

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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SECRETARY MORTON PROPOSES DOUBLING AREAS OF PARKS, WILDLIFE SYSTEMS
AND BOOSTING NATIONAL FOREST AND WILD RIVERS SYSTEMS IN ALASKA

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton today proposed legislation that would approximately double the acreage of the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System by augmenting them with 63.85 million acres of Federally-owned lands in Alaska.

The park and refuge systems currently contain about 30 million acres each. Secretary Morton's proposals would add some 32.26 million acres to the parklands and 31.59 million acres to wildlife refuges.

Morton also proposed adding 18.8 million Alaskan acres to the National Forest System (administered by the Department of Agriculture), and adding 20 new units to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, together with 800,000 acres of land lying outside the other proposed areas. *

His recommendations followed two years of detailed studies mandated by Section 17 (d) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act signed into law by President Nixon on December 18, 1971. Under that provision, the Secretary was to recommend to Congress within two years the Alaska lands he had decided should go into each of the "four systems" (parks, refuges, forests and wild and scenic rivers).

"We have given these studies our highest priority. We have listened to people representing all shades of opinion, and have consulted with the Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission for Alaska," Secretary Morton said. "It has been a mammoth undertaking, involving as it does about 23 percent of Alaska's total land area.

"In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture have also prepared draft environmental impact statements on each of the proposals.

"This is only the beginning as far as public participation is concerned. We are inviting comments on the draft environmental statements, and we will consider all comments in preparing the final statements. The Congress, I am sure, will hold extensive public hearings of its own, both by the Senate and the House of Representatives, on every element of this proposed legislation.

"We have attempted to reconcile many legitimate interests in making our proposals -- environmental, recreational, economic, and social. We have tried to be judicious in considering the needs of the State of Alaska and in particular its Native peoples, while thinking of the interests of our nation as a whole. We have tried to put our proposals in terms of whole ecological units.

"Inevitably, I have made decisions on which people may reasonably differ, and during the process of review, for many months to come, everyone will have ample opportunity to exchange views in the public forum," Secretary Morton said.

The Secretary's proposals include the establishment of three entirely new national parks -- Gates of the Arctic, in the rugged and scenic Brooks Range; Lake Clark in southern Alaska, west of Anchorage; and Wrangell-St. Elias, in the spectacular southeast.

He also proposed Congressional action to more than double the size of Mount McKinley National Park; enlarge and upgrade Katmai National Monument to full national park status; create new national monuments named for Kobuk Valley, Cape Krusenstern, Aniakchak Caldera, and the Harding Icefield-Kenai Fjords; and, through a National Rivers designation, to include in the National Park System the entire Charley River watershed and a portion of the Yukon River drainage in east central Alaska. The Chukchi-Imuruk National Reserve on the Seward Peninsula in the far northwest would be administered jointly by the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Nine additional Morton proposals call for new or expanded wildlife refuges, to protect fish and wildlife resources that are of worldwide significance. Protected against other development would be lands and waterways that help support dozens of species of wild waterfowl, seabirds, shorebirds, and other birds including eagles, falcons and ospreys; salmon and trout; black and grizzly bears, wolverines, lynxes, foxes and wolves; caribou, moose and Dall sheep; muskrat, mink, marten, otter, beaver, and many others, including some species classified as endangered. The National Wildlife Refuge System is managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service (Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife), a part of the Interior Department. In two of the new proposed areas, Noatak and Iliamna, there would be joint management with Interior's Bureau of Land Management.

Three new National Forests and minor additions to the existing Chugach are included in the Morton proposals. The new units would be the heavily forested Yukon-Kuskokwim, in remote central Alaska, and Porcupine, named for a river near the Canadian line; and the mineral-rich Wrangell Mountains National Forest flanking the proposed new national park of the same name in the southeast. Unlike most national parks and wildlife refuges, the national forests are managed under a statutory directive for multiple use which permits development of natural resources under Federal laws and regulations. Renewable resources such as timber are to be managed for sustained yield, with numerous provisions for protection of wildlife habitat, watersheds, primitive and recreational values.

