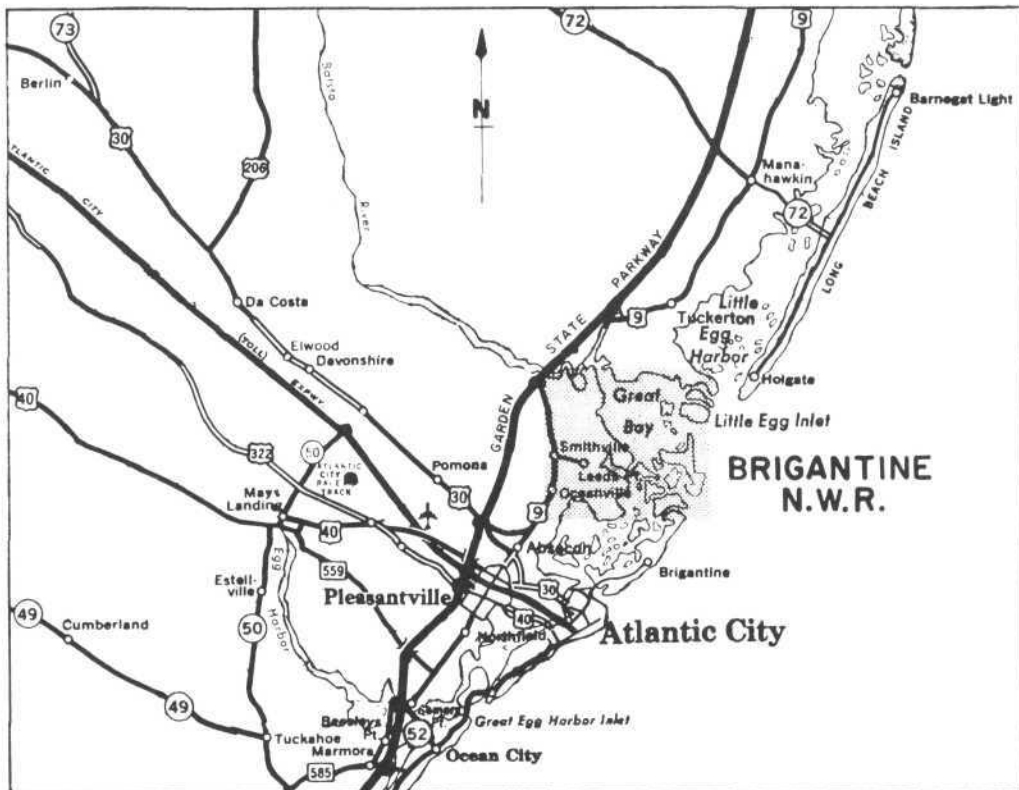


BRIGANTINE

WILDERNESS PROPOSAL



NEW JERSEY



The National Wildlife Refuge System

The Refuge System is a National network of lands and waters managed and safeguarded for preservation and enhancement of the human benefits associated with wildlife and their environments. It presently consists of over 320 units, embracing nearly 30 million acres in 46 states. About 90 refuges containing 25 million acres in over 30 States qualify for study under the Wilderness Act.

PREFACE

The Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (Public Law 88-577), requires that the Secretary of the Interior review every roadless area of 5,000 contiguous acres or more and every roadless island, regardless of size, within the National Wildlife Refuge System within ten years after the effective date of the Act, and report to the President of the United States his recommendations as to the suitability or nonsuitability of each such area or island for preservation as wilderness. A recommendation of the President for designation as wilderness does not become effective unless provided by an Act of Congress.

In defining wilderness, the Act also included areas of less than 5,000 acres that are of sufficient size to make preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

Sections 4 (a) and (b) of the Wilderness Act provide that: (1) The Act is to be within and supplemental to the purposes for which National Wildlife Refuges are established; and (2) Wilderness areas shall be administered so as to preserve their wilderness character and shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use insofar as primary refuge objectives permit. Wilderness designation does not remove or alter an area's status as a National Wildlife Refuge.

This brochure concerns a national wildlife refuge that has been studied by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife at the direction of the Secretary of the Interior. Its purpose is to summarize the wilderness study in sufficient detail to enable the reader to form an opinion regarding study conclusions concerning the suitability and desirability of including all or part of the refuge within the National Wildlife Preservation System.

INTRODUCTION

Little Beach Island forms a protective barrier for the marsh islands of Egg Island, Salt Island, Pullen Island, Elder Island, and a cluster of 12 unnamed islands totaling 4,250 acres of unspoiled beach and salt marsh within the 19,388-acre Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge. Brigantine Refuge is located along the Atlantic Coast of New Jersey, ten miles north of the boardwalk of Atlantic City, within the counties of Atlantic and Ocean. It lies about 90 miles south of Newark and 53 miles southeast of Philadelphia. It is an oasis in costal megalopolis providing the unspoiled solitude of tidal bays, salt marshes, and a barrier-beach island of significant size.

Little Beach Island and its complex of salt-marsh islands is a relatively remote and undisturbed area of unspoiled marsh and dunes with significant values to wildlife for nesting, resting, and feeding; to people for soul-satisfying peaceful solitude, and as an outdoor laboratory for a wide range of studies by schools and universities.



