



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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NEW REGULATIONS AFFORD BETTER PROTECTION TO CRITICAL WILDLIFE AREAS, INTERIOR DEPARTMENT LAWYER TESTIFIES

New regulations governing oil and gas leasing on wildlife refuges are designed to afford better protection to critical wildlife areas, an Interior Department lawyer testified today.

The new regulations, adopted December 2, 1955, replace a 1947 regulation which was not considered a permanent answer at the time it was adopted, Donald J. Chaney, Acting Assistant Solicitor, said in a statement prepared for delivery before the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries.

Chaney said the new regulations reflect a determination to set aside immediately those areas on which it was reasonably certain that oil operations would interfere materially with wildlife purposes.

Remaining lands are classified into categories on which oil and gas development might be permitted under special conditions or might be permitted under the terms and conditions of the normal oil and gas lease, he added.

Under the 1947 regulation an oil and gas lease would issue automatically if the operator met certain minimum conditions, as was done in several instances, he declared.

Chaney, who has handled legal matters pertaining to the Fish and Wildlife Service for the past 16 years, told the committee that legislation dealing with wildlife refuges shows that Congress intended multiple use of these areas, including oil and gas leasing.

"At no point in the history of the acts relating to the administration of wildlife refuges is there any reference to complete isolation of an area from secondary use," he said.

"It is clear," he added, "that Congress intended multiple use of the areas acquired for wildlife conservation, which multiple use included the disposition of products of the soil and of the grant of privileges on the various areas.

"It also is clear that Congress realized the impact on local communities of the withdrawal or acquisition of lands by the United States and attempted to provide some means by which the economy of the immediate locality would not be unduly disturbed.

"It is under this authorization that the Fish and Wildlife Service has established its grazing, sharecropping, and other operations...and economic utilization not directly connected with the management of the area but at the same time compatible with the primary purpose of the area...Under this authorization the Secretary of the Interior could and did issue oil and gas leases."

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