



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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ASH MEADOWS TO BECOME NEWEST NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE;  
WILL SUPPORT RARE DESERT PLANTS AND ANIMALS

A unique desert wetland that straddles the Nevada-California border, Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, will become the 422nd refuge in the national system, Interior Secretary William Clark announced today.

The first portion of this newest National Wildlife Refuge -- an 11,173-acre tract currently owned by The Nature Conservancy, a private conservation organization -- has been purchased for \$5 million by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with an appropriation approved by Congress in 1983. Consideration is being given to withdrawals from Federal public domain land to supplement this first acquisition.

The new refuge, about 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada, will serve as secure habitat for 26 plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. Several of these unique species have already been given Federal protection as endangered species.

"Desert oases like Ash Meadows are so rare in the southwestern United States that addition of this property to the National Wildlife Refuge System represents a noteworthy accomplishment," said Clark. "The rarity of the habitat is exceeded only by the uniqueness of the animals and plants it supports."

(over)

"Once again, The Nature Conservancy, through its ability to move quickly to acquire and hold properties such as Ash Meadows until the Federal Government could receive them, has provided the key to this successful acquisition. The Nevada Congressional delegation, led by Senator Paul Laxalt, has also been instrumental in assuring the success of this project."

Creation of Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge will ensure protection of the variety of unique animal and plant species that inhabit this spring-fed wetland basin barely 40 miles from parched Death Valley National Monument. The area had been slated for development as a residential community before it was purchased by The Nature Conservancy and held for later purchase by the Federal Government.

Four Federally-listed endangered species -- the Ash Meadows speckled dace, the Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish, the Devils Hole pupfish, and the Warm Springs pupfish -- are found on the property. Seven rare plants and one insect that are currently proposed for "endangered" status are also found at Ash Meadows. In addition, a number of other species whose status is precarious enough to possibly merit future listing as "endangered" are included in the property.

Management of Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge by the Fish and Wildlife Service awaits formal transfer of ownership of the property and development of a management plan that could include restoration of local marshes for use by waterfowl.