

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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HEARINGS SET IN LOWER 48 ON PROPOSED FINAL PUBLIC LAND WITHDRAWALS IN ALASKA

Interior Secretary Cecil D. Andrus today announced a third series of public hearings, the first to be held outside Alaska, on proposals to withdraw up to 57 million acres of Federal land in Alaska for national wildlife refuges and other special management areas.

The hearings will be held June 7 at the California Hall, 525 Polk Street, San Francisco, California, and at the Bureau of Reclamation Auditorium, Denver Federal Center (Building 56, Entrance W-1), Denver, Colorado. A third hearing will be held on June 8 at the Interior Department Auditorium, Washington, D.C. All will begin at 9 a.m. and continue until 8 p.m. if necessary.

Nine hearings in Alaska were announced previously. Six were conducted in April in the villages of Kotzebue, Galena, Kaktovik, Bethel, Arctic Village, and Dillingham. Three others are scheduled for May 24 at 10 a.m. in Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Tanana.

The proposed withdrawal for 20 years of 57 million acres could be made under authority of Section 204(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The areas are currently withdrawn for 3 years under emergency withdrawal orders issued by the Secretary November 16, 1978, after Congress failed to pass legislation putting these critical Federal lands into conservation system units--national parks, national wildlife refuges, wild and scenic rivers, and national forests.

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Subsequently, President Carter on December 1, 1978, declared 56 million acres (largely national park proposals) as National Monuments through his authority under the Antiquities Act. At the same time, he directed the Secretary to "proceed with necessary steps" for final withdrawals for the remaining areas. These steps involve holding public hearings and providing Congress with documentation similar to that submitted in connection with the emergency withdrawals.

Basic documentation describing the proposals, including the report on the emergency withdrawals, are available at all U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Offices. Documents will also be available during the hearings.

Those interested in testifying are requested to write to the following addresses for each hearing:

San Francisco: Mr. Jim Mills, Assistant Regional Director, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, Attn: 204(c) Public Hearing, 450 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, California 94102.

Denver: Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attn: PAO - 204(c) Public Hearing, P.O. Box 25486, Denver Federal Center, Denver, Colorado 80225.

Washington: Mr. Burkett S. Neely, Jr., Alaska Native Claims Staff, Attn: 204(c) Public Hearing, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Oral comments should be limited to 10 minutes. Written comments of any length are welcome and should be sent to the Area Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99507. The comment period will be held open for 30 days following each hearing.

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