



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Alan Levitt 202/343-5634

### WETLAND HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE MUST BE ACQUIRED SOON, WATT SAYS

Secretary of the Interior James Watt, commenting at a recent meeting of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, said he supports continued land acquisition to preserve wetland and wildlife habitat, on a "willing seller" basis. "In contrast to other land purchases the Interior Department is authorized to make, we must move aggressively on wetland areas. They may not be available if we wait," Watt said, referring to the physically fragile nature of wetland areas.

As Secretary of the Interior, Watt is chairman of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission which approves areas to be purchased by the Interior Department from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. Proceeds from the sale of Federal "duck stamps" (the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp) to waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older provide about \$16.5 million in revenues to the Fund each year.

On June 2, the Commission met and approved the expenditure of funds for 14 tracts of lands which were inholdings on national wildlife refuges. The refuges include Barnegat National Wildlife Refuge in Ocean County, New Jersey, Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge in California, and Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge in Maine.

The inholdings totalled 725 acres and were purchased for \$1,163,000. More than 123,000 acres of other migratory bird wetland habitat have been approved for purchase by the Commission as funds become available.

"These properties are being acquired from willing sellers and are lands of high priority due to their resource value. They will be managed by the government as feeding and resting areas for the continent's ducks and geese. But the areas will also be available to the public for a variety of other uses such as bird-watching, fishing, hunting, and just enjoying the outdoors," Watt said.

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