



GRAND SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
NEW JERSEY

W I L D E R N E S S A R E A

PROPOSAL



PREFACE

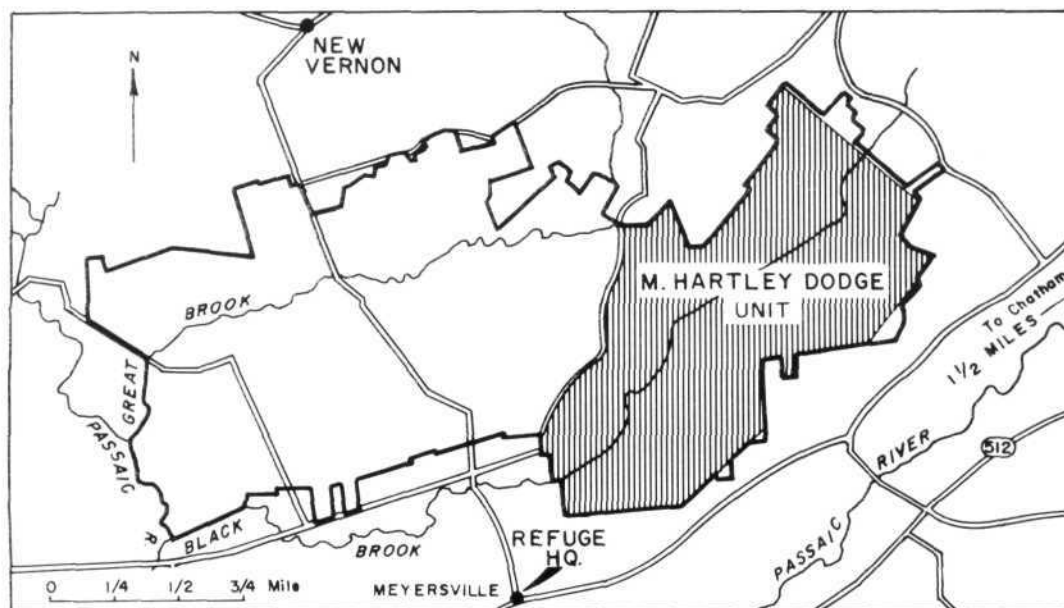
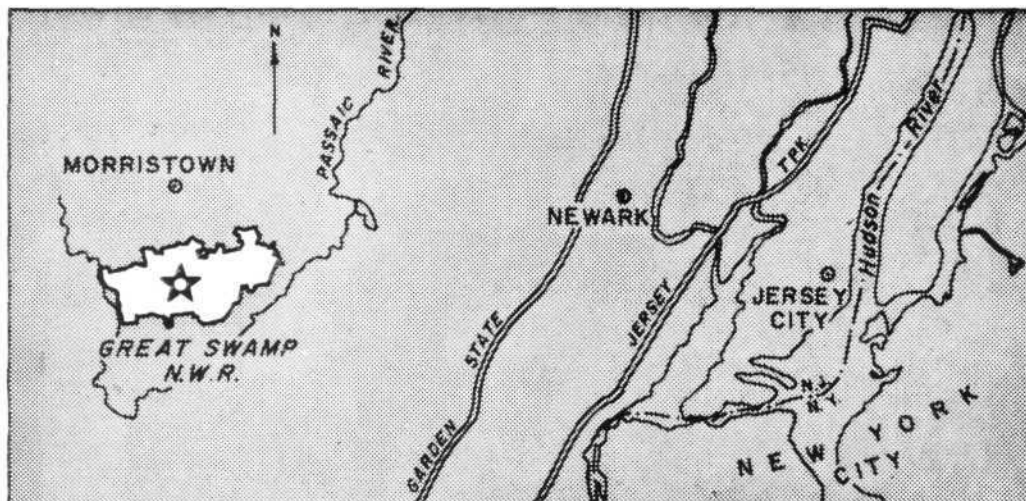
The Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (Public Law 88-577) requires that every roadless area of 5,000 acres or more and every roadless island within the National Wildlife Refuge System be designated a wilderness study area. Each of these areas will be studied to determine its suitability as a wilderness.

