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STEVEN ENGLEBRIGHT
4th Assembly District
Suffolk County

NYSDEC Bureau of Wildlife
Swan Management Plan
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4754

February 21, 2014

I write to express my strong opposition to the proposal being considered by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to eradicate the free-ranging mute swan population throughout the state by 2025.

Mute swans are familiar year-round residents of our local ponds and coastal waterways in the 4th Assembly District on the north shore of the Town of Brookhaven. Their annual courtship, nesting and cygnet-rearing are beloved and eagerly-awaited events. In spring, photographs of mute swans and their young are posted on the front pages of our local newspapers. In fact, observation of this very visible bird species is a valuable portal into the world of nature for many New York families, especially children whose connection with the natural world is essential to the future stewardship of our natural environment.

The proposal to kill all mute swans by 2025 has created a sense of shock and outrage among constituents in my district.

Prior to this proposal, my district office has never received a single complaint about mute swan nuisance behavior or degradation of the environment. I have had a number of calls over the years regarding concern for nesting swans being harmed by dogs or bothered by unsupervised teenagers.

After reviewing draft management proposal, it appears that any threat from New York's mute swan populations is largely speculative. Swan populations in our State are relatively small, totally a mere 2,200 individuals in 3 regional populations on Long Island, the Hudson valley and Lake Ontario. The Long Island and Hudson populations are currently either steady or in decline and the Lake Ontario population has less than 200 individuals. These stable or small mute swan populations hardly call out for the drastic measure of killing them all.

Additionally, in regard to the non-native argument for eradication, it is inconsistent and inappropriate for the DEC to propose to eliminate an animal such as the mute swan because it is non-native, yet support a rear-and-release hunting program for the Ring-necked pheasant, also a non-native bird, without scientific study on how the pheasant may affect protected ground birds such as grouse and bobwhites.

In conclusion, I request that the proposal to eliminate mute swans be denied. Further, due to the long-term stability of mute swan populations within Long Island, and of the decline of populations in the Hudson Valley, I request that a regional approach to mute swan management which protects these two populations.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Steve Englebright