

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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SECRETARY MORTON COMMENDS CONGRESS FOR PASSAGE OF ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton today commended the Congress for its prompt passage of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 signed by President Nixon on December 28.

"This new legislation will assure a higher degree of protection for those species of animals which are in jeopardy in the United States and around the world," Secretary Morton said.

Among its provisions, the Act establishes two categories of species subject to Federal protection--"threatened species" and "endangered species"--, creates a Federal-State partnership to conserve such species, and authorizes a matching grant-in-aid program to assist the States in carrying out this objective.

Secretary Morton indicated that he will make full use of the authorities provided by the legislation "in order that present and future generations of Americans may continue to enjoy the wildlife resources which are such an important element of our natural heritage. I have directed the Fish and Wildlife Service to prepare for prompt, effective implementation of the statute."

In greater detail, the Endangered Species Act of 1973 does the following:

***Addresses the need to identify those species which, though not yet in danger of extinction, are likely within the foreseeable future to become endangered by creating a new list of "threatened species" subject to Federal protection in addition to the "endangered species" category established by the 1969 Act. These lists will be maintained by the Interior Department.

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***Extends protection to species that are in trouble in any significant portion of their range, not just to those that are threatened with worldwide extinction.

***Eliminates existing dollar ceilings under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (16 U.S.C. 4601-4) on the acquisition of critical habitat for endangered and threatened species of animals or plants.

***Permits the Federal Government to share, up to two-thirds, in the costs of State programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species which have been approved by the Secretary of the Interior. An appropriation of \$10 million is authorized for such financial assistance over an initial three-year period.

***Implements the Nation's obligations under the "Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora" signed in Washington, D.C., on March 3, 1973, when the ratification process is completed.

***Prohibits the unauthorized import or export, taking, possession, sale, delivery and transport of endangered species. The Secretary of the Interior may extend such prohibitions to threatened species by separate regulation.

***Requires all importers and exporters of wildlife to obtain a permit from the Secretary of the Interior and maintain certain records.

***Continues requirement that all wildlife be imported through officially designated ports of entry.

***Permits the Secretary of Commerce to make additions to the endangered and threatened species lists for marine species which come under his jurisdiction.

***Directs the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution to review species of plants which are now or may become endangered or threatened and to devise methods for their conservation. A report is to be made to Congress within one year.

***Directs all Federal departments and agencies to insure that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by them do not jeopardize the continued existence of endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or modification of habitat critical to such species.

***Provides for criminal penalties up to a \$20,000 fine and/or one year imprisonment for willful violations of certain provisions of the Act and up to a \$10,000 fine and/or six months imprisonment for less serious violations. Civil penalties up to \$10,000 also are authorized by the statute. In all cases, authority is provided for subjecting to forfeiture any wildlife or plants connected with violations of the Act.