



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For Release November 8, 1988

Craig L. Rieben 343-5634

CHEYENNE BOTTOMS WETLAND GAINS INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has listed one of the most important shorebird staging areas in the Western Hemisphere as a wetland of international importance under an international agreement. The nearly 20,000 acre Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area in central Kansas became the first non-Federal tract in the United States listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

The Convention was created in 1971 when representatives of 40 nations recognized that wetlands loss and degradation is a global problem and requires a global approach. The Convention is aimed at calling attention to the international sharing of migratory birds and the wetlands upon which they depend. In addition, the document calls for certain critical wetlands to be afforded protection and support by being officially designated as "wetlands of international importance."

In making the announcement, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Frank Dunkle said, "The drought of 1988 has been tough on waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wildlife species that depend on wetlands. Recognizing the international significance of the Cheyenne Bottoms by placing it on the Convention list will assure the continued existence of this vitally important staging area."

(over)

The International Shorebird Survey shows an estimated 45 percent of the North American shorebird population stops at Cheyenne Bottoms during migration. This percentage jumps to more than 90 percent for some species of sandpipers, dowitchers, and the Wilson's phalarope. The area also has a long-standing reputation for waterfowl hunting and birdwatching, with more than 300 different species frequenting the area.

The Convention does not take precedence over Federal or state laws aimed at wetlands protection, but the international assistance brought about through the agreement does help to prevent damage or loss.

Other areas in the United States already listed include the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada, the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey, the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and State Game Range in Alaska, and the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Florida and Georgia.