UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

★ news release

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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT SCHEDULES LAND TRANSFERS TO COLORADO, NEW MEXICO, AND UTAH FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PURPOSES

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall announced today that approximately 15,000 acres to be acquired by the Federal Government in three Western States will be transferred to those States for wildlife conservation.

The land is in Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. It will remain under public jurisdiction for big-game management and recreational development. The areas are being acquired to replace big-game habitat that will be lost by flooding in units of the Bureau of Reclamation's Colorado River Storage Project.

Wintering grounds, largely for mule deer, will be inundated by reservoirs in the Navajo, Flaming Gorge, and Curecanti Units.

Transfers to be made include: Navajo Unit,, 5,600 acres to New Mexico and Colorado, and Flaming Gorge Unit, 6,700 acres to Utah. A proposal to acquire 3,000 acres of privately owned lands in Colorado to replace acreage to be flooded by Blue Mesa Reservoir in the Curecanti Unit is being studied.

Secretary Udall said the Department contemplates that additional lands will be similarly purchased and transferred to States for wildlife management in the Colorado River Storage Project area. Besides Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, the program is expected to include Wyoming.

Under the transfer provisions, States will be unable to dispose of the lands or use them except for big-game management. Should the States be unable or unwilling to carry out this provision, the lands will revert to the Federal Government.

The transferred lands are to be administered in connection with the development of three big-game areas that will total nearly 300,000 acres of Federal, State, and private lands.

Authority to acquire land and transfer it to States in the public interest was provided by Congress in the Colorado River Storage Project Act. Management of big game and other resident games traditionally is a State function.

The Act also provides that Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service can develop and maintain other facilities to mitigate losses to, or improve habitats for, fish and wildlife in the Colorado Basin.

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