

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4804

ENERGY AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

December 18, 2014

The Honorable Penny Pritzker  
Secretary of Commerce  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

I write with an urgent request on behalf of the National Youth Science Foundation (NYSF), a non-profit organization that means so much to my state of West Virginia. It has been brought to my attention that the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has given the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) the first option to take over operations of the Canaan Valley Institute (CVI) facility in Tucker County, West Virginia. As a result of this action, USFWS is now considering relocating the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge visitor center and administrative headquarters to CVI facility. I oppose this relocation and respectfully request you uphold the 2009 decision by NOAA to allow the NYSF the first right to operate the institute.

As you may know, NYSF and CVI entered into an agreement in 2006 recognizing their shared educational interest. This agreement specifically included language stating that NYSF would have first rights to manage the CVI facility should the institute cease to exist or become an inactive property. Further, NOAA which currently controls the facility, acknowledged this use agreement in 2009 when it approved NYSF's purchase of 111 acres of land near the CVI facility for the planned National Center for Youth Science Education. In light of this, I find it troubling that NOAA seeks to transfer the CVI facility from the Department of Commerce to the Department of the Interior while ignoring the agreement between the institute and NYSF. This action on the part of NOAA creates potential for serious harm to the advancement of STEM education in West Virginia and could eliminate future investments surrounding these state-of-the-art facilities.

The CVI facility is a natural fit for the NYSF's mission to inspire lifelong engagement and ethical leadership in STEM professions. NYSF is determined to enhance and stimulate the interest of students in West Virginia and across the nation to pursue careers in STEM-related fields. The Foundation is actively working with the West Virginia Department of Education to use this facility as a hub for STEM Education across the state, and plans to utilize the site as a part of its renowned National Youth Science Camp. I am confident that if NYSF takes control of operations at the facilities, they will continue to build strong partnerships with supporting

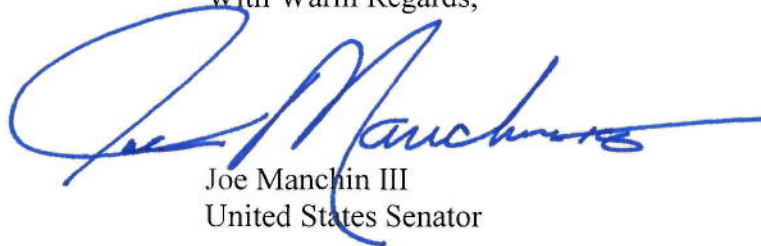
organizations in the area, including the refuge, to deliver the highest-quality math and science education to its students.

The NYSF and Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge each play an important role in Tucker County and our state, and I believe there are opportunities for each entity to experience continued success in the region. The refuge supports key conservation, education, and volunteer initiatives vital to the sustainable protection of the land in Canaan Valley. However, by allowing NYSF to operate the institute, the refuge would have the opportunity to expand its education efforts among the students attending programs sponsored by the foundation. The programs offered by NYSF are an important educational investment in the next generation of innovators and leaders.

The CVI complex is an essential part of the NYSF plan to grow its efforts in Tucker County, and future investments made by NYSF would have a significant economic impact on the area. I urge you to allow the National Youth Science Foundation to take control of the Canaan Valley Institute facility in question, and encourage U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services to work with local officials in Tucker County to find a location that better suits the needs of the refuge.

Please feel free to contact Lance West, a member of my staff, if you have any questions. He can be reached at 202-228-6688 or [lance\\_west@manchin.senate.gov](mailto:lance_west@manchin.senate.gov). Thank you so much for your time and I look forward to your response.

With Warm Regards,

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

Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator

CC:

Dr. Kathryn Sullivan

Edward Horton

Dan Ashe, USFWS

Wendi Weber

Ron Hollis

Judge Ron Pearson

Dr. Andrew Blackwood

The Honorable Earl Ray Tomblin

Dr. Michael Martirano

The Tucker County Commission

The Tucker County Chamber of Commerce

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito

The Honorable David McKinley

The Charleston Gazette

The Parsons Advocate