

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ISSUED FOR SAN FRANCISCO BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The plans of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire approximately 23,000 acres in south San Francisco Bay to protect and preserve fish, wildlife, and other natural values are explained in a final environmental impact statement issued June 29, 1977.

Copies of the 184-page document are available to the public by writing to Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attn: Division of National Wildlife Refuges, Washington, D.C. 20240.

In 1972, Congress passed a law which directed action toward formation of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The EIS, which was published in draft form in October 1976, examines the foreseeable effects of land acquisition and its administration as a refuge.

The EIS states that the principal impact would be the preservation of natural values of the bay with emphasis on protection for wildlife. Related benefits would be the provision of wildlife-oriented public recreation and education. Other impacts relate to possible loss of direct tax revenues, increased support of existing restrictions on development opportunities, and regulation of personal activities.

San Francisco Bay is one of the Nation's major estuaries, approximately 55 miles long, and ranges in width from 3 to 12 miles. Its watershed covers 3,500 square miles, while the 9-county bay area totals nearly

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7,000 square miles. The area provides habitat to 248 species of birds, including four officially classified as endangered, 47 mammal species, including one endangered species, and numerous forms of aquatic animals, amphibians, and reptiles.

The substantial fish and wildlife values of San Francisco Bay have long been recognized by resource agencies and ultimately resulted in the 1972 Act. It authorized a refuge composed of four units (Mowry Slough, Fremont, Greco Island, and Alviso) and placed a ceiling of \$9 million on acquisition costs.

The purposes of the refuge will be to:

- (1) Preserve and maintain wildlife habitat necessary to support sizable populations of migratory wildlife and resident animals and birds such as harbor seals, terns, herons, egrets, stilts, avocets, and snowy plovers. Typical flora includes algae, diatoms, cordgrass, pickleweed, saltgrass, other grass, and coyote bush.
- (2) Protect and enhance habitat for threatened and endangered species of wildlife. They include the salt marsh harvest mouse, California clapper rail, California least tern, brown pelican, and peregrine falcon.
- (3) Provide opportunities for wildlife and ecological studies, environmental education, and wildlife interpretation. This would require development of programs and facilities to accommodate many of the hundreds of thousands of school children of the surrounding area. Walkways, contact stations, interpretive material, and staffing are included in concept planning.
- (4) Maintain open space, open water, marsh, and tidal mudflats for public enjoyment. Habitat manipulation would be minor except in situations where reversion to natural marsh is feasible. Appropriate administrative and public facilities such as offices, roads, and trails are foreseen.

The environmental impact statement is in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 which requires such declarations when actions of significant environmental effect are proposed. As a land acquisition statement, the document addresses subsequent development and operation of the refuge only insofar as they relate to the proposed change of ownership.