For the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, maintained for natural and recreational values, Secretary Morton proposed inclusion of 375 linear miles of the Fortymile River drainage along the Canadian line in east central Alaska; 135 miles each of Birch Creek and Beaver Creek, both of them Yukon River tributaries northeast of Fairbanks; and 60 miles of the Unalakleet River in far western Alaska. All would continue to be administered by Interior's Bureau of Land Management, except for 10 miles of Beaver Creek which would lie within the new Morton-proposed Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

In addition, about 1,900 miles of 16 other Alaskan rivers lying within the boundaries of proposed national parks, refuges and forests would be added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

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(Specific descriptions of the proposed new areas follow.)

National Park System Proposals

1. Gates of the Arctic National Park in the Central Brooks Range is proposed to protect a diverse array of arctic scenes and landscapes varying from the granite spires of the Arrigetch Peaks (whose name in Eskimo means "fingers of the hand outstretched"), to rolling arctic tundra nowhere else represented in the National Park System, to spruce-clad interior lowlands.

Comprising 8.36 million acres, the park contains the complete Arctic Slope watersheds of the caribou-inhabited Killik River and the south slope North Fork of the Koyukuk. The latter lies in the eastern, Mt. Doonerak Unit of the park, which is the portion made famous by the writings of Robert Marshall. The western, Mt. Igikpak Unit, includes a portion of the placid Alatna River, a fine float stream rimmed by colorful layered mountains.

2. Kobuk Valley National Monument comprises approximately 1.85 million acres of richly varied subarctic environment with nationally significant geological, biological, and cultural features. Lying above the Arctic Circle in the central Kobuk River valley in northwestern Alaska, 100 miles east of Kotzebue, the area is bounded on the north by the crest of the Baird Mountains and on the south by the Waring Mountains. It contains the myriad meander sloughs and oxbow lakes of the Kobuk River complex, the Great Kobuk Sand Dunes, the northwestern limits of the boreal forest, wetlands, open tundra, barren jagged mountains, and the Salmon River--to be designated a National Wild River.

Arctic caribou, moose, black and grizzly bear, and wolves live or migrate through here, and important archeological sites lie within and abut the proposal. The area encompasses a large and remarkable bowl, rimmed entirely by green hills and cut only by the placid Kobuk River. Beautiful vistas abound and the Valley has a "friendly" appeal to both hikers and boaters.

3. Cape Krusenstern National Monument on the shores of the Chukchi Sea in northwest Alaska, consists of approximately 350,000 acres of coastal plain exceedingly rich in archeological remains. Located wholly inside the Arctic Circle, 40 miles north of Kotzebue, the Monument would protect archeological sites representing every known cultural period in Arctic Alaska. The proposed area is considered one of the most likely regions where prehistoric hunters may have entered America, across a thousand-mile-wide land bridge--Beringia--now partially under the sea. The Monument would memorialize prehistoric and historic Eskimos and their adaptations to the arctic environment. Continuation of their traditional life style by area Natives would be an integral part of the Monument's values.

4. Aniakchak Caldera National Monument proposes to protect 440,000 acres in perpetuity for public use an outstanding example of a dry volcanic caldera (crater), its environs, and the Aniakchak River. Located 350 air miles south of Anchorage on the Alaska Peninsula, the 30-square-mile caldera contains its own world of recent plant successions, lava flows, cinder cones, a lava plug, warm springs, and explosion pits.

The crater rim, 7 miles in diameter, rises nearly 5,000 feet above sea level. Within the caldera is 2-square-mile Surprise Lake, whose waters tumble through a spectacular 2,000-foot gash in the crater rim as the Aniakchak River and continue for 27 miles to the Pacific Ocean on the east. The Aniakchak has been designated a Wild River and will be added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The area includes salmon, trout, moose, and brown bear, plus sea mammals and sea birds, and will be managed for optimum recreation compatible with retention of the area's unique natural conditions.

5. Katmai National Park proposal, on the upper Alaska Peninsula, would combine the existing 2.8 million acre Katmai National Monument with 1.87 million acres of adjacent lands. The additions will preserve habitat to perpetuate a naturally regulated, un hunted population of the giant Alaska brown (grizzly) bear, and would bring into the National Park System such previously unrepresented landforms as the Bristol Bay lowland tundra.

