

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PUBLIC HEARINGS SCHEDULED ON WILDERNESS PROPOSALS IN THREE STATES

Public hearings to discuss results of wilderness studies involving national wildlife refuge areas are scheduled in Alaska, Arizona, and California in December, the Interior Department announced today.

Specific times and the areas involved are:

- I. Unimak Island, Alaska, 965,042 acres, hearing Dec. 14 at 9 a.m. in the Comserfac Theatre, Cold Bay, Alaska, continued Dec. 17 in the Alaska Methodist University Auditorium in Anchorage.

Unimak, with nearly 1,000,000 acres, is the largest island in the Aleutian chain and was included in the Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge when it was established in 1913.

Its many striking physical features include snow-capped mountains, snowfields, glaciers, active volcanoes, sweeping tundra, productive lagoons, salmon spawning streams, lakes, and windswept sand beaches. The 9,978-foot active Shishaldin Volcano, dedicated as a Natural Landmark in 1970, is the highest peak in the Aleutians and one of the most perfect cones in the world.

Wildlife is abundant on the island and in the surrounding seas. Brown bear, gray wolf, wolverine, and caribou prosper because of the wilderness environment. Offshore waters harbor marine mammals such as whales, porpoises, seals, sea lions, and walrus. The once rare sea otter now inhabits kelp beds in large numbers.

Migrating birds including waterfowl, shorebirds, seabirds, and song-birds are seasonally abundant. The northern bald eagle and peregrine falcon are year-round residents, and the endangered Aleutian Canada goose appears occasionally.

Opportunities for outdoor recreation are excellent. Hiking, camping, nature study, photography, mountain climbing, berry picking, beachcombing, and hunting and fishing would continue to be allowed with official wilderness designation.

An informational brochure describing the proposal is available on request from the Refuge Manager, Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Cold Bay, Alaska 99571, or from the Area Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, 6917 Seward Highway, Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Citizens are invited to express their views on this proposal pertaining to their public lands. Oral or written statements may either be presented at the public hearing or submitted in writing to the Area Director by January 17, 1972, when the hearing record will be closed.

- II. Havasu National Wildlife Refuge, in Mohave County, Arizona, and San Bernardino County, California, 17,116 acres, hearing Dec. 10 at 9 a.m. in the Elks Club in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, and Dec. 11 at 9 a.m. at the Needles High School Auditorium in Needles, California.

The refuge lies along the lower Colorado River about halfway between Las Vegas and the Mexican Border. Its marshes and desert lands support many native wildlife species and serve thousands of wintering and migrating birds. The proposal embraces lands on both sides of the river and includes the Needles Peaks and Mohave Canyon.

A map and other information about the proposal is available from the Refuge Manager, Havasu National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box A, Needles, California 92363 or the Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Building, 500 Gold Avenue S.W., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103.

Oral or written statements may be submitted at the hearing or written comments may be sent to the Regional Director by January 11, 1972, when the hearing record will be closed.