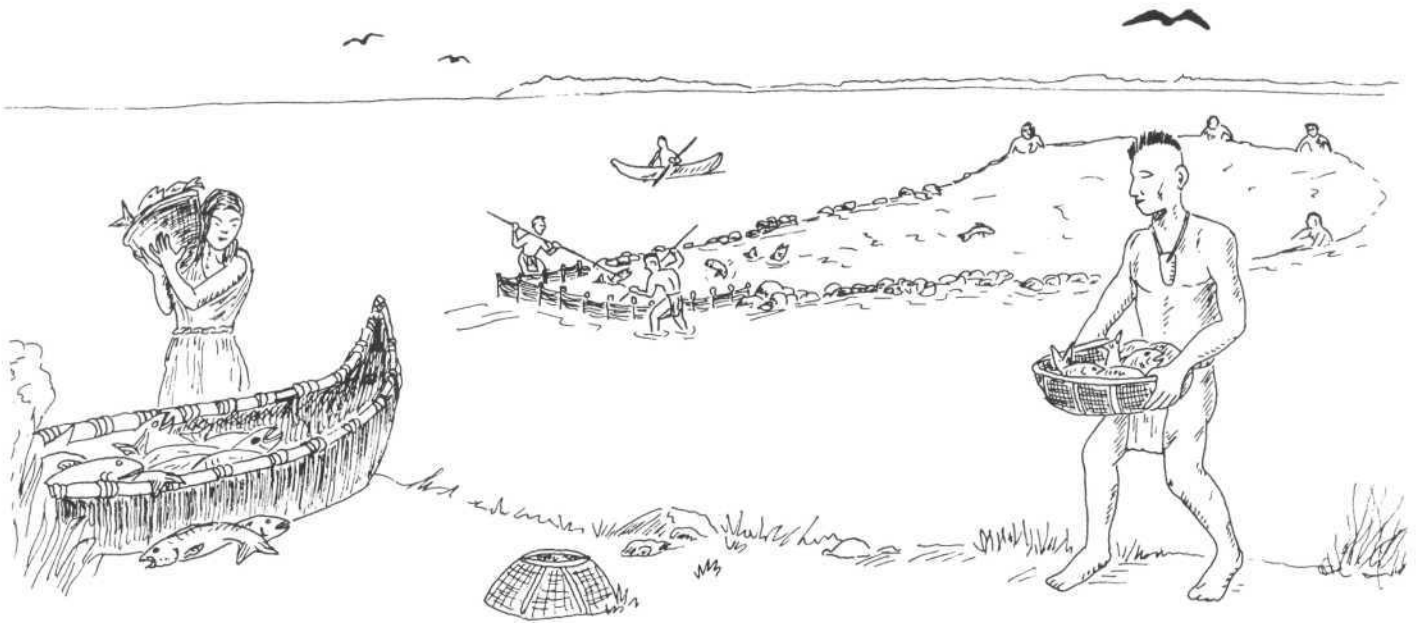
Concentration of migrant snow geese at Brigantine Refuge



Little Beach Island Beachcombing

Wildlife-oriented recreation and environmental education programs and facilities reward the visitor with a quality experience without violating the integrity of the environment.

HISTORY



The history of Little Beach Island is inseparable from that of the Brigantine Refuge area which goes back to the Indians. Huge mounds of shells attest to their culture, and names such as Indian Cabin Creek, Lake Lenape, and Lake Absegami reflect this heritage.

Cabot in 1498, Verrazzano in 1523, and Henry Hudson in 1609 were the first white explorers to see the area. "Eyren Haven", meaning "harbour of eggs" — now known as Great and Little Egg Harbor — was named by the Dutch ship captain, Cornelius Jacobsen May in 1614, for the great abundance of birds' eggs he saw there.

The excellent fishing and trapping attracted the first colonists — Dutch, Swedes, and English, who were raising cattle, building ships, and running salt works by 1738, adjacent to Little Beach Island along the mainland.

The marshes and bays provided the mainland settlers with oysters, crabs, fish, clams, and salt-marsh hay for the markets, and thousands of waterfowl eggs were taken for the markets in Philadelphia and Camden. Nesting herons and egrets were sacrificed for their feathers to satisfy the millinery trade of the period.

By the late 1800's, the seaside resort business had begun. With it came the daily increasing threat of despoilation of undeveloped gems like Little Beach Island and its emerald-like marsh islands — still unspoiled and still of extreme value to nesting birds.



Little Beach Island dunes and marsh

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Little Beach Island is one of the last barrier beaches along the New Jersey coast. It protects an estuarine environment of unspoiled marsh islands, tidal streams, and potholes from coastal storms. The crescent-shaped island is approximately one-quarter mile wide and a little over three miles long, comprising over 160 acres. The island consists of wave and wind-sorted fine sand with shallow lenses of dark silt in protected coves.

