

VALENTINE WILDERNESS PROPOSAL

SUMMARY

Introduction

Valentine National Wildlife Refuge is located in Cherry County 26 miles south of Valentine, Nebraska on U.S. Highway 83. The Refuge was established on August 14, 1935 as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. The lands in the 71,516 acre refuge were purchased with none being withdrawn from public domain.

History

The Sioux Indians were early residents in this area numbering about 5,000 in the early 1870's. When the land was opened for settlement, cattle were brought up from Dodge City, Kansas initiating the open-range days which terminated with the last big round-up in 1885. A U.S. Post Office was established on the south end of Dewey Lake, on land now in the refuge, in 1910 which operated only a few years before closing. Valentine established itself as a pioneer cattle town and grew more rapidly and boasted wooden houses and wooden sidewalks. The lumber came from the ponderosa pine which was plentiful in the Niobrara River Valley. The forest was utilized heavily and is only now beginning recover to the stage where it resembles the forest of the early days.

A CCC camp was built on the refuge in 1935 which contributed to

the construction of 125 miles of boundary fencing, roads, trails, towers, and cabins. Camp personnel also planted trees and shrubs for wildlife food and cover which can still be seen today. The camp was closed in 1939 and the buildings were razed.

Description

Cherry County is the largest county in the state and is also larger than some of the eastern states. Much of this county is comprised of the Nebraska sandhills. The terrain is a series of sandhill ranges called "choppies" with smooth valleys in between. If the valley is deep enough, a shallow lake is found in the bottom. If the valley bottom is at a somewhat higher level, wide, moist, grassy meadows are found. Haying in the grassy meadows has been conducted by local cattle ranchers on the refuge under special use permit for years. Grazing units occupy the remainder of the upland areas which are sprinkled with windmills.

The soil type for the entire refuge can generally be described as fine sand. Broken down by type and percentages the soils are as follows: dune sand, stabilized and hilly 75%; Valentine fine sand, undulating 15%; Gannet fine sandy loam and Gannet-Valentine loamy fine sand 8%; and muck 3%.

A series of lakes lie in more or less parallel string patterns running from the west-northwest to east-southeast between the

sandhill ranges. These are the lakes and marshy areas which are attractive to the waterfowl and the primary reasons for the location of the refuge.

The 12,900 acres Wilderness Proposal is bounded on the west by the highline which runs roughly N-NW to S-SE the entire length of the proposal. The southern boundary is the south refuge line except that West Sweetwater Lake, the adjoining road and other developments are excluded. The east boundary is U. S. Highway 83 running north to a point slightly south of the roadway located along the south side of West Twin Lake. From here the boundary runs westwardly along the fence line to the broad valley between the sandhill ranges between Pelican and Dad's lakes and thence west northwestwardly along the fence lines until intersecting the highline along the west boundary. A map is attached.

The proposal includes two large lakes, Dad's and Mule and several smaller ones. The ends of the long narrow, larger lakes have marshes while the smaller lakes are usually surrounded by marshes.

The sandhills are stabilized by a thin cover of vegetation with tree growth limited to the shores of the larger lakes unless planted by man. The sandhills are separated into ranges with some of the hills high and steep-sided while others are lower and undulating. Excessive grazing can cut through the thin

vegetation at the driest parts of the hills near the tops of the southwest facing slopes. If this occurs, blow-outs develop exposing pure sand. This type of scar is slow to heal, and a few still remain from the days of heavy grazing before the area was in refuge.

Wildlife

Rare and endangered species using the refuge include trumpeter swan, bald eagle, golden eagle, peregrine falcon, sandhill crane and prairie chicken. The trumpeters have been producing young here for the last couple of years, and we are hopeful these birds will continue to increase. Occasional visitors in this category include the bald eagle, golden eagle, peregrine falcon and the sandhill crane. These birds usually spend only a few days each year on the refuge.

The prairie chicken is a different matter. This bird has persisted on the refuge for many years on a sector devoted to their management. The prime chicken areas are east of Highway 83 where small food planting are prescribed to enhance the holding capacity of the area for this species. These plots will be scattered according to bird needs using new techniques which appear to have much promise.

