



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

NOV 27 1973

Dear Mr. President:

It is with pleasure that I recommend the establishment of areas totaling approximately 16,317 acres in Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, Nebraska, as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Section 3(c) of the Wilderness Act (approved September 3, 1964; 78 Stat. 890, 892; 16 U.S.C. 1132(c)), directs the Secretary of the Interior to review roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more in the national parks, monuments, other units of the National Park System, wildlife refuges, and game ranges and report to the President his recommendation as to the suitability of each such area for preservation as wilderness. The Act further directs the President to advise the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of his recommendation with respect to the designation of each such area as wilderness. A recommendation of the President for designation as wilderness shall become effective only if so provided by an Act of Congress.

This Department has recently completed its review of such roadless areas in Valentine National Wildlife Refuge. Based on this review, wilderness designation of certain lands totaling approximately 16,317 acres located in the 71,516-acre refuge is recommended.

The Valentine National Wildlife Refuge is located in northcentral Nebraska and is characterized by its sandhill ranges, which vary from steep-sided, sharp-topped sandhills to rolling meadows, sloughs and lakes. The refuge was established in 1935, by Executive Order No. 7142, as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. The primary breeding species of waterfowl are blue-winged teal, mallards, gadwall and Canada geese. In addition, diving ducks, including a few redheads and canvasback, also use the refuge. The welfare of many other migratory birds and threatened or unique species such as the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, greater prairie chicken, greater sandhill crane, golden eagle and trumpeter swan are of important concern. White-tailed deer and mule deer inhabit the refuge as do a variety of small



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mammals, notably badger, beaver, muskrat, coyotes and pocket gophers. Such fish as northern pike, bass, perch, sunfish and crappie are found in abundance. There are no known commercially valuable mineral deposits in the area. However, should such deposits be discovered, the designation of this area as wilderness would not affect the recovery of such deposits by use of slant drilling from adjacent land so long as such drilling did not disturb the surface of the wilderness area. Primary use of the refuge by the public is for fishing and related picnicking activities along with hunting and other miscellaneous wildlife oriented experiences.

Wilderness designation is recommended for lands in the southwest quarter of the refuge which contain three lakes situated among the sandhills. Because public ownership of sandhill areas is minimal, this wilderness proposal presents a rare opportunity to preserve a portion of this unusual type of geological formation.

In accordance with the requirements of the Wilderness Act, a public hearing was held on the recommendation at Valentine, Nebraska, on December 12, 1972. Analyses of the hearing records and written expressions received, together with the letters received from other Federal agencies, are contained in the enclosed synopsis. Complete records have been compiled and are available for inspection by the public.

On the basis of our review, I believe that the roadless area identified herein in the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge is suitable for designation as wilderness. Enclosed is a draft bill which, if enacted, would incorporate this area into the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Respectfully yours,

Rogers C. Morton
Secretary of the Interior

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Enclosures

A B I L L

To designate certain lands in the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, Cherry County, Nebraska, as wilderness.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, in accordance with section 3(c) of the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (78 Stat. 890, 892; 16 U.S.C. 1132(c)), certain lands in the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, Nebraska, which comprise about 16,317 acres and which are depicted on a map entitled "Valentine Wilderness - Proposed" and dated August 1972, are hereby designated as wilderness. The map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the offices of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Department of the Interior.

SEC. 2. As soon as practicable after this Act takes effect, a map of the wilderness area and a description of its boundaries shall be filed with the Interior and Insular Affairs Committees of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, and such map and description shall have the same force and effect as if included in this Act: Provided, however, That correction of clerical and typographical errors in such description and map may be made.

SEC. 3. The wilderness area designated by this Act shall be known as the "Valentine Wilderness" and shall be administered by the Secretary of the Interior in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Wilderness Act governing areas designated by that Act as wilderness areas, and any reference to the Secretary of Agriculture shall be deemed to be a reference to the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 4. Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to prohibit the placement, presence, modification, operation and maintenance of windmills and associated water tanks which the Secretary of the Interior deems the minimum essential for fire protection and wildlife purposes within the wilderness areas.