

APR 6 1978

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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For Release March 27, 1978

ANDRUS SALUTES SIGNING OF BILL ENLARGING REDWOOD NATIONAL PARK

Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus today hailed the addition of 48,000 acres to California's Redwood National Park as "a major step toward protecting our natural heritage in the continental United States."

President Carter today signed into law a bill increasing the size of the park and providing for rehabilitation of the watershed as well as protecting workers in the lumber industry who might be displaced by the additions to the park.

Andrus noted that protection for the country's largest remaining redwood trees and redwood forests is a process begun decades ago with creation of Redwood State Parks through donations by private individuals. The first stage was completed in 1968 when Congress passed the original Redwood National Park legislation.

Since then, concerned members of citizen organizations have worked tirelessly to encourage Congress to round out the park's boundaries in order to give the kind of protection to these primeval giants that was originally envisioned. The second stage was completed today.

The expansions to the park were necessary because the 1968 boundaries could not protect the world's tallest trees along the banks of Redwood Creek from erosion damage as other trees higher up nearby hillsides, outside the park, were cut down, Andrus said. Ultimately, the Secretary said, the situation became so bad that trees which the park was created to protect were actually threatened by logging activities outside the park boundaries. Stream flows, unchecked by normal forest vegetation, were altering their course and undermining some of the world's tallest and oldest trees.

The Sequoia Sempervirens--the California coastal redwood tree--is among the most ancient species still alive on earth, with evidence linking them to ancestors that lived more than 150 million years ago.

The additions to Redwood National Park, Andrus said, call to mind current Administration proposals before Congress to designate 92.5 million acres of federal land in Alaska as units of the national park, wildlife refuge, wild river and national forest systems.

"In Alaska," Secretary Andrus said, "we were guided by the principle of protecting entire ecosystems and watersheds, so we know that if our proposals are adopted by Congress there is little chance that the boundaries will ever have to be enlarged to protect vital resources. And there is little chance that we will have to buy back for the public any land that was once owned by the public, because we can do the job right the first time."

Andrus noted that the expanded Redwood National Park salvages only a small part of the redwoods that once covered more than two million acres of California coastal areas.

For further background on Redwood National Park see reverse side of release.

(more)

The Redwood National Park Expansion Act, passed by Congress on March 21, adds 48,000 acres to the existing park and provides a park protection zone of an additional 30,000 acres. This legislation, supported by the Administration, will protect the virgin groves of old-growth redwood forests within the park from the ecological threat presented by logging activity on adjacent lands.

In the southern portion of the existing park around Redwood Creek, the Tall Trees Grove, containing the world's tallest tree at 367 feet, has been particularly threatened by erosion and siltation from logging.

The 48,000-acre addition becomes Federal property immediately upon President Carter's signing the legislation. This legislative taking provision will permit the United States District Court to determine the value of the lands and the schedule of payment to the former owners. The Administration has estimated the cost of this acquisition at about \$359 million. Within the park protection zone established under this law, the Secretary of the Interior may acquire lands from a willing seller or upon a finding that physical damage to park resources would occur if the lands were not purchased.

Much of the land added to the park has already been logged and is subject to erosion. This legislation authorizes appropriation of \$33 million for rehabilitation of the expanded park area.

The legislation also authorizes the Secretaries of Interior, Commerce and Labor to take such measures as necessary to ease the burden of those people whose jobs may be affected by enactment of this law. The Secretary of Labor has the responsibility to implement employee protection benefits.

Redwood National Park, established on October 2, 1968, had been limited to an area of 58,000 acres in Del Norte and Humboldt Counties, California. Within the boundaries of the National Park are three State Parks -- Del Norte Coast, Jedediah Smith, and Prairie Creek Redwoods -- totalling 27,564 acres. The state park lands may be acquired by the Federal government only by donation. In 1977, more than one-half million visits were recorded in the Federal portion of the present park.

Following enactment of this legislation, the National Park Service will undertake a detailed survey of the newly acquired property, appraising its value, and developing a land rehabilitation program. The new law authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to hire seven full-time and 31 temporary employees to assist in carrying out these programs.

The legislation also requires that a general management plan for the park be submitted to Congress by January 1, 1980. This plan is to include further recommendations on protection of the redwood forest ecosystem, visitor use capacities, and necessary developments, including trails into the Tall Trees Grove.

Further information about Redwood National Park and the new legislation may be obtained from the Regional Director, Western Regional Office, National Park Service, Federal Office Building, 450 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, California 94102, telephone (415) 556-5186.

DEFINITION OF WILDERNESS

(c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.