Waterfowl indigenous to the Great Plains are all found sometime during the year on the refuge. Mallards, gadwalls and blue-winged teal are the most common puddle ducks while redheads and canvasbacks are the most common divers.

A small resident Canada goose flock is producing a few young each year.

Big game species include mule and white-tailed deer. Recent trends seem to favor the white-tail since it was slightly more common in last year's harvest for the first time.

Other common mammals include white-tailed jackrabbit, coyote, striped skunk, red fox, muskrat and raccoon.

The most common reptile on the area is the plains garter snake which is found near the lakes and marshes. A few rattlesnakes are also present on the proposal.

The common plants making up the habitat include grasses: sand blue stem, little blue stem, big blue stem, sand reed grass, sand love grass, blue gramma, side-oats gramma, cattail, phragmites, and soft and hard stem bulrush.

Forbs: Yucca, spiderwort, ground phlox, prairie violet, nigger-head, prairie shoestring aster, blazing star, sunflower, golden-rod, soapweed, wild licorice and prickly pear cactus.

Brush: Prairie rose, sandcherry, chokecherry and wild plum thickets.

Trees: Green ash, box elder, cottonwood, willow and scattered hackberry.

Developments

No new developments will be undertaken on the proposed wilderness area. The proposed public use road from Twin Lakes to the east end of Pelican Lake will closely parallel the north boundary of the proposal and will provide access to the north boundary of the wilderness area.

Management

Grazing will continue on the proposal as before but will be phased out gradually as opportunities present themselves. Windmill operations will continue for livestock and wildlife use. Haying operations will cease, but these areas may be included in the grazing units for light grazing. No mechanical equipment will be permitted in the wilderness unit.

Socio-Economic Considerations

Any economic losses which might be anticipated by the discontinuance of the haying operations should be mitigated by the use of the meadows for grazing. It is expected the attraction of the wilderness area will increase visitor use of the refuge and increase the income to the community from this source.

Summary and Conclusions

The proposed wilderness area includes a sufficient area of the sandhill ranges, lakes and valleys to adequately protect and preserve this type of environment for posterity.

Haying should cease and grazing should be gradually phased out. Windmills seem to be an advantage to wildlife and should remain for the present. If studies and experience show they are not necessary for top wildlife use, they should be removed after grazing is phased out.

The needs and management of rare and endangered species must always have first priority in the use of the area.

The study finds this area suitable for recommendation for inclusion in the Wilderness System.



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

Federal Building, Fort Snelling
Twin Cities, Minnesota 55111

IN REPLY REFER TO:

(RF)

PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURES

VALENTINE WILDERNESS PROPOSAL

VALENTINE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

VALENTINE, NEBRASKA

January , 1972

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The hearing officer is Elmer Nitzschke, Field Solicitor, Twin Cities, Minnesota who has been assigned by the Secretary of the Interior to conduct this public hearing. Most of you undoubtedly filled out an attendance card as you entered the door; if you have not done so, we would like to ask that you complete one. The information on these cards will be used by the hearing officer to help him conduct this hearing. The hearing officer will call on all those who indicate on this card that they wish to be heard or recognized. If anyone wishing to make an oral statement has to leave early, please indicate this on the card so that the hearing officer can arrange for you to testify.

As indicated in the Notice of Public Hearing, this hearing is being held to obtain information relating to the desirability of establishing a unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System within the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge. In arranging for this hearing, notices were sent to the United States Senators and Congressmen, the Governor of the State of Nebraska and other elected officials. Replies which have been received from them will be read later and incorporated into the transcript of this hearing. Notices were also sent to Federal and State agencies and organizations and individuals known to be interested in the matter. You have been provided a copy of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife statement outlining the proposal. It is suggested that you read this statement as soon as possible. It should answer most of your questions.

When you are called upon for your statement, please come forward to the microphone, state your name and organization you represent, or if you are speaking as an individual, please make this clear. All written statements will become a part of the official record whether they are filed with the hearing officer, read in the open meeting, or orally summarized. In the



interest of conserving time, you are requested to file lengthy statements for the record and summarize them orally at this hearing. Please keep in mind that it is the official transcript, containing all written statements, as well as oral presentations, that will be used for review by the Department of the Interior and later by the Congress in their consideration of this study. Statements will be made under oath, and since this is not an adversary proceeding, there will be no cross-examination.

