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Hagerty, Karen H MVR

From: Elias Zaharias [elzahari@avalon.net]
Sent: Saturday, January 04, 2003 7:01 PM
To: Johanson, Wayne E; Hagerty, Karen H; Castle, John C; Bollman, Dorene A; Fournier, Ronald
Subject: Muslim Youth Camp

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January 4, 2003

Department of the Army
Rock Island District
Corps of Engineers

Attention: Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division

I have been involved with the proposed Muslim Youth of America project since I first heard of it in the summer of 1999 and I have been in the distribution list since September of that year. I have several concerns and inquiries about this plan but like to start on the 45-day public review period issue.

A copy of a letter dated November 12 signed by Colonel William Bales with content relating to the proposed camp and indicating the duration of the public review period, along with the Zambrana Engineering EA report, was received in November 23, 2002. The **postmark** on the envelope indicates that it was mailed November 19 from Zambrana Engineering, St. Louis MI. Since it has been 43 days from the day I received that information, I expect that my comments in this email will be included along with other emails and letters you received during the Nov. 19-Jan. 3, official time frame for public remarks. December is a very hectic month for me and is only the last few days I had the chance and time to prepare a response and express my criticism for your apparent support of this Muslim camp project. If you dispute my claim that this email is valid for consideration because it was received after the public remarks period expired, I will contest your judgment on the premise that the 45 day public review span started the day I received your documents, not November 19, which is the day they were mailed to me.

29-1

I have been instrumental in helping preserve environmentally sensitive areas in the late 80's and early 90's in Iowa City and Coralville and worked several times with one of your biologists, Mike Hayes, during that period. I am well aware of how easily a natural area can degrade when disturbed by human activity, like construction, simply because of unforeseen consequences or neglect by the contractors to follow the plans carefully. Also, just having too many people trotting about in a natural area is very undesirable because of the detrimental effects this action has on such land. I strongly object to the establishment of the Muslim Youth Camp at the Coralville lake for environmental reasons, and because of other negative impacts such as declared by the Johnson county board of supervisors, and the unacceptable idea of isolating a large public natural area for the benefit of any group of people that plans to use it for religious ceremonies, particularly such that is known to often be intolerant of other religions, and has neither condemned openly and vigorously, nor has apologized for the unspeakable atrocities that followers of the Islamic faith have committed against the West and Christianity for decades. It is preposterous and illogical for the US government to promote a religion that has been in conflict with the Western culture and ideals mainly because this faith is slow in updating its antiquated notions and dogmas.

30-1

7-16

3-10

1/6/2003

Here is a list of questions about the Muslim camp project that I expect to be answered:

- a) Why was a time of the year when most people are very busy and preoccupied with Thanksgiving and the holidays, chosen as the public review period? 29-1
- b) What do you mean by "religious activities"? Have you requested details about such conduct? 3-7
- c) Are religious ceremonies allowed in public lands? The separation of church and state is quite clear in our constitution and official religious engagements at Coralville lake should be a violation of that principle. 7-16
- d) What do you mean by "multi-cultural campers will use the facilities? It sounds misleading to me. 3-8
- e) What was the cost for the EA by Zambrana Engineering and who paid for this study? 33-6
- f) Who will bear the cost for the construction to setup the Muslim youth camp? 3-9
- g) Who will have the responsibility to oversee the operations of the camp at the proposed site and intervene if the land is misused or abused, or if unauthorized activities take place? 3-1

The constitutionality of religious activities on leased federal land will become an issue that I will pursue if the lease application by the MYCA is approved, and may initiate other protests, physical or otherwise.

Please provide me with the list of the people in the US Corps that will make the final decision on the fate of this project, and what choice they made. 33-19

Sincerely

Elias Zaharias