



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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INTERIOR SECRETARY CLARK STOPS MOVE TO DEVELOP OIL AND GAS IN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

Interior Secretary William Clark said today that funds appropriated last year to pave the way for oil and gas exploration in certain areas of the National Wildlife Refuge System will not be needed for that purpose and that he would seek their reallocation to other uses after consultation with Congress.

In letters to the Chairmen of the Senate and House Interior Appropriations Subcommittees, Secretary Clark said there are no Departmental plans for oil and gas activity on so called "acquired lands" within the Wildlife Refuge System. Such lands had been declared open to exploration and development of natural gas and oil by a decision of Interior's Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) in the spring of 1981.

Congress, through the appropriations process, subsequently directed that Interior undertake extensive environmental analysis of the proposed development lands as a prelude to any mineral activity, and made \$500,000 available for that purpose in the 1984 budget.

"I have reviewed this matter carefully and, as I stated in recent Congressional testimony, the Department has no plans to allow oil and gas activity on the wildlife refuges under consideration," Clark said in letters to Senator James McClure and Congressman Sidney Yates. "Therefore, funds for environmental analysis are now unnecessary. I will be recommending that your committee concur in other uses of such monies in the near future."

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