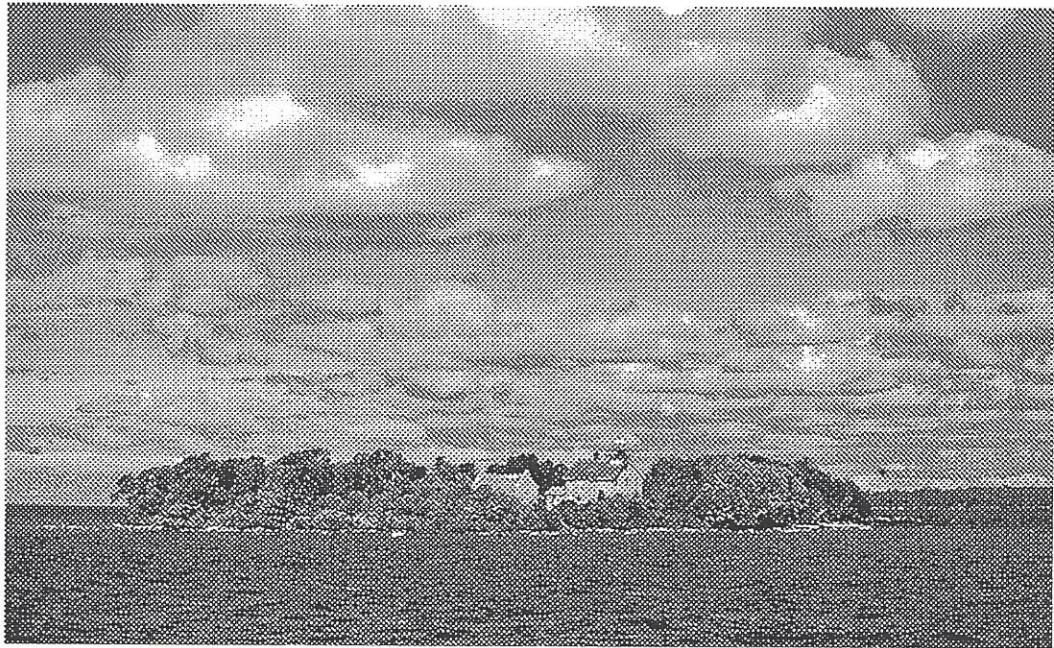
Reference 20: University of Nebraska - Lincoln DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln Wildlife Damage Management Technical Series U.S. Department of Agriculture: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, by Dorr, Brian S.; Sullivan, Kristi L.; Curtis, Paul D.; Chipman, Richard; and McCullough, Russell D., "Double-crested Cormorants" (2016). Wildlife Damage Management Technical Series. 3. Pages 2 and 3, August 2016.

Reference 21: *Habitat Management Plan*, Green Bay and Gravel Island National Wildlife Refuge, Page 2-11, October 2017.

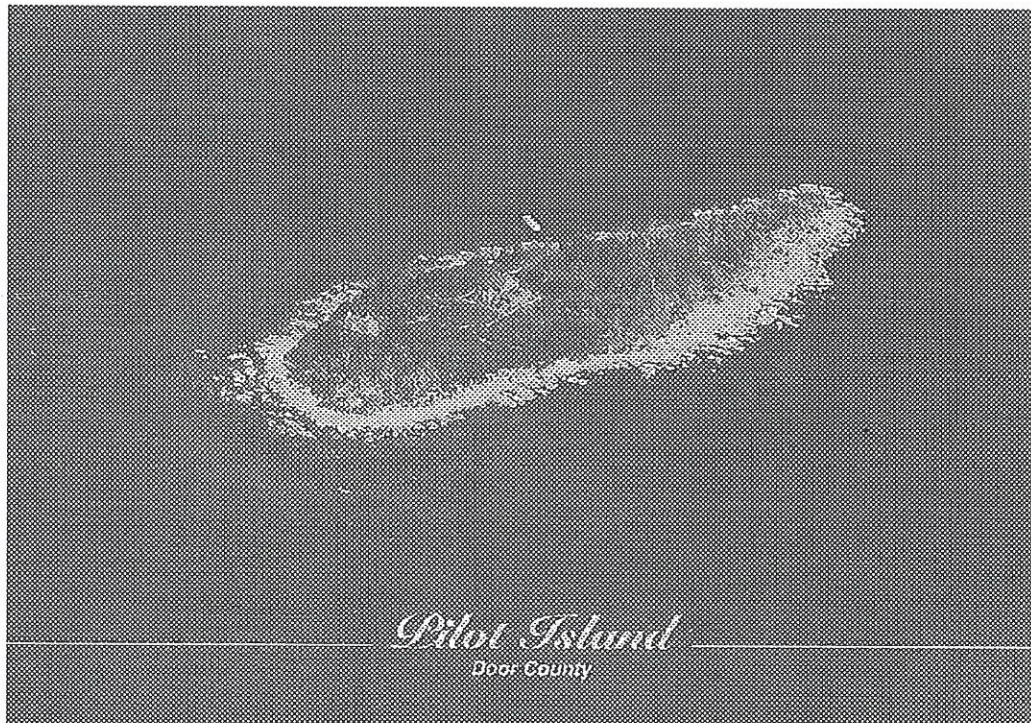
Reference 22: *Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources*, Cormorant conundrum by Jeff Pritzl and Paul Peeters, February 2008

Reference 23: *USFWS Employee Pocket Guide*. Mission Statement. Last updated Mar 27, 2019.