Katmai is the site of a devastating volcanic eruption in 1912 and contains outstanding scenic, historic, scientific, wildlife and ecological values. Important sockeye (red) salmon spawning and nursery waters will be protected within the proposed addition, which also includes American Creek--identified by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation as a potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

With the additions, Katmai National Park will constitute a natural area to ensure retention of one large, unaltered portion of the scenic and superbly wildlife-rich Alaska Peninsula.

6. Harding Icefield-Kenai Fjords National Monument would encompass two major elements of the Alaskan scene: a 700-square-mile icecap with outflowing glaciers and a series of coastal fjords and islands rich in bird and marine life. Located within a 2-1/2-hour car ride of Anchorage, the area is accessible by paved highway, railroad, aircraft, and the State marine ferry, and offers the highest potential visitor use of all the National Park System Alaskan proposals. The area would include 300,000 acres

High points of the icefield itself is 5,270 feet above sea level, with several rock peaks protruding through to elevations of over 6,000 feet--suggesting a mountain range literally buried in ice. Studded with cirques, horns, moraines, nunataks and other glacial features, the icecap provides visitors with an awesome and unique experience.

Glaciers from the field have cut deep fjords into the mountainous coast. Cliffs rise hundreds of feet out of the sea and dense rainforest vegetation cloaks the nearby slopes. Birds and marine mammals (including the once-endangered sea otter) abound, and migrating whales can be sighted in offshore waters. Preservation of natural features would allow nature study, sightseeing, hiking, cross country skiing, and icefield tours, as well as boat trips through the fjords and coastal island waters.

Portions of the fjord lands and coastal islands which are important as marine mammal and sea bird colonial nesting habitat are also proposed for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

7. Lake Clark National Park, a 2.61-million-acre proposal, would preserve a region of wildly diverse resources representing Alaska's finest natural values and lying within easy reach of Anchorage, the State's major population center. Straddling the Alaska and Aleutian Mountain ranges, the park fronts on Cook Inlet to the east and includes a string of glacier-made lakes on the west.

Extravagantly scenic Lake Clark is the park's southern jewel; the northern boundary encloses rugged Merrill Pass. A jumble of valleys weave through a spectacular mountain environment where two major ranges collide in a frenzy of spires, glaciers, and still-smoking volcanoes. Once access has been achieved by charter aircraft (the only present means), the area provides surprisingly easy recreational use. Mountains, lakes, rivers and woodlands support a diverse range of flora and fauna; these, combined with inviting opportunities for hiking and camping, could be expected to attract heavy visitation. Management would be for maximum recreation compatible with preservation of the area's scenic beauty and wilderness values.

8. Mount McKinley National Park proposal would add approximately 3.18 million acres to the existing park for a total of 5.12 million acres, lying roughly midway between Anchorage and Fairbanks in Interior Alaska. Two fairly equal parcels, known as the northern and southern additions, would provide diversity and integrity of ecosystems within the park, including adequate habitat ranges for wolves and caribou; would ensure preservation of spectacular glacial systems, the awesome Cathedral Spires and other scenic features; would bring within the park for the first time the entire Mount McKinley massif, and would facilitate orderly development of recreational and interpretive resources. In addition, a Cooperative Planning and Management Zone of about 2 million acres is proposed for the area south and east of the Park, to be implemented as a planning and management entity in accordance with an overall State land use plan.

9. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park in south-central Alaska stretches north from the Gulf of Alaska to encompass a superlative 8.64 million acre block of land and water that for sheer grandeur and visual impact ranks with the Alps, the Northern Cascades, and the Canadian Rockies.

Bounded roughly by the Copper River and the proposed Wrangell Mountains National Forest to the west and the Kluane National Park and Territorial Game Sanctuary of Canada on the east, the proposed park includes 18,000 foot Mount St. Elias and 16,000 foot Mount Blackburn, plus the largest glacial system in the United States. The Bagley Ice Field and associated Ice Age landscape, source of the nearly two dozen glaciers that spill out back into the interior and forward into the Pacific, is 5,000 square miles in area and more than a mile thick in places. Malaspina Glacier alone could accommodate the entire State of Rhode Island on its surface with margin to spare.

The low areas for human enjoyment consist of spectacular ice-sculptured valleys in view of sheep-haunted cliffs. Portions of rolling, tundra-carpeted interior foothills attract caribou and lead to the woodland of white and black spruce, birch, and poplar beyond. The Malaspina Glacier has formed a coastal plain on which black cottonwood, and later hemlock, and Sitka spruce grow tall, and beyond which live abundant sea mammals and fish.

