

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE .

December 4, 1974

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

Ten years ago, acting with great wisdom, the Congress enacted and President Johnson signed into law the historic Wilderness Act of 1964.

That act declared it to be the policy of this Nation to secure for all Americans the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness. Some 9.1 million acres were officially designated as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System, and the Executive Branch was charged with the responsibility of surveying the rest of the country and proposing additions to that system which seemed appropriate.

In the intervening years, there have been some 40 additions, so that the Wilderness System now covers 12.9 million acres and extends into many different States.

Today we reach another milestone in this unfolding story. The Executive Branch has now completed the initial, decade-long review prescribed by law in 1964, and as a result of this survey, I am hereby proposing 37 new additions to the Wilderness System. If accepted by the Congress, these recommendations would add an additional nine million primeval acres to the system.

Wilderness areas are, of course, well suited for low density recreation use that does not involve motorized vehicles or equipment, such as hiking, backpacking, primitive camping, and canoeing. They also lend themselves to scientific and educational uses which do not alter their pristine character. But beyond these uses, I believe that the Wilderness System serves a basic need of all Americans, even those who may never visit a wilderness area -- the preservation of a vital element in our heritage.

As we approach the Nation's two hundredth birthday, it is well to remember that we are a pioneering people. For our ancestors, the ability to live in rugged, undeveloped countryside was often a matter of survival. The influential American historian Frederick Jackson Turner considered the frontier -- the invisible but very real barrier between civilization and wilderness -- to be the dominant force in shaping the American character. American writers from James Fenimore Cooper to Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner have recognized and depicted the almost religious regard which Americans have for their wild places and creatures. Throughout our history, we have felt a need for rugged interaction with nature, for the solitude and the self-reliance that a wilderness experience can foster.

We have tamed and developed much of our original wilderness endowment, but a surprisingly large amount of it is left. The preservation of wilderness areas across the country today enables us to recapture a vital part of the national experience: like our forebears, we can journey

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into primeval, unspoiled land. The Nation as a whole is enriched by the availability of the wilderness experience to those who are able and willing to seek it. Wilderness preservation insures that a central facet of our Nation can still be realized, not just remembered.

Briefly described, the additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System which I am proposing today are:

- (1) Mount Rainier Wilderness, Mount Rainier National Park, Washington -- 210,700 acres. The ice-clad, dormant volcano after which this park is named towers above the landscape. The park serves as a habitat for deer, bear, elk, and mountain goats.
- (2) Kenai Wilderness, Kenai National Moose Range, Alaska -- 829,000 acres. This is a diverse area near Anchorage which contains scenic mountains, glaciers, low-land lakes, forests, muskegs, and rivers. The range's wide variety of wildlife includes black and brown bear and the Kenai moose.
- (3) Cloud Peak Wilderness, Bighorn National Forest, Wyoming -- 150,490 acres. This proposed wilderness stretches some 27 miles along the backbone of the Bighorn Mountain Range and includes the rugged, Cloud Peak and Black Tooth Mountain.
- (4) Agassiz Wilderness, Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge, Minnesota -- 4,000 acres. Located on prehistoric Lake Agassiz, this area provides nesting grounds for the Canada goose and several species of ducks, as well as a habitat for moose, white-tailed deer, and elk.
- (5) Sheldon Wilderness, Sheldon National Antelope Refuge, Nevada -- 20,100 acres. This refuge in the high sagebrush desert of the northern Great Basin is devoted primarily to the preservation of antelope but also supports deer, bighorn sheep, coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions and burros.
- (6) Monarch Wilderness, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests, California -- 30,689 acres. This proposed area is located on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, contiguous to Kings Canyon National Park. The landscape is characterized by steep ridges, deep canyons, and multicolored geological formations.
- (7) Santee Wilderness, Santee National Wildlife Refuge, South Carolina -- 163 acres. This area is composed of coastal plains which protect such threatened species as the wood ibis, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, red-cockaded woodpecker, osprey, and American alligator.
- (8) Everglades Wilderness, Everglades National Park, Florida -- 1,296,500 acres. A remarkable blending of climates makes this proposed area at the southernmost tip of the Florida mainland hospitable to pine trees as well as mangroves, panthers, and alligators.
- (9) Salmon River and Idaho Wildernesses, Boise, Challis, Payette, Salmon, Bitterroot, and Nezperce National Forests, Idaho -- 1,143,487 acres. Bighorn sheep, deer, and elk abound in this region of deep gorges and lofty peaks.

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(10) Parker River Wilderness, Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Massachusetts -- 3,110 acres. This recommended area on the north shore of the State, about 35 miles from Boston, is one of the few natural barrier beach-dune areas remaining in the northeastern United States.