The M. Hartley Dodge Natural Area within the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge qualifies as a wilderness study area. It is a 2,400-acre "roadless island" of unspoiled swamp dotted with wooded knolls. Hemmed in by a landscape dominated by man, the swamp is the domain of a fascinating community of native plants and animals left undisturbed for many decades. It is a wild area of native wildlife living in extensive marsh, swamp, garden-like islands of laurel and stately trees.

Acquisition in the proposed Wilderness is about 91 percent complete. There are 14 tracts, comprising about 229 acres, still in private ownership. There are no roads. There is one federally-owned building which will be removed. There are no other obvious marks of civilization. A few remote "island" ridges in the swamp support ancient trees believed to be 300 to 500 years old. Much of the area is little changed since the last ice age.

The provisions of Sections 4(a) and 4(b) of the Wilderness Act declare that: (1) the Act is to be within and supplemental to the purposes for which National Wildlife Refuges are established; (2) wilderness areas shall be administered so as to meet purposes of wildlife protection in such a manner as to preserve and protect wildlife communities; (3) such areas shall also be managed within the wilderness area concept to provide public recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical enjoyment insofar as wildlife management objectives permit.

M. HARTLEY DODGE UNIT
PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREA
GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
NEW JERSEY



LOCATION

The proposed Wilderness is located in Chatham, Harding, and Passaic Townships, Morris County, in north-central New Jersey. The area comprises the eastern portion of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and represents 40 percent of the proposed refuge. It comprises all the land within the M. Hartley Dodge Unit that the Bureau owns or acquires in the future, further described as all Bureau-owned lands east of the Meyersville Road, excepting those beginning at the presently existing public utility right-of-ways on the east and southeast sides.

Morristown, the county seat of Morris County, is located seven miles to the north, and New York City is twenty-five miles to the east.

HISTORY

Approximately 40,000 years ago the Wisconsin Glacier advanced southward gathering massive loads of sand, gravel, and boulders in its bulk. After some 15,000 years, this advance reached its farthest point in this area, stopping on a line along the sites of Chatham, Madison, and Morristown, New Jersey. As it receded, long ridges of glacial till were deposited. One such ridge blocked the outlet of an ancient river basin near the present location of Short Hills, New Jersey.

As the glacier melted northward behind this natural dam, it created a lake 30 miles long and 10 miles wide--Lake Passaic. Eventually, Lake Passaic developed an outlet at Little Falls Gap, draining out along the present course of the Passaic River. Vestiges of Lake Passaic remain in the form of the extensive marshes and swamps including Black Meadows, Great Piece Meadows, Hatfield Swamp, Troy Meadows, and Great Swamp.



William Penn acquired a large parcel of land in northern New Jersey in 1667 which was called West New Jersey. Part of this acquisition was the Great Swamp, which was recorded on local maps as early as 1682, and was inhabited by the Delaware Indians.

British investors were deeded a 30,000-acre tract by the Delawares in 1708 for thirty pounds and assorted trade goods. They renamed the area New Britain. Settlement began in 1720. During the Revolutionary War lumbering operations supported a nearby hub and felly factory. By the turn of the century, brick, charcoal, and potash industries had begun in the area.

Timber was cut from the Swamp until the early 1900's. Due to the fact that a great deal of the area was inaccessible, except on thick ice during the winter months, many ridges have vestiges of virgin timber. The neglect of old drainage ditches has enabled the area to revert to swampland.

The Great Swamp has been the object of several divergent land use plans. The Army Corps of Engineers has proposed a number of flood control plans involving the Swamp. The first was proposed in the 1920's, and the latest is still in the planning stage.

The Works Projects Administration engaged in a drainage project during the mid and late 1930's. Ditches were constructed or improved. The channel of Black Brook was straightened and deepened. These efforts slightly increased the drainage of the Natural Area.