Egg Island, Elder Island, Salt Island, Pullen Island, and the unnamed islands are all emergent tidal marsh islands totaling about 4,090 acres, stretching north and south the length of Little Beach Island and westward nearly to the Intra-coastal Waterway. These marsh islands are firm, deep, dark-colored silt-clay and peat.



Little Beach Island is gently rolling with low dunes. The vegetative cover is typical barrier-beach species grading from barren foredunes at the high-tide line with dune grass first anchoring the sand, to beach plum, wild rose, poison ivy, bayberry, speckled alder, wild cherry, and aspen in the back dunes. The terrain extends from mean sea level to a maximum of 13 feet on the highest of the dunes. A few low areas contain freshwater pockets with fresh-type species of grasses, sedges, and flowering plants.

The marsh islands are all dominant salt-marsh grasses with lesser densities of other grasses and sedges. No woody vegetation exists on the flat marsh islands which average two feet above mean sea level.

Average annual precipitation is 42 inches, including 14 inches melt from snowfall. Average annual temperature is 54°F with a January average of 36°F, and a July-August average of 74°F. The climate is oceanic, subject to periodic "nor'easters", and infrequently the fringes of hurricanes.

RESOURCES



The most striking quality of Little Beach Island and its associated marsh islands is the unspoiled barrier beach and estuarian solitude and beauty found so close to urban centers of population.

This is a traditional nesting, migration, and wintering area for waterfowl, marsh birds, and shorebirds. It is a major wintering ground for Atlantic brant and is one of the important wintering and migration areas for black ducks.

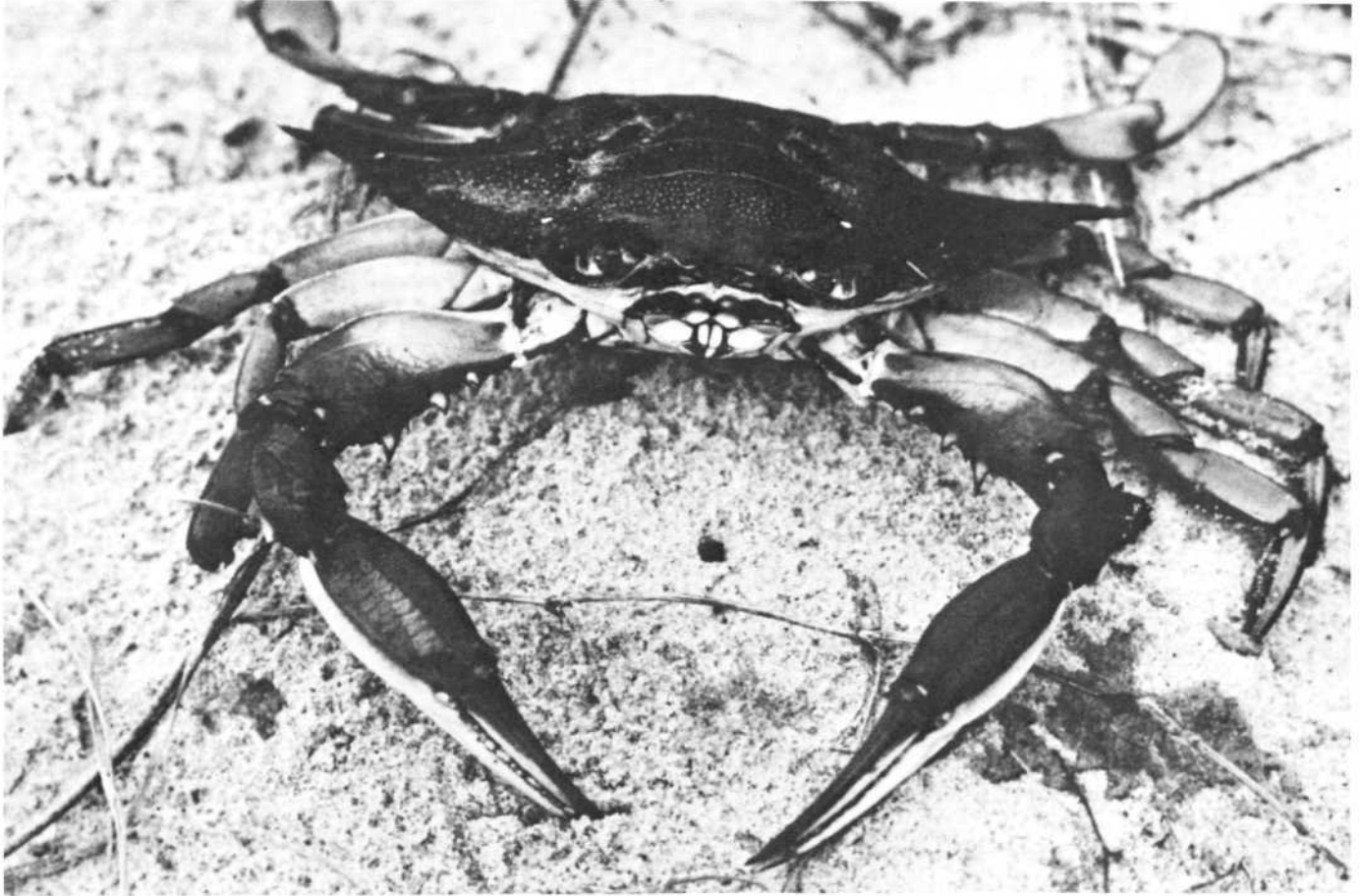


Osprey

The osprey, whose numbers have been decimated in recent years, nests in the solitude of the undisturbed habitat of Little Beach Island and Elder Island. The nesting success of this rare and beautiful fish hawk is dependent upon the existence of wilderness areas such as Little Beach Island.