Early mine sites testify to the region's historic mining era, and numerous aboriginal Athapascan villages dot the river valleys. Road access to the towns of Chitina and Nabesna and numerous small plane landings such as lakes, river bars, and improved bush strips, provide means of visitation and opportunities for scenic viewing, hiking and camping. Coordination with other Federal, State, Native and local organizations in providing park-related facilities and access to the overall Wrangells region could bring about extensive visitor services while preserving the integrity of the park itself.

10. Yukon-Charley National Rivers, a 1.97-million-acre proposal, combines two nationally significant resources: the upper Yukon River with its wealth of historic, biotic and geologic features, and the Charley River drainage, an entire watershed essentially undisturbed by modern man.

The historic town of Eagle, its well-preserved buildings dating back to the Gold Rush era, lies adjacent to the eastern boundary. The Charley River basin exhibits a remarkable interfingering of spruce forest and tundra, little altered by glaciation, wildfire, or man. An exceptionally clear scenic float stream, the Charley flows through an apparently endless uplands much like the Adirondacks. The area offers ideal cross-country hiking, with occasional views of Dall sheep high above the river.

Ice-age mammals are entombed in river bluffs--part of an unbroken geologic record of evolving life that extends back 500 million years and holding great promise for paleontologic investigations.

Inclusion of the Yukon where it cuts deeply through high hills adds to the National Park System a piece of a major river, largely unaltered and with fine habitat for wolves, moose, and the endangered peregrine falcon; remnants of the history of Alaska; and comfortable and extensive opportunities for water-oriented recreation. The Charley River is to be designated a Wild River in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

11. Chukchi-Imuruk National Reserve, a 2.69-million-acre area on the Seward Peninsula of northwestern Alaska between Nome and Kotzebue, is a relict of the Bering Land Bridge and internationally significant for its coastal and wetland-based wildlife. A superb collage of wet sedge, moist tussock, and dry heath tundra occurs along an ecological continuum stretching inland from the Chukchi Sea to the Bendeleben Mountains. Of the 112 migratory bird species found in the area, 87--including noteworthy Asiatic species--nest here. Migrations to all seven continents are represented in the birdlife of Chukchi-Imuruk, including songbirds, sea birds, shore birds, and numbering half the Pacific Flyway population of snow geese among its waterfowl.

Four of 39 species of threatened marine mammals occur here, as do grizzly bear, wolves, moose, and a variety of furbearers. Two great volcanic processes have covered large areas with lava to the south, and produced unusual ash explosions in the north part of the wildlands. The ash blowouts have left deep crater lakes and have buried in near total preservation a prehistoric ecosystem. Chukchi-Imuruk would be jointly managed by the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service for preservation of wildlife resources, geologic features, and natural systems.

National Wildlife Refuge System Proposals

12. Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge--About 3.6 million acres, 100 air miles north of Fairbanks. The unit, a level flood plain basin bisected by the Yukon River and ringed with highlands, occupies the western half of Alaska's largest interior valley. Water is the dominant natural feature of the flats region with 25,000 miles of streams, and 40,000 small lakes and ponds covering 800,000 acres. Bird species total 130 and include 20 species of waterfowl that nest on the unit and provide 750,000 birds each year to Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The most abundant waterfowl are about 120,000 pintail, 250,000 lesser scaup, 100,000 widgeon, 40,000 scoter, 40,000 mallard, 55,000 green winged teal, and 30,000 canvas-back. There are large breeding populations of Canada (6,400) and white-fronted geese (4,000), and breeding populations of peregrine falcons, ospreys, gyrfalcons, and bald eagles. Mammal species total 37 and include black and grizzly bears, and moose. Portions of two herds of caribou use the area. Fur-bearing animals include an estimated 15,000 beaver, four million muskrats, 10,000 mink, and smaller numbers of marten, wolverine, and otter. Chum, coho, and chinook salmon as well as sheefish, whitefish, Arctic grayling, and northern pike spawn in the Yukon River and its tributaries.