This meeting will be conducted strictly for the purpose of recording the position of the organization you represent, or your personal view. Debates between individuals and officials of the Government or private organizations will be ruled out of order. Please direct any inquiries to the hearing officer who will rule as to whether the questions is pertinent to the study for which this hearing has been called, keeping in mind that the purpose of this hearing is to compile an official record of public opinion with respect to the merits of this wilderness proposal, as directed by the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964, Public Law 88-577. Neither is it the duty of the public hearing officer to reach any conclusions nor make any decision regarding the wilderness proposal.

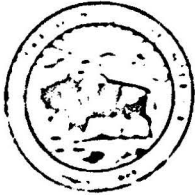
After this public hearing, a thorough review will be made of this wilderness proposal, but this is not the last opportunity for public expression. The record of this public hearing and all other information on the proposal will be reviewed by the Secretary of the Interior who will transmit his recommendations regarding the proposal to the President. The President will transmit his recommendations to the Congress. After appropriate consideration, which will include hearings, the Congress will accept, reject or modify the proposal as a unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The hearing will be in session from 9:00 a.m. until all interested parties have had an opportunity to express their views. Please note that the official record of the public hearing will be kept open through March , 1972 for those who wish to submit statements or modifications of previous statements for inclusion in the record. Send such statements to the Regional Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Federal Building, Fort Snelling, Twin Cities, Minnesota 55111.

The Department of the Interior welcomes your views at any time, but in order to be included in the official record, your views should be in the offices of the Regional Director at the above address by March , 1972.

Thank you for attending.

Regional Director



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Federal Building, Fort Snelling
Twin Cities, Minnesota 55111

VALENTINE WILDERNESS PROPOSAL

VALENTINE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Valentine, Nebraska

January, 1972

Ladies and Gentlemen: I am Forrest Carpenter, Regional Refuge Supervisor of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this hearing on the Valentine Wilderness Proposal within the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge.

As background, I should like to point out that the Wilderness Act of 1964 directed the Secretary of the Interior to review all roadless areas of 5,000 acres or if less that are of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation in an unimpaired condition and every roadless island with the National Wildlife Refuge System to determine their suitability as wilderness.

Further, regulations of the Secretary of the Interior published on February 22, 1966, require this Bureau to review those areas qualified for study under the Wilderness Act that are: (a) reasonably compact; (b) undeveloped; (c) possessing general characteristics of wilderness; and (d) without improved roads suitable for public travel by conventional automobile.

The National Wildlife Refuge System consists of more than 320 units containing over 30 million acres. Units of the system are found on lands reaching from the shores of the Arctic Ocean to islands of the Central Pacific Ocean and from the Florida Keys to Maine.

There is one or more national wildlife refuge in every one of the 17 major Life Zones of North America. Therefore, the ecology of each national wildlife refuge differs from any other refuge, although some are similar. Because of these ecological differences, management objectives of individual refuges are often quite different. It has been determined that about 90 national wildlife refuges, containing over 25 million acres, located in over 30 states qualify for study as wilderness.

As you can see, the wilderness review program in the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, of which this proposal is a part, encompasses a wide spectrum of lands within national wildlife refuges in the country. Only through careful study and analysis can a proper determination be

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made regarding whether a national wildlife refuge, or a portion of a national wildlife refuge, qualifies for consideration by the Secretary of the Interior as wilderness. We are presenting the results of our study of Valentine Wilderness Proposal for your consideration today.

You have a copy of the report with summarizes the study we have made of this proposal. Copies of the complete study report are available for your scrutiny after the hearing here on the front table. We ask you to please leave them in the hearing room after you have finished with them, because the number of copies is very limited. A copy of my statement is also available, if you do not already have a copy, for your information and use.

Valentine National Wildlife Refuge is located 26 miles south of the city of Valentine on U. S. Highway 83 in Cherry County, Nebraska. It was established in 1935 as a breeding grounds for migratory birds and other wildlife. None of this 71,516 acres refuge was withdrawn from public domain.

