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CONSERVATION COMMISSION AUTHORIZES TWO NEW NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

Development of two new national wildlife refuges in Nevada and Oregon with a total of more than 10,000 acres has been approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall, Commission chairman, said today. A third new wildlife area in Idaho was approved pending favorable action by the State.

Action on two other areas was postponed until the next meeting of the Commission. One of these is the proposed Wabash Refuge in Indiana. The other is the Pee Dee in North Carolina.

The proposed Wabash National Wildlife Refuge, a 9,800 acre area about 10 miles from Terre Haute, which had been approved by Governor Matthew E. Welsh of Indiana and the State Fish and Game Department, was discussed but action was delayed until the next meeting of the Commission at the request of Senators Vance Hartke and Birch E. Bayh and Congressmen Richard L. Roudebush and William G. Bray, all of Indiana. The Commission agreed to the delay to give interested individuals and groups more time to consider the project and weigh its advantages. The proposed refuge would be in the heart of once-famous waterfowl hunting grounds. The refuge would provide a resting place for migrating Canada geese and would be especially important in the distribution of the Mississippi flock of Canada geese.

The proposed 11,440-acre Pee Dee area of North Carolina is in Anson and Richmond Counties and lies along the Pee Dee River. It is about 50 miles east of Charlotte, in the central piedmont, and would be an important addition to the Atlantic Flyway. In the past, large numbers of waterfowl used the Pee Dee area, but as agricultural activity increased the waterfowl use declined considerably. It is expected that if the refuge is developed it will provide a minimum of six million waterfowl-use days each year. Operations would include farming the agricultural part of the refuge, developing temporary reservoirs in the timbered bottomlands, and the construction of three impoundments to provide open-water resting areas.

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Development of the two new refuges just authorized, Pahranagat, in Nevada, and Willamette, in Oregon, will be made over a period of time by the Department's Fish and Wildlife Service. Funds for land purchases come from the sale of duck stamps or from a Congressional loan fund which is to be repaid later from duck stamp receipts. Pahranagat has 4,826 acres, Willamette, 5,371.

The Commission also approved the addition of 9,352 acres to four existing refuges. They are: Brigantine, New Jersey, 100 acres; Mississquoi, Vermont, 500 acres; Patuxent, Maryland, 355 acres; and Noxubee, Mississippi, 8,397 acres. The Commission also approved a new purchase price for 320 acres for the Delevan National Wildlife Refuge in California and 6,000 acres for the Ouray Refuge in Utah. Of the Ouray total, 1,146 acres will be leased.

The Pahranagat Refuge is in the lower Pahranagat Valley in Lincoln County, Nevada, about 75 miles south of Las Vegas. It is in a relatively well-watered valley in an important waterfowl lane, halfway between Salt Lake Valley and the Gulf of California. The principal water areas are Upper and Lower Pahranagat Lakes. Several seasonal impoundments will be developed. Grazing will be continued as a management practice necessary to maintain range and pasture lands in optimum condition for waterfowl use. Peak populations of 30,000 ducks are expected.

The Willamette Refuge, in the heart of Willamette Valley seven miles south of Corvallis, Oregon, will be an important wintering ground for the western Canada goose which nests in the Copper River country in Alaska. Recent inventories indicate that of a total population of 21,000 geese of this species, 14,000 winter in Willamette Valley. About 2,000 acres will be planted to rye grass, clover, sudan grass and field corn for waterfowl use. Another 1,000 acres will be ponded in low areas by a series of check dams. Pasture areas to provide green feed for the Canada geese will be developed and maintained. In addition to the geese great numbers of mallards, pintails and other ducks use the area. The whistling swan is common to the Willamette.

In addition to Secretary Udall, members of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission are Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman; Secretary of Commerce Luther H. Hodges; United States Senator Roman L. Hruska of Nebraska; United States Senator Lee Metcalf of Montana; Congressman Frank L. Karsten of Missouri; and Congressman Leon H. Gavin of Pennsylvania.

Ex officio members for the meeting in Washington D. C., were Donald E. Foltz, Director, Indiana Department of Conservation; Stuart Critcher, Federal Aid Coordinator, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission; John E. Phelps, Assistant Director, Utah Department of Fish and Game; George W. Davis, Commissioner, Vermont Fish and Game Commission; Wayne E. Kirch, Chariman, Nevada Fish and Game Commission; John McKean, Chief, Division of Game, Oregon Game Commission; and Ernest A. Vaughn, Director, Maryland Department of Game and Inland Fish.

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