13. Arctic National Wildlife Range (expansion)--3.76 million acres are proposed as additions to the existing 8.9 million acre Arctic National Wildlife Range. The area, in northeast Alaska, extends from the Yukon basin to the Arctic Ocean, adjoining the Canadian border. Nearly 130 species of migratory birds and 44 species of mammals use these habitats. Tundra wetlands and adjacent coastal waters are frequented by 31 waterfowl species. The area is a major migratory route for millions of shorebirds and waterfowl. About one million eiders move through annually. Thousands of migrating snow geese forage inland on the tundra in late summer and early fall. Of special interest are the threatened peregrine falcon, gyrfalcons, golden eagles, and possibly the Eskimo curlew which many people fear is extinct. Polar, grizzly, and black bears, muskox, moose, caribou, Dall sheep, and wolves inhabit the area. The calving grounds of 150,000 caribou in the so-called Porcupine herd are within the existing Wildlife Range and are of international importance because the herd winters in Canada as well as on the Yukon Flats south of the existing range. Passes through the Brooks Range are important migration routes for the herd. Sixteen species of fish include Arctic grayling, Arctic char, lake trout, chum, salmon, northern pike, turbot, and whitefish. The Ivishak, Wind, and Sheenjek Rivers in the proposed area will be designated as "wild" and placed in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

14. Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge--Two units of land totalling 4.43 million acres in central Alaska. The area produces a fall flight of one-half million ducks and geese and is an important staging area for other waterfowl. Bird species total 140. Lakes and streams are prime habitat for fur-bearing animals, moose, and salmon. The Beaver Mountains caribou herd of 3,000 winters in the area. Black bear, grizzly bear, and moose range throughout the area. Forty percent of the Alaska beaver catch is harvested in the region. Other fur-bearers include 2 million muskrat, 30,000 mink, and thousands of otter, marten, weasel, wolverine, lynx, red fox, wolf, and coyote. Chum, coho, and king salmon ascend the Yukon River as far as the proposed refuge. Resident fish species include Arctic grayling, cisco, whitefish, and northern pike.

15. Selawik National Wildlife Refuge--1.4 million acres in the Selawik Lake region on the Arctic circle 200 miles west-northwest of Fairbanks. Area contains a duck breeding population of 187,000 and is a crossroad for Asian-North American migrations. Provides nesting for many species not found elsewhere in North America. The Selawik River drainage, the main water course, provides braided channels, lakes, ponds, and sloughs that attract shorebirds and waterfowl. Fingers of white spruce timber extend down the river to the tundra. Area produces a fall flight estimated at 337,000 ducks, geese, whistling swan, black brant, and eiders. Gyrfalcons nest there. Mammals include black and grizzly bears, wolves, wolverine, moose, and Arctic fox. Part of a herd of 240,000 caribou winter along the Selawik drainage. Whales, seals, and walruses are found in the coastal waters. Fish include whitefish, cisco, grayling, Dolly Varden, and lake trout. Spawners include silver, chum, king, and pink salmon.

16. Alaska Coastal National Wildlife Refuges--70,000 acres in six units along 1,500 miles of coast; one unit each to be added to existing refuges, the Bering Sea and Kodiak, and four units to go into four new refuges: Chukchi, Shumagin Islands, Barren Islands, and Aialik. A majority of the plant life associations of the Alaska coast are represented. Inter-tidal marshes, beach strand, coastal dunes, and sea cliffs on all 6 units; inland communities are characteristic of the local region. Four to six million seabirds nest within the proposed units. The units are also important to over 100,000 sea lions, harbor seals, walruses, polar bears, sea otters, and ringed and bearded harbor seals. Peregrine falcons use all units. Bald eagles are common. Grizzly bear, wolverine, moose, and caribou use portions of the units. Thirty-five muskox, transplanted to one unit four years ago, are doing well. Commercial fish species harvested in nearby waters include Dungeness, king, and tanner crabs, Pacific salmon, ocean perch, halibut, herring, shrimp, sablefish, clams and scallops.

17. Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (expansion)--About 5.16 million acres of the Yukon-Kuskowim River delta to be added to the 2.8-million-acre existing refuge on Alaska's west coast, an important migratory bird area. Waterfowl breeding population of the delta averages two million producing an annual fall flight of three million ducks, geese, and swans, a third of them on refuge lands. Shorebirds of all species nesting there total 50 million. Of 170 bird species observed in the Yukon Delta area, over 130 nest in the area. Half the surface is water, 10 percent forested. Upland, freshwater, and estuarine habitat produces 80 percent of swan and all white-fronted geese of the Pacific flyway. No other area of land so small is so critical to so many species. Forty-three mammal species noted. Fish resources include king, chum, sockeye, pink, and silver salmon as well as northern pike, blackfish, whitefish, grayling, rainbow trout, and Arctic char. The Andreafsky River and its east fork will be designated "wild" and placed in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

18. Togiak National Wildlife Refuge--Some 2.74 million acres of coastal mountains in southwestern Alaska 400 miles west of Anchorage. An important nesting area for seabirds, it is characterized by steep-walled mountains and broad river valleys with three large river drainages and a number of glacial lakes. Area is crossroads for waterfowl of the Pacific Ocean and a breeding ground for all types: black brant, Canada geese, emperor geese, pintails, scaup, and eiders. Hundreds of thousands of seabirds and shorebirds nest there with osprey, bald eagles, and gyrfalcons and the threatened Arctic peregrine falcon. Thirty-two species of land mammals including grizzly bear, black bear, moose, and wolves inhabit the area with walrus, sea lions, and four species of seal. Rivers and lakes contain abundant spawning and resident fish including whitefish, steelhead, king, sockeye, coho, pink, and chum salmon. Average of 1.7 million salmon spawn there. There are 114 streams, 20 of which are important salmon producers. The Kanektok River will be designated "wild" and placed in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

19. Noatak National Arctic Range--7.59 million acres in northwestern Alaska comprising the basins of the Noatak and Squirrel Rivers; 650 miles of major tributaries; 13 large lakes; the De Long, Schwatka, and Baird Mountains; and the long mountain-flanked valley known as the Grand Canyon of the Noatak rises in the central Brooks Range and flows westward 450 miles to the sea at Kotzebue Sound. The Squirrel, 57 miles long, drains the Baird Mountains. The Noatak will be designated as a National Wild River. The river basins are major arctic valley ecosystems that are virtually unaffected by civilization. They would be placed under a 20-year development moratorium that would permit scientific study and only those other uses that would not significantly impair the environment. Within the 20-year period the Secretary of the Interior would report to Congress on his recommendations for the future administration and use of the Range. The Range can increase knowledge of arctic ecosystems and their inter-relationships with human needs and desires and provide opportunities for research into ways in which arctic resources can be utilized without undue environmental damage. Wildlife includes more than 200,000 migrants from the Arctic caribou herd (Alaska's largest), the barren-ground grizzly bear, Dall sheep, moose, wolves, wolverine, and migratory birds. The Noatak supports the most northerly major chum salmon run in Alaska and is noted for Arctic char. The Range will be a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System and will be managed jointly by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the Bureau of Land Management with the National Park Service acting in an advisory capacity.

20. Iliamna National Resource Range--2.85 million acres on the Alaskan Peninsula between Cook Inlet and Bristol Bay, about 100 miles west of Anchorage. The Range includes heavily glaciated mountains, alpine-like meadows, coastal bays, and numerous ponds and lakes. Lake Iliamna, covering 640,000 acres, is the seventh largest freshwater lake in the United States. The Kvichak River system contains the greatest red salmon spawning grounds in the world and sustains a world-renowned freshwater trophy sport fishery. The river flows from Lake Iliamna to Bristol Bay, drains an 8,000 square mile watershed, is 68 miles long, and has an estimated flow of 18,000 cubic feet per second. From 1960 through 1969 the Kvichak drainage contributed 55 percent of the red (sockeye) salmon caught in Bristol Bay, 33 percent of the entire U.S. catch, and 16 percent of the world catch. The wholesale value of this fishery has averaged more than \$12 million annually over the last 10 years. Pink, chum, king, and coho salmon are also found within the Range, and there is a trophy sport fishery for grayling, Arctic char, Dolly Varden, lake trout, rainbow trout, and pike. The Iliamna area is the only designated Blue Ribbon Sport Fishery in Alaska. The fisheries support extensive subsistence fishing, 4,000 licensed commercial fishermen, 4,000 to 6,000 support workers for the fishermen, 23 canning lines, several salteries and freezing facilities, and many small businesses that serve the sport fishery. Other wildlife includes moose, caribou, Dall sheep, grizzly and black bears, wolves, wolverine, mink, muskrat, marten, otter, and fox. Sea otter live in Cook Inlet east of Lake Iliamna, the Beluga (white) whale migrates from Bristol Bay into the Kvichak River, and Lake Iliamna has the only known colony of freshwater seals in the United States--an estimated 300 harbor, or leopard, seals. Bird species total more than 100, including large numbers of waterfowl as well as the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, osprey, and gyrfalcon. Bristol Bay is the staging area for the entire world population of emperor geese and Pacific black brant. The area produces a fall flight of some 572,000 ducks and 10,600 whistling swans. The Range will be a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System and will be jointly managed by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the Bureau of Land Management.