The entire refuge was reviewed for wilderness potential and the 12,900 acre unit proposed here was selected. The topography sets this portion of Nebraska off from the remainder of the county. The unique sandhill ranges sometimes rise over 100 feet high and lie in generally longitudinal patterns from the W-NW to the E-SE. Some of the hills have sharp and steep slopes while others are more gently undulating. The deeper valleys between the ranges have long narrow lakes while the broader valleys at higher elevations have moist, grassy meadows. The proposal includes the best and most undeveloped portion of this unique formation on the refuge.

The Sioux Indians were the early residents of this area. When the land was opened for settlement, cattle were brought up from Dodge City, Kansas initiating the open-range days which terminated with the last big round-up in 1885. Valentine established itself as a pioneer cattle town and grew rapidly. It boasted wooden houses and sidewalks cut from the ponderosa pine in the Niobrara River valley.

A CCC camp was built on the refuge in 1935, and the boys built boundary fences, roads, trails, towers and cabins. They also planted trees and shrubs for wildlife which can still be seen today. The camp was closed in 1939, and the buildings were razed.

When the refuge was established, much of the land had been over-grazed, and blow-outs had formed near the tops of many of the south facing slopes of the sandhills. Slowly the vegetation has been brought back to where most of the blow-outs have healed over and the native grasses and forbs have recovered.

The great drowth of the thirties had focused national attention on the rapidly diminishing waterfowl numbers. The Valentine area with its numerous lakes and marshes was attractive to waterfowl. Since then, the protection

afforded by the refuge has attracted great numbers of waterfowl and other migratory birds. The rare trumpeter swan has become a nesting resident. Canada geese are producing young and bald eagles, golden eagles and peregrine falcons use the refuge during migration.

The prairie chicken is a particularly interesting species which makes its home on the refuge. A section of the refuge east of Highway 83 has been devoted to its preservation and management. Studies are continuing to learn more about the requirements and management of this rare and disappearing species.

The native grasses which are found on the proposed area include: sand blue stem, little blue stem, big blue stem, sand reed grass, sand love grass and phragmites to mention just a few.

Some of the common forbes found here are: yucca, spiderwort, blazing star, prairie sunflower, goldenrod and prickly-pear cactus.

Our proposed recommendation to the Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Washington, D. C. will be that the Valentine Wilderness Proposal be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The Bureau here concludes its presentation in behalf of the proposal, and thanks you for your attention.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Valentine National Wildlife Refuge

Notice of Public Hearing Regarding Wilderness Proposal

Notice is hereby given in accordance with provisions of the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (Public Law 88-577; 78 Stat. 890-896; 16 U. S. C. 1131-1136), that a public hearing will be held beginning at 9:00 a.m. on January _____ Nebraska, on a proposal leading to a recommendation to be made to the President of the United States by the Secretary of the Interior, regarding the desirability of including Valentine Wilderness proposal within the National Wilderness Preservation System. The wilderness proposal consists of approximately 12,900 acres within the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge and is located in Cherry County, Nebraska.

A report containing a map and information about the Valentine Wilderness Proposal may be obtained from the Refuge Manager, Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, Valentine, Nebraska 69201, or the Regional Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Federal Building, Fort Snelling, Twin Cities, Minnesota 55111.

Individuals or organizations may express their oral or written views by appearing at this hearing, or they may submit written comments for inclusion in the official record of the hearing to the Regional Director at the above address by March , 1972.

Acting Director
Bureau of Sport Fisheries
and Wildlife

Federal Register Notice

Department of the Interior

Fish and Wildlife Service

Valentine National Wildlife Refuge

Notice of Public Hearing Regarding Wilderness Proposal

Notice is hereby given in accordance with provisions of the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (Public Law 88-577; 78 Stat. 890-896; 16 U. S. C. 1131-1136), that a public hearing will be held beginning at 9:00 a.m. on January 1972, at the Valentine, Nebraska, on a proposal leading to a recommendation to be made to the President of the United States by the Secretary of the Interior, regarding the desirability of including Valentine Wilderness proposal within the National Wilderness Preservation System. The wilderness proposal consists of approximately 12, 900 acres within the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge and is located in Cherry County, Nebraska.