Attachment 2: PILOT ISLAND (ORIGINAL STATE) – BEFORE USFWS OWNERSHIP:

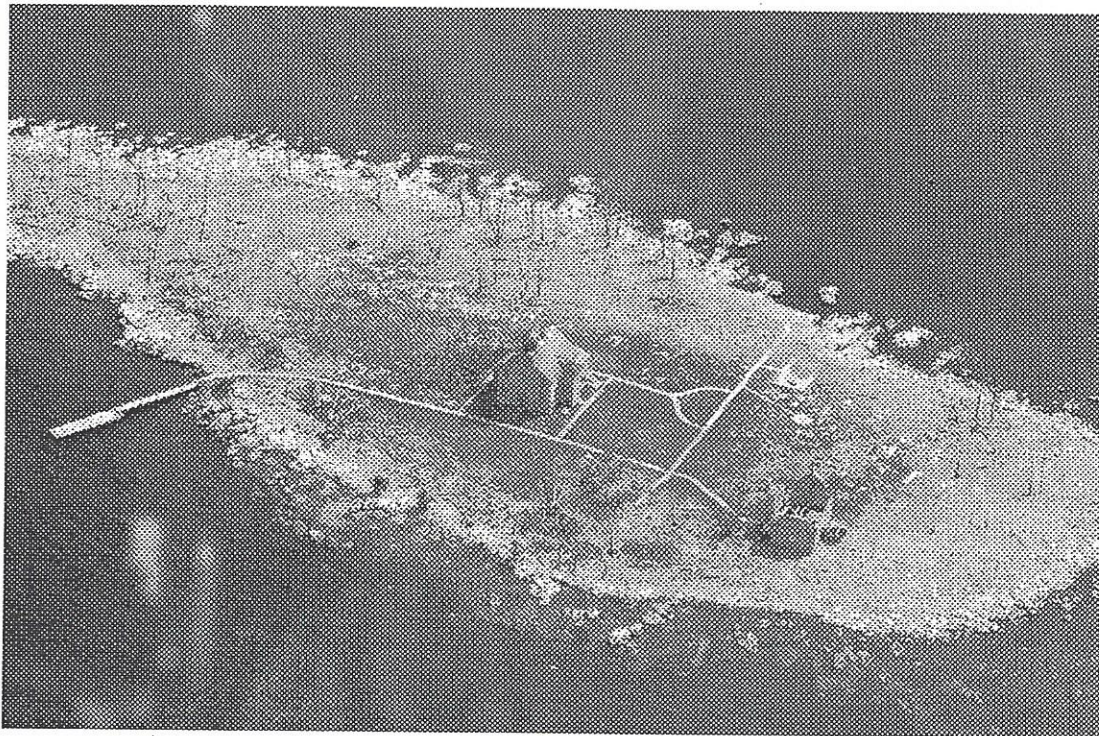


(Source: Washington Island History Page. Circa 1970s)

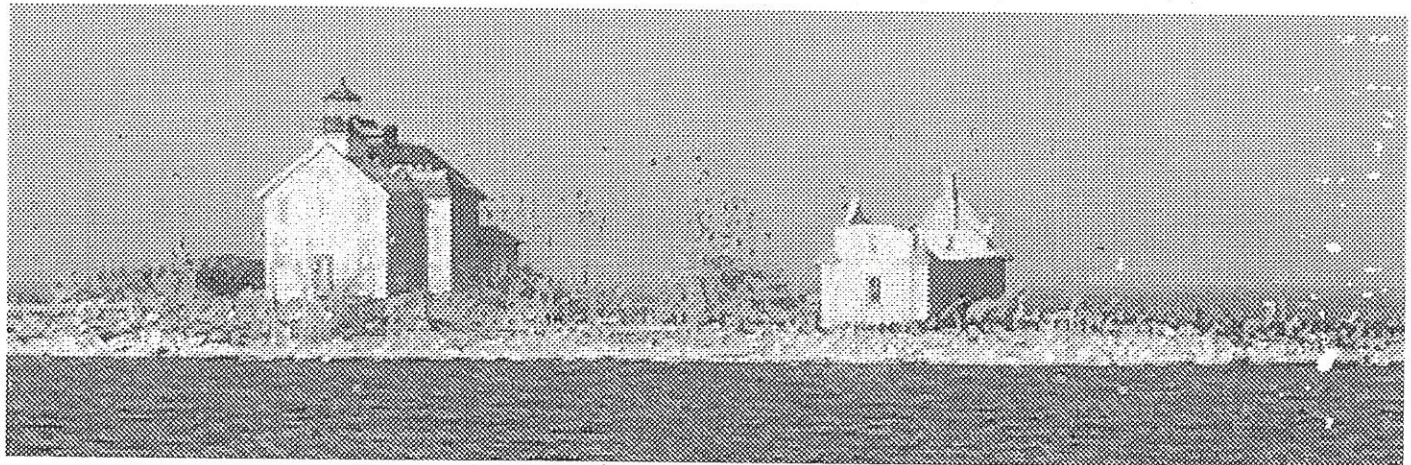


(Source: Post Card from DC Distributions. P.O. Box 290. Sister Bay, WI)

PILOT ISLAND (CURRENT STATE) – AFTER USFWS OWNERSHIP:



(Source: Rip Koken. July 2018)



(Source: Amy Watkins Collection – July 2018))

Pilot Island lighthouse and Fog Signal Building with Cormorant Destruction)