



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE RELEASES DRAFT IMPACT STATEMENT
ON OPERATION OF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM**

The Fish and Wildlife Service has released a draft environmental impact statement reviewing management of the Nation's 445 national wildlife refuges. The document updates a 1978 environmental impact statement on the same topic.

"The National Wildlife Refuge system protects 90 million acres of varied habitats for migratory birds, endangered species, and a host of mammals, reptiles, fishes, amphibians, and plants," said Frank Dunkle, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

"It is a complex matter to manage these unique areas in a way that balances the need to conserve a variety of species and also provide the public with opportunities to enjoy wildlife. This environmental impact statement details the kinds of decisions refuge managers must make every day. We welcome comments from the public and interested organizations in order to help the Fish and Wildlife Service do the best job we can."

The draft statement outlines four "alternatives" for managing habitat and public use. Each "alternative" is then compared to various environmental consequences. Highlights of the four alternatives are as follows:

Alternative A:

The current management program. Allows for a variety of management options within statutory mandates and provides refuge managers with maximum flexibility. Opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation are encouraged to the extent they are compatible with refuge objectives.

(over)

Alternative B:

Compatible recreational and economic uses would be encouraged. Would expand multiple use opportunities and allow more non-wildlife-oriented recreation such as swimming, picnicking, and camping.

Alternative C:

No management approach. Eliminate management practices so as not to interfere with natural habitat succession and the natural abundance of wildlife. Consumptive uses such as hunting, fishing, and berry picking, would not be allowed. Public use would be limited to non-consumptive activities such as birdwatching and be concentrated at refuge visitor centers.

Alternative D:

Similar to approach of Alternative A except that the taking, capture, or killing of any animal would be prohibited except when necessary for safety of persons or property.

The document evaluates each of the alternatives for its impacts on fish and wildlife populations; diversity of refuge habitat; air, water, and soil; and the local economy and people.

Alternative A is the Service's "preferred alternative." It encompasses management techniques that have evolved since the first national wildlife refuge, Pelican Island, was established in Florida in 1903. It represents the continual development of management techniques in response to the changing needs of wildlife and the increased understanding of fish and wildlife resources. Under this alternative, the habitat is managed to achieve desired fish and wildlife populations and maintain them at levels consistent with sound wildlife management principles and stated refuge objectives.

In order to obtain the greatest degree of input concerning the statement prior to development of a final document, the Service will be holding a series of public meetings in 10 major cities to solicit comments (see list attached). Additional information concerning the draft environmental impact statement can be obtained by contacting the National Wildlife Refuge EIS Team, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Room 2343, Main Interior Building, Washington, DC, 20240; telephone: 202-343-4944.

MEETING LOCATIONS

- Albuquerque, New Mexico Continuing Education Conference Center
Date: January 24, 1989 1634 University Boulevard
Time: 8:00 pm
USFWS Contact : Linda Hagen (505) 766-8044
- Anchorage, Alaska Fairview Community Center
Date: January 4, 1989 1121 East 10th Avenue
Time: 7:00 pm
USFWS Contact : Bill Knauer (907) 786-3399
- Atlanta, Georgia Richard B. Russell Federal Building
Date: January 18, 1989 L. D. Strom Auditorium
Time: 7:00 pm 75 spring Street, S.W.
USFWS Contact : Ken Butts (404) 331-0834
- Bismark, North Dakota Doublewood Ramada
Date: January 19, 1989 Exit 36 and I-94
Time: 7:00 pm
USFWS Contact : Jerry Nugent (303) 236-8150
- Bloomington, Minnesota Thunderbird Motel
Date: January 24, 1989 2201 East 78th Street
Time: 7:30 pm
USFWS Contact : Wayne Weier (612) 725-3306
- Lakewood, Colorado Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center
Date: January 17, 1989 360 Union Boulevard
Time: 7:00 pm
USFWS Contact : Jerry Nugent (303) 236-8150
- Newton Corner, Massachusetts One Gateway Center
Date: January 10, 1989 7th Floor Conference Room
Time: 7:00 pm
USFWS Contact : Curt Laffin (617) 965-5100 Ext. 222
- Portland, Oregon 500 NE Multnomah Street
Date: January 20, 1989 16 th Floor Conference Room
Time: 12:00 noon
USFWS Contact : Ty Planz (503) 231-6171
- St. Louis, Missouri Stouffer Concourse Hotel
Date: January 26, 1989 9801 Natural Bridge Road
Time: 7:30 pm
USFWS Contact : Wayne Weier (612) 725-3306
- Washington, D. C. Main Interior Building Cafeteria
Date: January 18, 1989 Large Buffet Room
Time: 9:00 am 18th and C Streets, NW
USFWS Contact : Sean Furniss (202) 343-4944