In 1959 the Port Authority of New York proposed an international jetport in Great Swamp. Residents and landowners quickly formed the Jersey Jetport Association and initiated a campaign to counter this threat. At the same time conservationists were alerted by the activities of the Great Swamp Committee of the North American Wildlife Foundation, which was trying to preserve the area for a wildlife refuge. The threat of the jetport gave added impetus to the work of the Committee. It was able to muster the efforts and interest of a great number of volunteers who raised more than a million dollars to acquire nearly 3,000 acres for donation to the Government. This threatened loss continues to be a very real problem, involving not only the M. Hartley Dodge proposed wilderness, but the entire Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge as well.



DESCRIPTION

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is located in the Piedmont Plateau of the Appalachian Province. The Plateau is characterized by gently rounded hills separated by broad valleys with hills rising from 200 to 400 feet above the surrounding land. Great Swamp is best described as a shallow bowl, seven miles long and three miles wide.

The climate of this area is basically "continental" with cold winters, near-tropical summers, and a range of 40° between average temperatures for the coldest and hottest months.

The Natural Area is a brush and timbered swamp interspersed with low ridges or knolls rising from five to fifteen feet above the surrounding swamp. In several places the swamp opens into small marshes. Bottom-land vegetation is composed of red maple, elm, azalea, withe rod, high bush blueberry, swamp rose, alder, willow, and a wide variety of ground cover types. Many of the scattered low ridges support a forest association of beech, white oak, scarlet oak, chestnut oak, northern red oak, sweet birch, sugar maple, black gum, white ash, and shagbark hickory.

A few remote "island" ridges support magnificent stands of beech. Some trees measure 14 feet in girth and are believed to be between 300 and 500 years old. A white oak over ninety-five feet high and four feet nine inches in diameter has been found. Other ridges support spectacular stands of mountain laurel and rhododendron which attracts many visitors when these plants are in bloom.





WILDLIFE

The proposed wilderness is the only extensive swamp-forest habitat of its type in northern New Jersey. It supports a wide variety of birds and mammals, as well as reptiles and amphibians. The varied natural habitat is used as nesting, resting, and feeding grounds by over 140 species of birds. Wood ducks, black ducks, and mallards nest throughout the swamp. During migration large numbers of warblers are found in the timber.

White-tailed deer and ruffed grouse inhabit the area, especially where the swamp borders cropland, brush, and upland ridges. Raccoon, opossum, grey squirrel, and red fox are abundant, with occasional sightings of weasels, grey fox, and mink reported.



