

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIO

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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INTERIOR SEEKS DESIGNATION OF 1,265,000 PUBLIC LAND ACRES AS WILDLIFE REFUGE AREAS

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall announced today that action has been initiated to set aside about 1,265,000 acres of public lands in Alaska as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The lands involved would pass from administration by Interior's Bureau of Land Management to the Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Applications to change their designation are being published in the Federal Register. Final approval could take place after 30 days have elapsed.

It was emphasized that the public land orders would not prejudice land claims of Alaska's Natives--the Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts.

"These two areas are of matchless importance to our efforts to preserve some of the most remarkable birds and mammals of the North American Continent," Udall said. The actions have been discussed with President Johnson and have his full approval, Udall added.

Upon final approval, the areas--both fronting on the Bering Sea in remote western Alaska--would be redesignated as follows:

Cape Newenham National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska, a 265,000-acre peninsula jutting into the Bering Sea encompassing rocky islands, coastal cliffs and tundra, tumbling rivers and interior mountains. Its inaccessible cliffs hold what may be the greatest bird city on the American mainland--1,000,000 or more nesting murres, puffins and kittiwakes. Vast eelgrass beds in the shallow bays feed countless brant, geese and ducks. Land birds are also plentiful. Mammals include grizzly bears, seals and sea lions. Spectacular runs of salmon swim the rivers. In all, it is considered a showcase of Arctic wildlife at its varied best.

Clarence Rhode National Wildlife Range, Alaska (existing area of 1,800,000 acres, being augmented by about 1,000,000 acres). Four proposed additions include some of the greatest waterfowl and shorebird nesting grounds in North America. Also fronting on the Bering Sea, these remote tundra regions are nesting resorts of much of the total population of black brant, white-fronted geese, cackling geese and emperor geese. They also help support whistling swans, sandhill cranes, and many ducks, including the spectacled eider. Shorebirds which migrate as far as South America also summer there.

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