(11) Hawaii Volcanoes Wilderness, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii -- 123,100 acres. Two major active volcanoes, Kilauea and Mauna Loa, are the focal points of this park. Kilauea erupts frequently and is readily accessible at protected vantage points. Thus, this area is particularly rich in the scientific and educational opportunities envisaged by the Wilderness Act.

(12) Big Lake Wilderness, Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Arkansas -- 1,818 acres. Believed to be the product of an earthquake in the 1800's, the lake supports a peak population of 30,000 waterfowl during the winter. The proposed wilderness is a cypress-timbered area that has remained in its natural state.

(13) Aleutian Islands Wilderness, Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska -- 1,395,357 acres. Located among the islands that stretch from the Alaska mainland along a thousand-mile chain toward the Soviet Union, this area is the principal home of the sea otter and a habitat for large numbers of pelagic birds (those which have the furlike outer coat of a mammal).

(14) Beartooth Wilderness, Custer, and Gallatin National Forests, Montana -- 542,437 acres. This area is characterized by spectacular river canyons and treeless tundras at elevations of about 10,000 feet. Moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and black and grizzly bears are among the area's wildlife.

(15) Swanquarter Wilderness, Swanquarter National Wildlife Refuge, North Carolina -- 9,000 acres. In addition to accommodating more than 200 species of birds, this island refuge serves as the northernmost range of the endangered American alligators.

(16) Dinosaur Wilderness, Dinosaur National Monument, Utah and Colorado -- 165,341 acres. This national monument is the site of the most extensive concentration of dinosaur fossils found anywhere in the world and serves as a habitat for mountain lions and bighorn sheep.

(17) Lacassine Wilderness, Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge, Louisiana -- 2,854 acres. Among the striking birds and animals which use this refuge, located some 25 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, are ibises, roseate spoonbills, armadillo, otter, white-tailed deer, and alligators.

(18) Popo Agie Wilderness, Shoshone National Forest, Wyoming -- 81,820 acres. This area consists of deep, narrow valleys and canyons set along a 25-mile stretch of the lofty Southern Wind River Range. Elk, moose, mule deer, bighorn sheep, black bear, and a variety of smaller mammals and birds inhabit the area.

(19) Mattamuskeet Wilderness, Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge, North Carolina -- 590 acres. Consisting of a lake, islands, and marshy shoreline about 50 miles northwest of Cape Hatteras, this refuge is operated for such birds as the bald eagle, red-cockaded woodpecker, and osprey.

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- (20) Organ Pipe Cactus Wilderness, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Arizona -- 299,600 acres. The cactus forests and creosote-bush flats of this rugged, Sonoran desert area support 43 species of mammals, 39 species of birds, and nearly 50 species of reptiles.
- (21) J.N. "Ding" Darling Wilderness, J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Florida -- 2,735 acres. Sanibel, a tropical island in the Gulf of Mexico, is the site of this refuge, which provides habitats for several endangered birds, mammals and reptiles.
- (22) Trinity Alps Wilderness, Klamath, Shasta-Trinity, and Six Rivers National Forests, California -- 267,561 acres. At the highest reaches, permanent snowfields and small glaciers dominate the landscape; at lower elevations dense stands of trees and patches of wild flowers clothe the mountain ridges. Black bear, mountain lions, and black-tail deer are the area's major animals.
- (23) Assateague Island Wilderness, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and Assateague Island National Seashore, Maryland and Virginia -- 1,740 acres. The dunes and marsh lands of this area serve a variety of wildlife, including the endangered Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel, the white-tail deer, red fox, raccoon, sika deer, and the Chincoteague pony.
- (24) Death Valley Wilderness, Death Valley National Monument, California and Nevada -- 1,908,000 acres. Despite the seeming barrenness of this area, where rainfall averages less than 2 inches a year, life flourishes here in a tribute to nature's adaptability. Even fish have managed to cling to life in the parched valley: two species of pupfish inhabit desert springs.
- (25) Cedar Island Wilderness, Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge, North Carolina -- 180 acres. The salt marsh and islands here constitute a developing habitat for waterfowl.
- (26) Fort Niobrara Wilderness, Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, Nebraska -- 4,635 acres. The high grazing lands and rolling plains of this refuge are managed primarily to support herds of American bison, elk and Texas longhorns.
- (27) Medicine Lake Wilderness, Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Montana -- 11,366 acres. A large portion of this refuge consists of lakes and ponds; the peak fall population of waterfowl using the area frequently exceeds a quarter of a million birds.
- (28) Great Smoky Mountains Wilderness, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, North Carolina and Tennessee -- 390,500 acres. Beneath the smokelike haze that envelops these mountains and gives them their name lies an impressive array of unspoiled forests. Among the animals found in the park are black bear, white-tailed deer, wild hogs, and 27 different kinds of salamanders.