Little Beach Island contains a rookery of black-crowned night herons and, in the spring, migrations of tiny warblers are an outstanding experience as they flit along through the protective brush feeding and moving *northward*. Egg Island received its name for the concentrations of nesting terns and gulls which covered it. It is an important nesting site for gulls from a radius of many miles and offers outstanding opportunity for extended serious study or just looking by a casual visitor.

Grebes, herons, egrets, bitterns, rails, sandpipers, gulls, terns, skimmers, and plovers are some of the marsh, water, and shorebirds common to the area, especially during the spring and fall migrations.

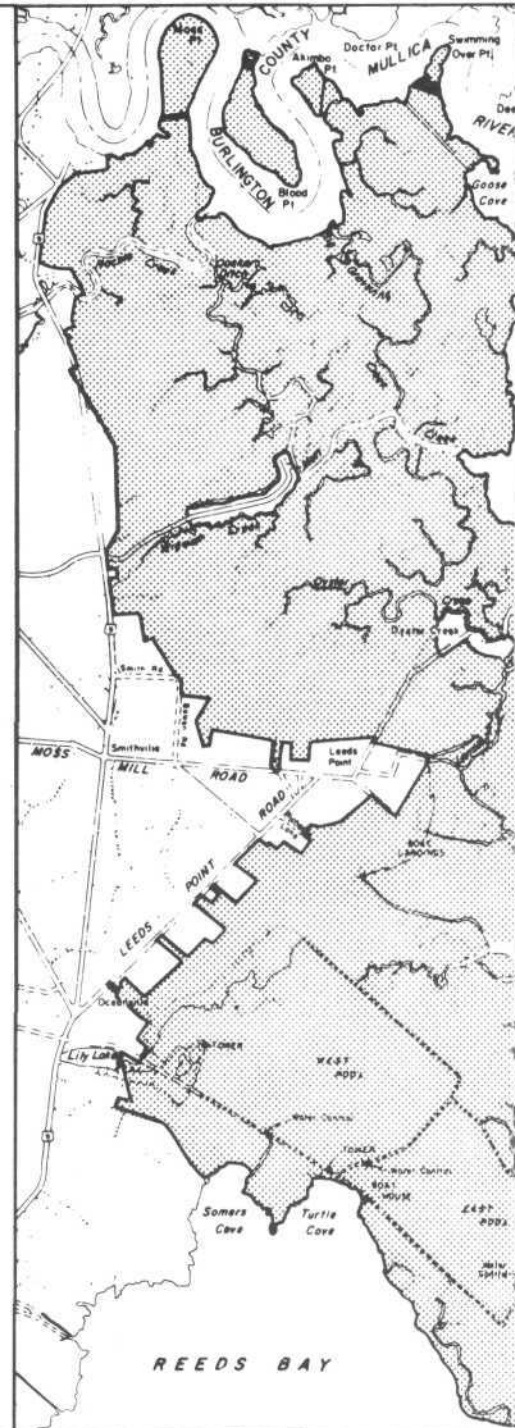
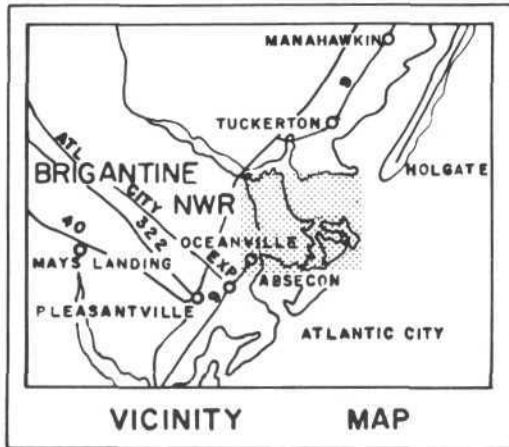


Blue Crab

White perch, fluke, flounder, and blue crabs are plentiful in the tidal guts, streams, and bays throughout the Little Beach Island area and its marsh islands. Excellent surf fishing is found along the eastern beach of Little Beach Island. These species are caught by sport fishermen and also support a small commercial fishery. The diamondback terrapin, once commercially caught to nearly extinction, abounds in the larger tidal streams and little bays. Large pods of them may be seen during breeding season.

No minerals have been reported in the study area. The main substance of Little Beach Island is well-sorted yellow sand. The marsh islands are silty-peat of various thicknesses, overlaying sand. These are not scarce commodities in this area.

