



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

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SEATON CALLS SITE DONATED FOR KEY DEER REFUGE A VALUABLE ACQUISITION

The 15.5-acre parcel of land on Big Pine Key, Florida, which the North American Wildlife Foundation donated to the Department of the Interior, is the "kick-off of land acquisition for the entire Key Deer Refuge program," Secretary of the interior Fred A. Seaton said today.

The land was donated to the Federal Government on April 30, and the deed was presented to Secretary Seaton by Mr. C. R. Gutermuth, secretary of the foundation.

The Secretary expressed his appreciation for the foundation's action and pointed out that the area, which will be used as a headquarters for the refuge, is especially valuable, because it provides one of the few boat basins in the key deer area. The basin will be used as a patrol base not only for the protection of the key deer but also for the protection of the birds on Great White Heron Refuge a few miles to the northward.

The National Key Deer Refuge was established February 1, 1954, primarily to have the key deer which were facing extinction. The present size of the refuge is 1,731 acres, of which 71.5 acres is reserved from the public domain and the rest is privately owned land leased to the Department, with most of the leases subject to termination by the owners on 90 days notice.

The 1957 Federal legislation provided for the acquisition--including acceptance of donation or use of donated funds--of 1,000 acres of land in the key deer region as a permanent refuge. The 15.5-acre donation is the first acquisition under the authority of that legislation.

The foundation secured the donation from civic-minded people in Florida. The sites had been selected by officials of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

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