



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

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#### ARMY USE OF WICHITA MOUNTAINS REFUGE RESOLVED

The discussions over the Army's use of a portion of the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge as an artillery and rocket range now have been concluded and agreement reached, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler said today.

The issue was concluded when Under Secretary of the Army Charles C. Finucane approved on September 6 the agreement which both he and Mr. Leffler had previously tentatively outlined. Assistant Secretary Leffler had already signed the document.

The terms of the agreement are substantially the same as those announced last February when tentative agreement was reached. There are some minor modifications which were mutually agreed to after an on-the-spot inspection by the Army and United States Fish and Wildlife Service officials.

Secretary Leffler expressed satisfaction in having the matter finally resolved. He praised the attitude of the Army officials, headed by Under Secretary Finucane, who reviewed the settlement plan, and conservation agencies for the role they played in solving the problem.

Originally the Army asked for 10,700 acres of the refuge as a permanent addition to the Ft. Sill artillery range. The agreement as it now stands provides that the Army may use, when needed, 3,600 acres of the refuge, the area to be a buffer zone with firing only along the outer boundary of the buffer zone and with impact on Ft. Sill itself. In this way, about 200 buffalo and numerous other species of wild game will have use of the area for grazing and feeding purposes.

The Army will relocate Elk Springs and Pecan Springs campgrounds to places selected by the Service and will provide suitable access roads to the new camp areas. Boulder Camp and the public use facilities at Post Oak and Treasure Lakes will not be affected by the Army use of the area. State Highway 49 will be kept open at all times except when the firing problem is such that there might be actual danger in using the road.

The agreement also provides for general safety precautions to assure all possible protection against accidents, for the prevention of fires and for the prohibition of hunting on refuge grounds. Other provisions assure refuge employees access to the buffer area when necessary to carry out their duties.

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