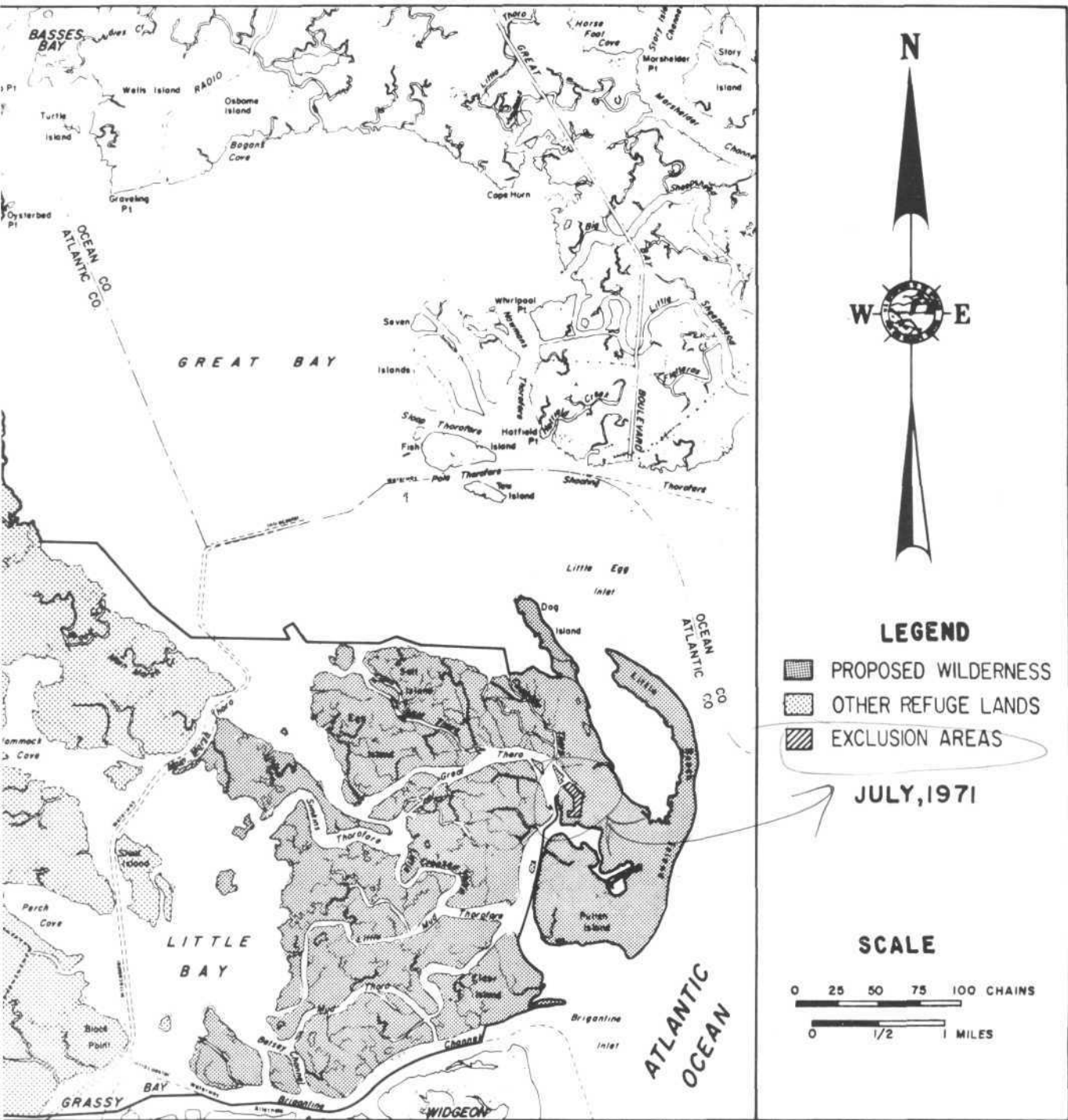
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BRIGANTINE NATIONAL
ATLANTIC COUNTY

OSAL

NEW JERSEY



WILDLIFE REFUGE
NEW JERSEY

PRELIMINARY
SUBJECT TO CHANGE

PUBLIC USE



Surf casting along a wild beach.

The study area is currently used by a few surf fishermen, sport fishermen, and some commercial fishing. A number of schools and organizations sponsor and participate in research projects. Little Beach Island and Egg Island are enjoyed by bird-watching and nature-study enthusiasts. The designation of wilderness for this area would provide lasting preservation of the beauty and solitude of this area for generations yet to come.



Birdwatching



Nature Photography

MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

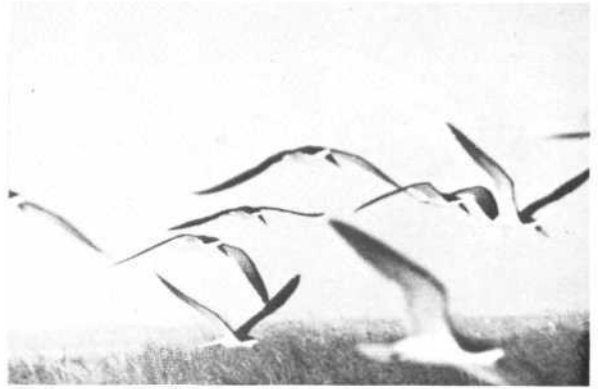
No management-development practices will be necessary within the proposed wilderness area. Research programs in progress can be continued, and new ones conducted that are compatible with the Wilderness Act. Management will be to protect and preserve the habitat as it now exists and allow natural succession to proceed undisturbed by any activities of man. Two tracts of land on Little Beach Island containing 22 small buildings on 11 acres will be excluded from wilderness status until tenure agreements with the seasonal users have been satisfied.