A report containing a map and information about the Valentine Wilderness proposal may be obtained from the Refuge Manager, Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, Kennedy Star Route, Valentine, Nebraska 69201 or the Regional Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Federal Building, Fort Snelling, Twin Cities, Minnesota 55111.

Individuals or organizations may express their oral or written views by appearing at this hearing, or they may submit written comments for

inclusion in the official record of the hearing to the Regional Director
at the above address by 1972.



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Information
TWIN CITIES, MINNESOTA

BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

For Immediate Release

PUBLIC HEARING SLATED ON WILDERNESS AREA IN NEBRASKA

A public hearing to discuss a wilderness study on Valentine National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska is scheduled for January in the Department of the Interior announced today.

The meeting on the Valentine wilderness proposal, covering 12,900 acres, will be held at 9:00 a.m. Notice of the hearing was published in the Federal Register on

The proposal includes a selected portion of the refuge typical of Nebraska sandhill country. Several shallow lakes are found in the deeper valleys between the ranges of sandhills while moist grassy meadows are located in the valleys of slightly higher elevations.

A map and other information about the Valentine wilderness proposal is available from the Refuge Manager, Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, Valentine, Nebraska 69201, or the Regional Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Federal Building, Fort Snelling, Twin Cities, Minnesota 55111.

Oral or written statements may be submitted at the hearing or written comments can be sent to the Regional Director by March

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

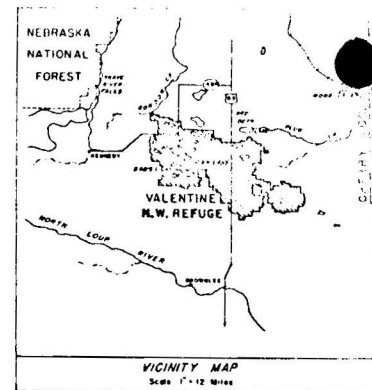
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OCTOBER, 1960

SIXTH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN

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TO AIRSHIP
DIAGRAM



PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wilderness Study, Public Hearing, record analysis and synopsis are completed. It is recommended that the Valentine Wilderness Proposal be approved for inclusion in the Wilderness System.

It is important to note that local opposition to the proposal was primarily concerned with fire protection. Originally, the Bureau had planned to remove the windmills before the area was included in the Wilderness System, but the Public Hearing brought out the need for watering tanks for fire protection. Inasmuch as they will not conflict with the Wilderness Proposal and are beneficial to wildlife, it is recommended the windmills and tanks remain and fire protection efforts of the refuge continue as before.

After considering a request from the Federal Highway Administration for a change in the boundary of the proposal where it parallels the highway right-of-way, it is recommended that the Wilderness Proposal boundary along Federal Highway 83 be set back 400 feet from the center line of the present highway to satisfy the environmental auditory requirements recently promulgated for highways constructed or maintained with Federal funds.

The change in grazing rates and methods of grazing is being undertaken on the refuge as a whole without consideration of wilderness. This change is in accordance with the prime objectives of the refuge.

While a short turn loss in revenue to the county from grazing fees is probable, any loss will soon be recovered by the fees paid to the county on the basis of $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1% of the land value.

Strong support from the non-grazing element of the public within and without the State of Nebraska indicate the desirability of recommending this area for wilderness designation.

VALENTINE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

LEGEND

- REFUGE HEADQUARTERS
- SUB HEADQUARTERS
- XXXXX WILDERNESS PROPOSAL
- /// RESEARCH NATURAL AREA
- CHOPPY SANDHILLS
- SUB-IRRIGATED MEADOW
- HARD SURFACE ROAD
- - - PUBLIC USE TRAIL
- FIELD ACCESS TRAIL
- FENCE
- POWER LINE
- TELEPHONE LINE (BURIED)
- ⋈ WINDMILL
- FLOWING WELL
- ▲▲▲ TREE PLANTINGS
- ⌚ OBSERVATION TOWER

1 0 1 2
SCALE IN MILES

