

LLA-Wilderness Reference Sheet

LAGUNA ATASCOSA WILDERNESS REFERENCE SHEET

1. Name: Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge.
2. Location:
 - a. County and State: Cameron and Willacy Counties, Texas.
 - b. General: about 25 miles north of Brownsville on the southern Texas coast.
3. Congressional Representation:
 - a. Senate: John G. Tower (R)
Lloyd M. Bentson (D)
 - b. House: Eligio de la Garza (D)
4. Size: 45,147 acres (whole refuge studied initially, but only Unit IV - North Island (9,440 acres) - considered to have potential for wilderness.
5. Date Established:
 - a. Authority: Migratory Bird Conservation Act.
 - b. Acquisition: Duck Stamp funds.
6. Refuge Objectives:
 - a. to develop, maintain, and manage waterfowl habitat to support up to 500,000 ducks and 20,000 geese.
 - b. to preserve habitat for animals rare or endangered in the United States.
 - c. to provide for public use and enjoyment of the wildlife resource.
 - d. to manage for the greatest number of migratory and indigenous species within the capabilities of available habitat.
7. Wildlife: about 75% of nations wintering population of redhead ducks is found on the refuge and adjacent Laguna Madre; 300 bird species are present; mammals include deer, javelina, bobcat, coyote, and armadillo; 32 species classified as threatened, including 25 peripheral species, the endangered southern bald eagle and peregrine falcon, the rare prairie falcon and 4 with their status undetermined.
8. Public Use: 22,987 visits in 1968; fishing, auto tours, wildlife observation; picnicking, camping, wildlife guided tours, wildlife trail walks, and wildlife photography.

9. Economic Use: 130 head of cattle grazed on North Island; Intracoastal Waterway cuts across one corner of North Island and Harlingen Ship Channel forms one boundary of the unit; spoil is deposited on North Island when these two waterways are dredged.
10. Mining and Mineral Leasing: Oil and natural gas constitute the mineral potentials of North Island; some exploration has been carried out on refuge proper, but no producing wells have been established; mineral rights on the refuge have been retained by the previous landowners and are due to expire within 10 years; if any oil or gas is discovered the previous owners have full rights as long as the wells produce, even after 10 years.
11. Wilderness Proposed at Public Hearing: None; North Island Unit recommended as non-suitable because of planned future management for waterfowl and possible complications from development for oil and gas.
12. Public Hearing:
 - a. Date: October 15, 1970
 - b. Place: Harlingen, Texas
13. Public Reaction at Hearing:
 - a. Number of Statements:
 - b. Pro (in favor of non-suitability): (16); 0 elected officials; 2 public agencies; 4 organizations; and 10 individuals.
 - c. Con: (14): 4 organizations and 10 individuals
 - d. Reasons for: area would best be utilized by development for waterfowl.
 - e. Reasons against: because of limited undisturbed coastal habitat now left, wilderness was more important than managing intensively for waterfowl.
14. Changes After Hearing: None, still recommended as non-suitable.