

OCTOBER 12, 1974

Office of the White House Press Secretary

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NOTICE TO THE PRESS

The President has signed H. R. 11546--Big Thicket National Preserve, Texas--which establishes the Big Thicket National Preserve in Texas and authorizes appropriations of not more than \$63,812,000 and \$7,000,000 for land acquisition and development, respectively.

H. R. 11546 will establish the Big Thicket National Preserve in Texas comprising about 84,550 acres to be administered as a unit of the National Park System by the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary will be authorized to acquire lands and waters by donation, purchase or exchange although State or other public lands could be acquired only by donation. After notifying the Congressional Interior Committees, the Secretary could administer certain donated lands which are located outside the preserve as an integral component of the preserve. The bill expresses the intent of the Congress that the Secretary should substantially complete the land acquisition within six years of enactment and within one year of enactment requires the Secretary to submit to Congress a detailed acquisition program covering the subsequent five years.

The Secretary will be prohibited in most cases from acquiring the mineral estate in any property or existing easements for public utilities, pipelines, or railroads without the consent of the owner. However, he will be allowed to issue regulations designed to maintain the ecological integrity of the preserve including those pertaining to the control of mineral exploration and extraction, road construction, the use of motorized vehicles, and grazing and agriculture.

Owners of improved property could reserve a right of use and occupancy, but in doing so would be deemed to have waived their rights for relocation benefits. Hunting, fishing, and trapping within the preserve will generally be allowed in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws. Within five years of enactment, the Secretary will be required to report to the President his recommendations as to the suitability of any area within the preserve for preservation as wilderness

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