Conducted Nature Tours



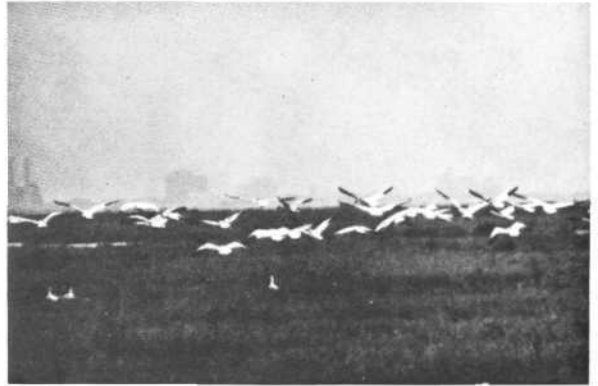
Black Ducks



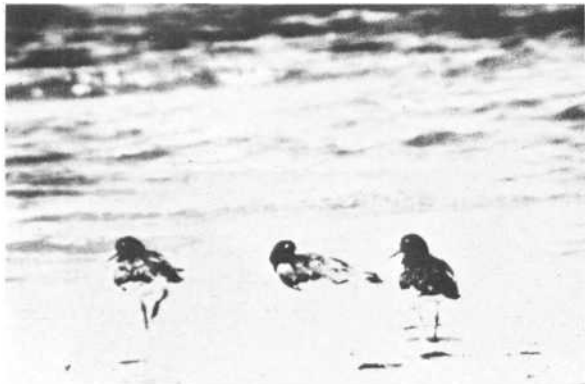
Black Skimmers



Brant



Snow Geese



American Oystercatchers



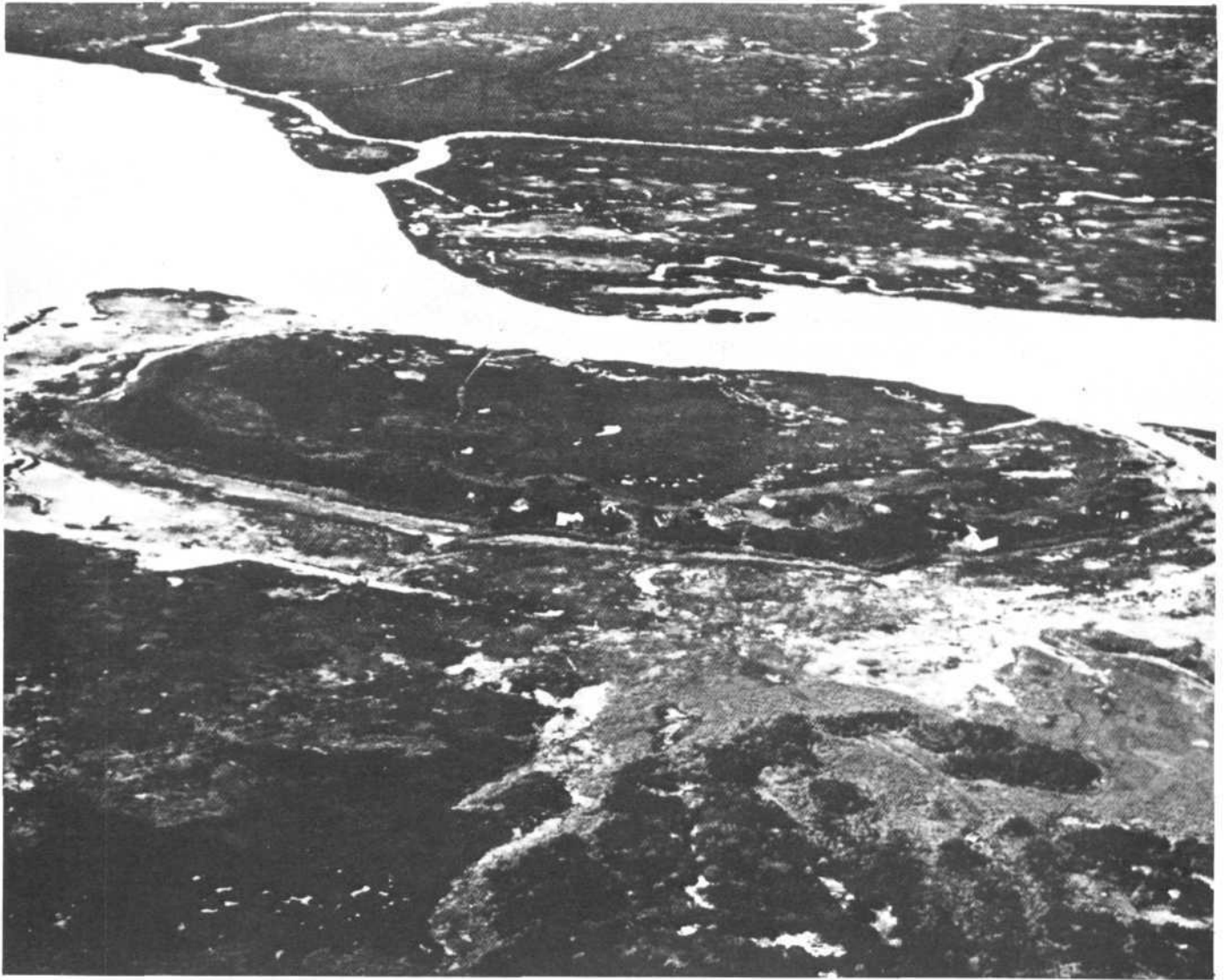
Snowy Egret

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATION

There will be no change in public use due to wilderness status. Boats would still be permitted to travel the waterways below mean high tide and land on the beaches. Fishermen and nature enthusiasts would experience no change in access, and would find added pleasure in the assurance of permanent protection for the solitude and pristine beauty of the proposed wilderness area. Hunters would be welcome as before and find no change in boat access or foot travel due to wilderness status.



Clamming



Inholdings — Exceptions to Wilderness



CONCLUSIONS



Brant feeding in undisturbed habitat.