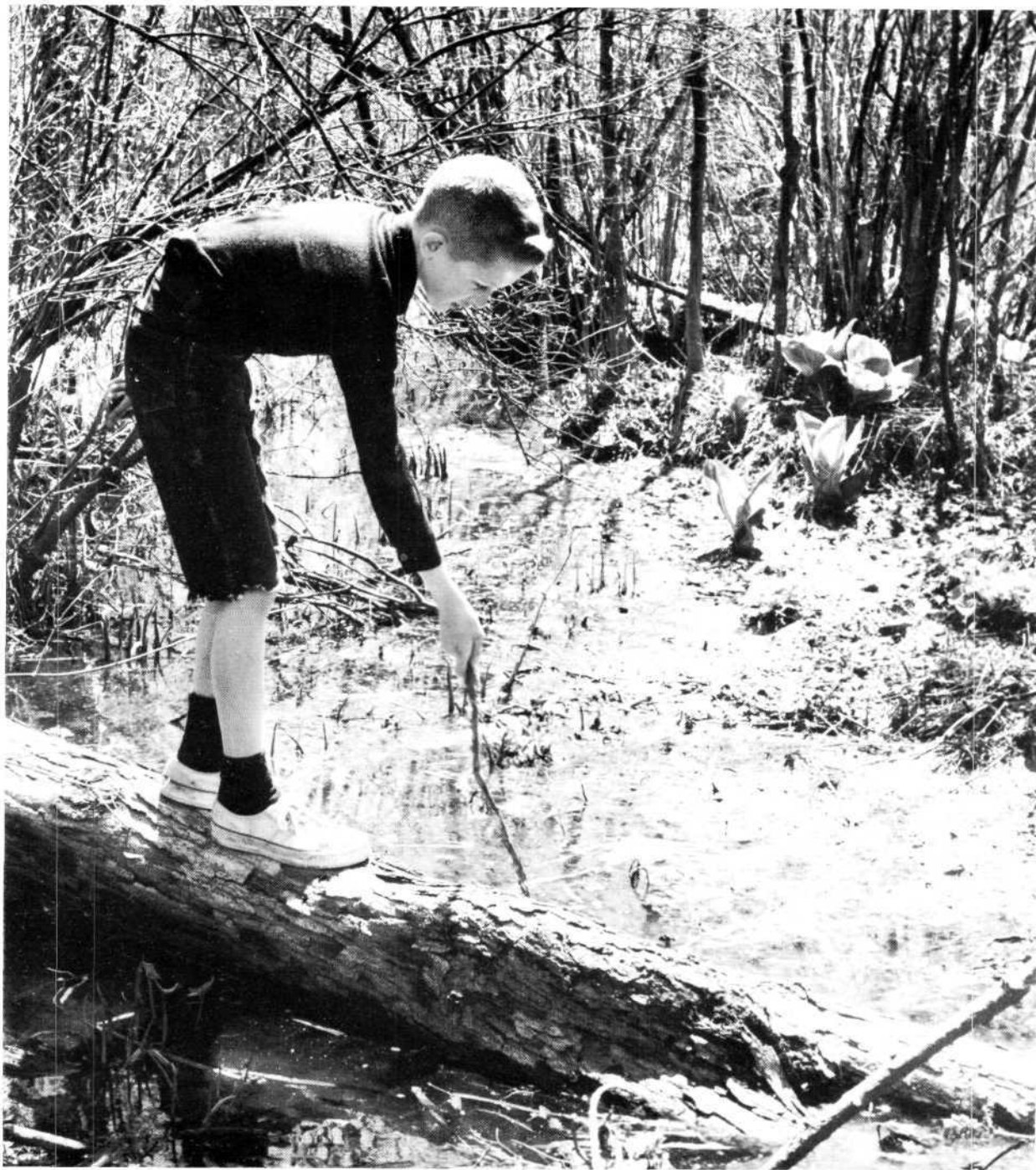
MANAGEMENT

The M. Hartley Dodge proposed wilderness will continue to be managed as a wild area. The sole existing building will be removed. No other man-made structures exist. The road and trails will be restricted to foot travel only. Nature trails will be maintained to encourage continued use for education and recreation.

A special use permit will continue to be issued to the Morris County Park Commission, which maintains a portion of its Nature Education Center trail on the land of the proposed wilderness. The program of the Commission aids the public, especially school children, to enjoy the wilderness qualities of the land.



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS



The M. Hartley Dodge Unit of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge lies in the center of "Megalopolis USA." The human population density in New Jersey is over 833 persons per square mile. Individuals seeking escape into the peaceful seclusion of nature find quiet and solitude in this wilderness. This quiet swamp, with its abundant wildlife, its ridges and knolls of laurel and old trees, all accessible by convenient foot trails is unique and the last of its kind in northern New Jersey.

No commercially useful minerals are within or beneath the Great Swamp Refuge, which is composed primarily of glacial till, silt, and shallow peat deposits. Its potential as an aquifer for local water supplies would only be enhanced by the protection of wilderness status. The New Jersey State Plan for outdoor recreation contains no proposed development that would be adversely affected by wilderness protection. The area will continue to attract nature enthusiasts seeking an exceptional wilderness experience to which no dollar value can be assigned. Wilderness status for the M. Hartley Dodge Unit by Act of Congress will preserve forever its unspoiled character.

INSPECTION

Anyone concerned about this proposal is urged to personally inspect the M. Hartley Dodge Unit of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

HEARING INFORMATION

A public hearing will be held at 9:00 A.M., February 8, 1967, in the Lecture Hall of the Morris County Nature Center, end of Jay Road, Chatham Township, Morris County, New Jersey. Any questions not answered by this leaflet should be directed to one of the following:

Regional Director
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife
U. S. Post Office and Courthouse
Boston, Massachusetts 02109

Refuge Manager
Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
614 Meyersville Road
Gillette, New Jersey 07933