National Forest System Proposals

21. Porcupine National Forest--Deriving its name from the Porcupine River, is proposed to cover 5.5 million acres in East Central Alaska adjoining the Canadian border and not far south of the Alaska National Wildlife Range. It consists largely of broad river flats and low-lying hills, with many lakes and waterways; the northern half is above the Arctic Circle. Area is 70 percent forested, with 750 million board-feet of commercially valuable sawtimber. There are possibilities for production of oil and gas in the Yukon Flats Basin and some mineral potential for gold, tin and lead in the north portion. Very sparsely settled, it has importance as a major waterfowl breeding area, with upland wildlife, big game and important fisheries. Forest Service contemplates careful resource development and management, with wetlands given special consideration to protect waterfowl nesting, and the upper Porcupine and the Sheenjek Rivers maintained in primitive, free-flowing condition as components of Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

22. Yukon-Kuskokwim National Forest--a new 7.3-million-acre national forest spanning the Middle Yukon and Kuskokwim River Valleys in Central Alaska. All except 1 million acres of d-2 lands within its boundaries is presently under d-1 or "public interest" withdrawal status. Overall, it is more than three-fourths forested, with commercial timber estimated to be as much as 2 billion board-feet, capable of supporting a major forest products industry. Eight Native villages in the area rely upon its fish and wildlife for subsistence hunting, fishing and trapping. Wildlife include major game species and some of the finest furbearers, plus substantial fisheries. There is little known mineral potential. The Forest Service has plans to protect historical and archeological sites, and to develop a coordinated management program with the State and the Native peoples to help the renewable wildlife resources thrive. There are substantial opportunities for public hunting, fishing and other recreation that is oriented to the rivers and scenic values. The Forest Service proposes to manage the area under a comprehensive multiple use plan following thorough analysis and public discussion.

23. Wrangell Mountains National Forest--of 5.5 million acres would be in two units flanking the larger Wrangell-St. Elias National Park in southeast Alaska. It has a variety of outstanding resources that suggest a need for multiple-use management, including minerals, recreation, fish and wildlife, and outstanding scenery. It contains deposits of copper and associated minerals which some experts consider highly significant. Its fish and wildlife, especially Dall sheep, are renowned, and its relative ease of access makes it attractive to backpackers, hunters, fishermen, and sightseers. The area's variety means recreationists could choose a wide range of opportunities from roadside sightseeing to pure wilderness experience. More than half the acreage is d-1 (general interest) land and the remainder is in d-2 public interest withdrawal status. The present population of about 5,000 depends heavily on tourism, transportation and food processing. Coordination of mineral development with wildlife, water and recreation values constitutes a major management challenge.

24. Additions to Chugach National Forest--Two isolated areas adjoining the present Chugach National Forest are proposed for inclusion within its boundaries -- the 161,000-acre College Fjord (an icy and mountainous region of heavy precipitation in Prince William Sound) and the glacial, rocky Sargent Ice Field or Nellie Juan Unit of 276,000 acres on the Kenai Peninsula northeast of Seward. Because of their isolation from other areas and proximity to the Chugach they appear most likely to be well managed as part of the national forest, for scenic enjoyment, recreation, wilderness and minor hunting and fishing opportunities.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Proposals

25. Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River--The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation has issued a draft environmental statement on Secretary Morton's proposal to add 375 miles of the Fortymile River drainage and 320,000 acres of adjacent land to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Of that area, 161 miles would be classified as wild river; 205 miles as scenic river which would withstand more use than the wild river corridor; and 9 miles as recreational river where use would exceed that of the scenic river segment. The Fortymile would be administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Located 180 air miles from Fairbanks along the Alaska-Canadian border, the Fortymile drainage is accessible from Fairbanks and Anchorage via Taylor Highway and by road from Dawson, Yukon Territory. The proposed 375-mile segment within the 1,000-mile spiderweb river drainage includes the largest streams and a sampling of smaller tributary drainages. Landscapes range from muskeg marshes to alpine tundra. Streams vary from small, fast, and shallow to deep, wide pools culminating in strong white-water rapids. Three principal drainages included are the Dennison and Mosquito Forks; Middle and North Forks; and South Fork and Fortymile River. For recreationists, the Fortymile provides a host of outdoor opportunities. In 1886, the first gold in Alaska was discovered in the Fortymile basin. Relics of the ensuing gold rush include many cabins, some with original furnishings, and old mining sites. The abandoned Eagle-to-Valdez military telegraph line is of historical interest and great trail potential. Recreational gold panning could be attempted with some probability of success. Hiking and camping opportunities abound along with photography and nature observation. The area is also excellent for hunting, fishing, and canoeing.

26. Birch Creek National Wild River would add a 135-mile segment of Alaska's Birch Creek, with 200,000 acres of adjacent land, to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as a wild river area, to be managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Birch Creek is located approximately 75 miles northeast of Fairbanks between Fairbanks and Circle. It is accessible via the Steese Highway which approaches the river corridor at both the upstream and downstream boundaries of the proposal area. A clear, free-flowing tributary of the Yukon, the Birch is primitive in character with practically no evidence of human activity. Interesting to both layman and professional geologist are the Birch's pleasant scenery and varied geologic formations. Spectacular exposures of Birch Creek Schist which is named after the river are particularly outstanding. The river provides excellent recreational opportunities for canoeing and fishing. Moose, black bear, wolves, and grizzly bear inhabit the area. The rare peregrine falcon nests in cliffs along the river, while the lower portion of the proposed segment runs through a significant waterfowl site.

27. Beaver Creek National Wild River would add a 135-mile segment of Alaska's Beaver Creek, with 200,000 acres of adjacent land, to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as a wild river area. The upper 125 miles would be administered by the Bureau of Land Management while the lower 10 miles would be administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the proposed Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. The wild river area is located in interior Alaska about 50 miles north of Fairbanks and is accessible only by trail to the headwaters of the river area from the Steese and Elliott Highways, or by air. A clear, free-flowing tributary of the Yukon, the Beaver grows from a moderately swift, shallow, youthful stream to a contorted, meandering, mature stream in the Yukon flats. The scenic White Mountains, with elevations averaging between 3,000 and 4,000 feet, form a backdrop for most of the river segment. Exposed, nearly vertical outcroppings of white limestone plus varied exposures of other bedrock afford interesting and often complex geologic study. The mountains are at the apex of two geologic structural trends marked by earth folding and faulting. The river character and environment are primitive. Waters provide excellent canoeing opportunities and good fishing. Big game animals such as moose, black bear, and caribou afford opportunities for photography and wildlife observation. Dall sheep are found in adjacent mountain areas.

28. Unalakleet National Wild River--Studies by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation have led to a proposal to add a 60-mile segment of Alaska's Unalakleet River, with 104,000 acres of adjacent land, to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as a wild river area to be administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Located about 380 miles northwest of Anchorage the pristine, free-flowing Unalakleet traditionally has been used by Natives for subsistence fishing (king, chum, and pink salmon, plus grayling and Arctic char abound) and transportation. Except for fishing camps, there is virtually no evidence of human activity. Access is by air and boat or, during winter, by dogsled and snowmobile. For the recreationist, sport fishing is excellent, while hunting, boating, and camping also hold significant recreation potential. Much of the river is good waterfowl nesting and molting habitat. The Kaltag Trail for both vehicular and foot travel passes within one mile of the river area and is a link in the historic 1,000-mile Iditarod Gold Rush Trail between Nome and Anchorage. Canoeing is ideal for the novice or intermediate-level sportsman, because there are no rapids or serious obstacles. The proposed wild river area would be managed to accommodate all forms of recreation customary on wild rivers.