On the basis of field and record studies, it has been determined that Little Beach Island, Egg Island, Salt Island, Pullen Island, Elder Island, and approximately 12 other closely associated unnamed marsh islands are suitable as wilderness within the National Wilderness System. The area found suitable includes all Bureau-owned lands as designated on the center-fold map, totaling about 4,250 acres, with certain exclusions as indicated.



Wilderness marsh islands and flocking waterfowl.



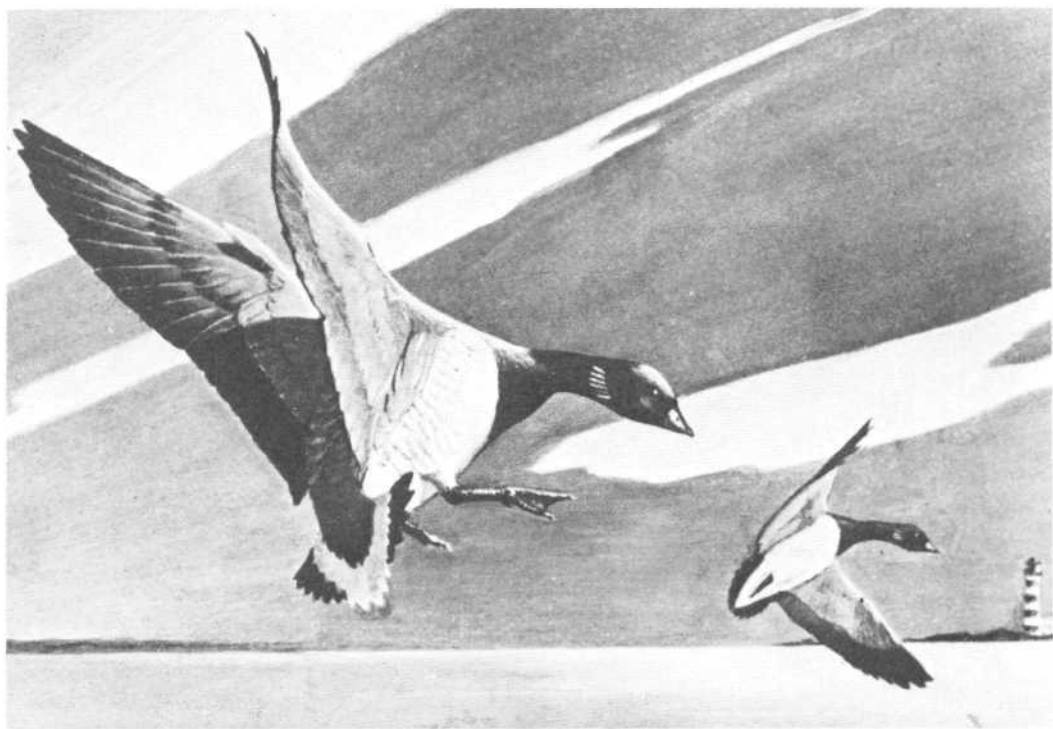
Wilderness benefits fishing and hunting opportunities.

Persons interested in this proposal are encouraged to inspect the Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge. Vehicular access to refuge headquarters is convenient; however, access to the proposed wilderness area is limited and private arrangements for boat transportation should be made prior to a visit to the area. Additional information may be obtained from the Refuge Manager, Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge, Great Creek Road, P.O. Box 72, Oceanville, New Jersey 08231; or the Regional Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, Boston, Massachusetts 02109.



