



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SECRETARY SEATON ESTABLISHES 1.8 MILLION ACRE  
KUSKOKWIM NATIONAL WILDLIFE RANGE IN ALASKA

Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton today announced establishment of the 1.8 million acre Kuskokwim National Wildlife Range in western Alaska. Today's action makes final withdrawal steps initiated in 1948.

The Kuskokwim National Wildlife Range is located in the Yukon-Kuskokwim River delta in western Alaska. It extends across the great flat marsh and tundra from the mouth of the Kinak River north to Hooper Bay and east to Dall Lake and the head of Faird Inlet. The area will be one of the Nation's largest wildlife conservation areas.

Secretary Seaton said the area is probably the greatest waterfowl breeding ground on the North American Continent. The area contributes many thousands of birds to the Pacific Flyway and is the breeding and nesting grounds for waterfowl which are the object of sportsmen all along the Pacific Coast.

In addition to waterfowl, the area also supports red and white foxes, mink, otter, and muskrat. It is mostly an uninhabited, brackish area with a few patches of low willows and many miles of marshy, wet tundra. Secretary Seaton explained that establishment of the Range would in no way affect the right of the natives in the area to hunt, fish, trap and carry on their other normal activities. The lands, however, will be closed to all forms of disposition under the public land laws. Mining and mineral leasing will still be permitted, though any oil and gas exploration and development would be carried out under protection of the Department's wildlife land leasing rules pertaining to Alaska wildlife areas.

Funds for development, operation and maintenance of this and other new wildlife management areas in Alaska will be requested from the next Congress.

Establishment of the Kuskokwim National Wildlife Range culminated years of effort to guarantee preservation of this vital link in the Pacific Flyway system. The 2,924 square miles included in the Range represent the minimum area required to assure the long-term conservation of the valuable waterfowl breeding and nesting grounds, the Secretary said. State-owned inland navigable water areas are not included in the Range. Furthermore, the Range does not include any lands or waters granted to the State of Alaska by virtue of the Alaska Statehood Act.

This Kuskokwim area was the subject of a public hearing in Bethel, Alaska, in 1956. At the hearing many local residents expressed concern about establishing the Range, fearing that it would seriously impair the livelihood of the natives who hunt, fish and trap there. The order creating the Range specifically protects the natives' rights to continue these activities as in the past.

A complete description of the affected area and the specific terms of the actual order will be published in the Federal Register.

A map showing the general location of the wildlife Range is attached.

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KUSKOKWIM NATIONAL  
WILDLIFE RANGE

ALASKA

