



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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AT&T CONTRIBUTES TO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Perpetual rights to a 2,400-acre "refuge within a refuge" that harbors nesting peregrine falcons, several thousand black ducks, and dozens of other wildlife species have been donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, Under Secretary of the Interior Ann Dore McLaughlin announced today.

"This generous gift by AT&T is an outstanding example of the way invaluable wetlands can be protected at no cost to the Federal Government," said Under Secretary McLaughlin. "Not only does wildlife benefit from this type of gift, but so do the taxpayers, particularly those in New Jersey, as the lands remain on the tax base."

The acreage lies in the heart of the Barnegat National Wildlife Refuge, located on the New Jersey coast about 25 miles north of Atlantic City. The tract contains an exceptional mix of productive saltmarsh, bottomland hardwoods, tidal creeks, and numerous ponds. It also contains a hack-box where 22 captive-produced peregrine falcons have been released to the wild. Two of the peregrines returned to nest in 1979, the first nesting attempt in the eastern United States since the reintroduction effort began. The pair has produced eight young at the site since 1980.

The gift by AT&T of a conservation easement in perpetuity grants permanent use of the property as a national wildlife refuge.

Under Secretary McLaughlin presented Michael Brunner, Vice President for Government Communications for AT&T, with a plaque inscribed "Friend of the National Wildlife Refuge System" at a reception February 24 in Washington, D.C.

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With this gift, AT&T joins a growing number of major corporations such as DuPont, Seagrams, and Tenneco that actively support wildlife conservation programs conducted by the Fish and Wildlife Service. Under Secretary McLaughlin encouraged other corporations to follow their examples.

The land has been used by AT&T since 1938 for ship-to-shore communications and as a terminal point for one of the company's undersea cables. AT&T will continue to use the land for that purpose. Its operations, maintenance, and repairs to the facility will be conducted according to stipulations designed by the Service to protect wildlife and their habitat.

The Barnegat National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1967 and later that year began managing the AT&T land under a lease agreement. The refuge's management program revolves around and is tailored to that core tract of land.

"A lease agreement is fine," Under Secretary McLaughlin said. "But your authority is limited by the worry that the lease might not be renewed. This perpetual easement removes that worry and allows us to proceed with long-range management goals for the entire refuge."

The 2,400-acre area will remain closed to public access, while the remainder of the 10,200-acre refuge can be used by sportsmen, wildlife observers, and photographers.

Barnegat was established by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission with funds from the sale of "Duck Stamps," the \$7.50 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp that marks its 50th anniversary this year. The Duck Stamp must be carried by waterfowl hunters and is also purchased by conservationists, stamp collectors, and others to help acquire vital wildlife habitat. Duck Stamps have helped to acquire 186 of the 418 national wildlife refuges in the country.

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