



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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INTERIOR SECRETARY HODEL ANNOUNCES PURCHASE OF ARIZONA RANCH FOR ENDANGERED QUAIL

Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel today announced that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will buy the Buenos Aires Ranch near Tucson, Arizona, as a national wildlife refuge for the endangered masked bobwhite quail. The purchase price is expected to be \$9 million.

"Under the Endangered Species Act, the Department of the Interior has a responsibility to seek to bring about the recovery of species that have been listed as endangered or threatened," Secretary Hodel said. "The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service believes that Buenos Aires Ranch is the only place in the United States providing suitable habitat for the masked bobwhite quail. Based upon this view, Congress directed the acquisition of the ranch as a national wildlife refuge."

The masked bobwhite is a black-headed quail that formerly ranged from north-central Mexico into southern Arizona. Due to destruction of its habitat, the bird is no longer known to occur in the wild in the United States, although small numbers survive in Mexico. The masked bobwhite was placed on the U.S. Endangered Species List in 1969 and is also listed as endangered in Mexico.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has been successfully breeding masked bobwhite quail in captivity at its Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland, for a number of years. Captive-raised quail will be released on the Buenos Aires Ranch in an effort to reestablish a self-sustaining wild population of this species in the United States.

The refuge acquisition includes purchase of 21,258 acres of private land that form the heart of the ranch, as well as the ranch's grazing rights to 90,191 acres of State land. The Service will also conclude management agreements for another 7,245 acres of grazing lands now managed by other Federal agencies. The entire 118,694 acres will be managed as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Fish and Wildlife Service will develop a long-term master plan to determine the best possible uses and management for the refuge. The plan, which takes about 2 years to complete, will consider such activities as hunting, fishing, grazing, wildlife observation, hiking, and bee-keeping to determine their compatibility with the management of the refuge for masked bobwhite quail.