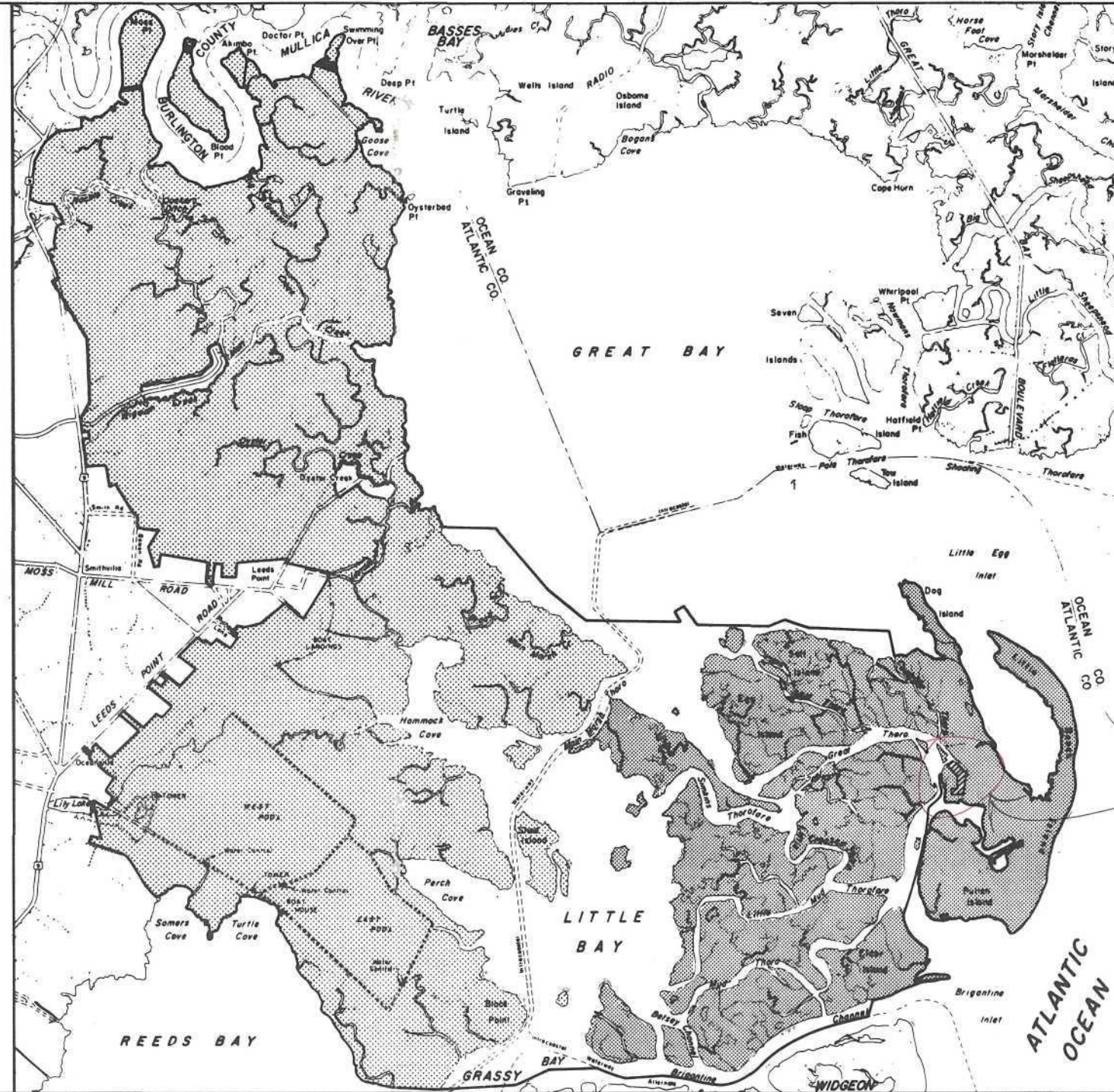
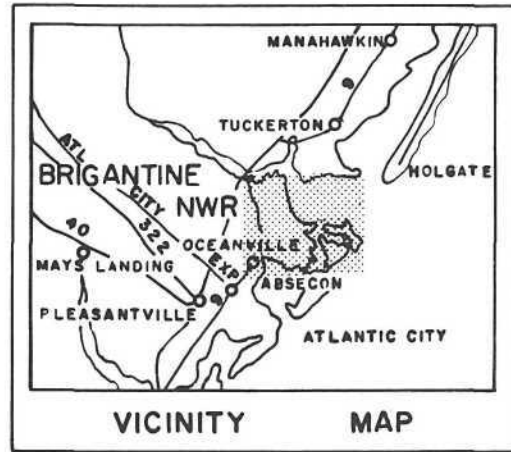
As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources."




The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.



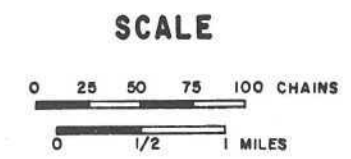
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- LEGEND**
-  PROPOSED WILDERNESS
 -  OTHER REFUGE LANDS
 -  EXCLUSION AREAS

JULY, 1971



BRIGANTINE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
ATLANTIC COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

PRELIMINARY
SUBJECT TO CHANGE