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(29) Big Blue, Courthouse Mountain, Dolores Peak, Mount Sneffels and Mount Wilson Wildernesses, San Juan and Uncompaghre National Forests, Colorado -- 80,130 acres. This area is characterized by high, jagged peaks and deep, narrow canyons interspersed with forested and alpine grassland ridges. The largest wildlife species indigenous to it include elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, bear and mountain lion.

(30) Lake Woodruff Wilderness, Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge, Florida -- 1,106 acres. This proposed area is located along the flood plain of the St. Johns River, one of the few large northerly-flowing rivers in the United States. Among the remarkable variety of wildlife found here are threatened species such as the Everglades kite, Southern bald eagle, Florida sandhill crane, manatee, Florida panther, and American alligator.

(31) Anaho Island Wilderness, Anaho Island National Wildlife Refuge, Nevada -- 747.73 acres. The island is a sanctuary for a multitude of birds, including the largest nesting colony of white pelicans on the continent.

(32) Noxubee Wilderness, Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, Mississippi -- 1,200 acres. Consisting of flat and slightly rolling hardwood and pine lands, the refuge provides habitats for the Canada goose, such rare birds as the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and southern bald eagle, and a good-sized herd of white-tailed deer.

(33) UL Bend Wilderness, UL Bend National Wildlife Refuge, Montana -- 19,693 acres. Located along the Missouri River's Fort Peck Reservoir, this refuge is primarily a habitat for migratory waterfowl. Among the land birds found here is the unique burrowing owl, which nests in abandoned "dwellings" in prairie dog towns.

(34) Pea Island Wilderness, Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, North Carolina -- 180 acres. A part of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, this refuge is a winter spot for greater snow geese, Canada geese, brant, and many species of duck.

(35) Bombay Hook Wilderness, Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, Delaware -- 2,000 acres. This salt marsh estuary serves as a habitat for migratory waterfowl and such other birds as the endangered southern bald eagle and peregrine falcon.

(36) Back Bay Wilderness, Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Virginia -- 2,165 acres. A focal point along the Atlantic Flyway, the refuge is the winter home of up to 40,000 Canada geese per year and the rare Ipswich Savannah sparrow.

(37) In addition, the first wilderness area -- the Gila Wilderness -- in New Mexico, would be enlarged by the addition of 115,648 acres.

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Three other areas -- Kofa Game Range, Arizona; Charles Sheldon Antelope Range, Nevada and Oregon; and Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Range, Montana -- contain surface lands suitable for wilderness designation. However, because the areas are open to mining and may contain minerals vital to the national interest and because they have not been subjected to thorough mineral surveys, I am recommending that action on these proposals be deferred pending the completion of such surveys.

In addition, Lake Mead National Recreation area, contains surface lands suitable for wilderness designation. However, virtually the entire area is subject to withdrawals for power purposes. In view of the potential energy needs of the West, I cannot recommend that any part of the area be designated wilderness at this time. I have directed that the area be given additional study and that a further recommendation be submitted within three years.

Finally, Nunivak National Wildlife Refuge also contains surface lands suitable for wilderness designation. Because of the uncertainties of land ownership and their future management which is peculiar to Nunivak, I cannot recommend that any part be designated wilderness at this time. I have directed that future recommendations be guided by native land uses and native land selections pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

After a review of roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more and roadless islands, the Secretary of the Interior has concluded that four areas are not suitable for preservation as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. These are: Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, Oregon and Idaho; Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, Maryland; Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky; and Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois. As to the latter two areas, however, I am directing that a wilderness reevaluation be conducted at such time as management prerogatives and other prospective uses of the areas are better defined.

In addition to this message, I am transmitting herewith to the Congress letters and reports from the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture regarding these proposals. I concur with the recommendation of the respective Secretary in each case.

As noted above, the Executive Branch has now carried out the original provisions of the 1964 Wilderness Act. Additional surveys will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis, but the Congress now has before it the major recommendations of the Executive Branch, as compiled over a 10-year period. I urge the Congress to give early and favorable consideration to all of these proposals.

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Concurrent with the wilderness proposals, I am also transmitting the Tenth Annual Report on the Status of the National Wilderness Preservation System which covers calendar year 1973.

GERALD R. FORD

December 4, 1974
THE WHITE HOUSE,

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