



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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NEW REGULATIONS PROPOSED FOR OIL AND GAS LEASING ON WILDLIFE LANDS

A new policy restricting oil and gas leasing on Federal wildlife lands would be the result of proposed regulations announced today by Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton. The regulations would forbid leasing on certain wildlife lands.

The proposed regulations would establish Departmental-wide policy and procedures dealing with oil and gas leasing on public lands reserved for wildlife conservation purposes.

They will be published in the Federal Register after which there will be a period of 30 days during which interested persons may submit any comments on the proposed rules. Written statements may be submitted in triplicate to the Director, Bureau of Land Management, United States Department of the Interior, Washington 25, D. C.

"The new regulations show the value which we believe ought to be placed on our country's wildlife resources," Secretary Seaton said.

Secretary Seaton stated that the regulations recognize four separate classes of wildlife lands. These include wildlife refuges, game ranges, Alaska wildlife areas, and Federal-State cooperative lands. The latter category includes lands made available to the States through joint agreements between the Federal government and State game commissions.

Under the proposed regulations, all oil and gas leasing would be forbidden on wildlife refuge lands under complete jurisdiction of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, except where the Government has determined that the lands are being drained of oil and gas by nearby wells. If the Geological Survey, an agency of the Department of the Interior, determines that those lands are subject to oil drainage from operations on adjacent lands, the Bureau of Land Management may, upon concurrence of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, process an offering inviting competitive bidding. Leases for such lands would be issued only upon approval of the Secretary of the Interior and would contain such stipulations as are necessary to assure that activities on oil and gas development would not damage wildlife resources. There are an estimated 4,418,000 acres of wildlife refuge lands in the continental United States.

On game range lands, the administration of which is carried out jointly by the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service, it would be the responsibility of these two agencies to determine any areas that would not be subject to oil and gas leasing. Under the proposed regulations these special areas would be treated the same as lands in an established wildlife refuge. The remaining lands in each game range would be open to oil and gas leasing under such conditions as are determined necessary to insure that leasing activities and drilling will not interfere with the value of lands for game range purposes. Under the regulations any areas that are closed to oil and gas leasing within a game range will be shown on maps available to the public. Game ranges embrace an estimated 4,616,000 acres.

Oil and gas leasing on Federal-State cooperative lands and on Alaska wildlife areas would be handled under the same principles as game range lands. Any areas in which leasing would be forbidden, except when there is drainage present, would be determined by the agencies having jurisdiction over the lands. The remaining lands in these areas would be open to oil and gas leasing under such stipulations as are deemed necessary to protect wildlife resources. There are approximately 502,000 acres in Federal-State cooperative areas and about 7,885,000 acres within Alaska wildlife areas.

Oil and gas leasing on Federal wildlife lands has been the subject of extensive study by the Secretary of the Interior and by the other Government agencies involved. New oil and gas leasing operations on Federal wildlife lands have been held up pending the development and formal approval of the new proposed regulations.

A copy of the proposed regulations, as they were ordered published, is attached.

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