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secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton announced today that he is setting aside nearly 79 million acres in Alaska which will be studied for possible additions to the National Park, Forest, wildlife Refuge, and Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems.

The so-called "Four Systems" lands thus withdrawn fire almost half the size of Texas. Put another way, they are as large as New York State and New Jersey, plus .a11 six of the New England States combined.

The action is in accordance with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act which was signed into law by President Nixon on December 18,1971. It confirms, with some final acreage and boundary adjustments, the set-asides which the Secretary initially announced in March and which, under the Act, he is required to make final prior to September 18, 1972.

"This action, ' Secretary Morton said at a press conference today, "could result, after study and favorable Congressional action, in doubling the lands now contained in the National Park and Wildlife Refuge Systems and could provide significant additions to the National Forest and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems.

"In selecting these final areas I have chosen not only areas of unique splendor, but also a mixture of habitats which support a wide range of wildlife -- the great marine mammals, millions of shorebirds and waterfowl, grizzly bears, caribou, and sheep. The rivers and lakes serve as habitat for the great runs of salmon and trout."

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to make two types of land withdrawals. Section 17 (d) (1) allows the withdrawal of lands in the general public interest, pending further study and classification. Section 17 (d) (2) further authorizes the withdrawal of up to 80 million acres to be studied for inclusion in the four national systems.

The Act also requires the Secretary to advise Congress at six-month intervals of his specific recommendations for the use of the withdrawn D-2 land areas. Congress has five years from the recommendation dates to act before the D-2 withdrawals automatically terminate.

Secretary Morton said that the areas tentatively identified in March for the D-2, or four systems, withdrawals have been extensively studied during the past six months. As a result, about 14 million acres of the D-2 80 million acres that was initially withdrawn have been shifted to D-l public interest areas and to State and Native land selection areas. A slightly smaller total acreage has been added to ~e initial D-2 withdrawal, thus holding the overall total close to the authorized 80-million-acre limitation.

D-2 lands are withdrawn from new locations and, leasing under the mining and mineral leasing laws, from Native and State selection, and from entry under the public land laws. D-I lands are open to metalliferous mining claims but are withdrawn from the other land actions listed above.

In deciding on the withdrawals made today, the Department of the Interior has worked closely with the

State of Alaska and with the Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission which was established by the Settlement Act.

The Secretary emphasized that in studying the withdrawn areas for inclusion in the four systems the Department will be concerned with creating manageable units for lands in the system and for adjacent lands. 'we will, therefore, look not only at the D-2 land but at the D-l land in making our study and recommendations and will endeavor, as much as possible, to preserve natural management units and complete ecosystems intact."

Among the more significant areas withdrawn to be studied for inclusion in the four systems are the following:

1. The Wrangell Mountains -- This area, in southeastern Alaska, combined with the adjoining Kluane National Park of Canada, is truly the mountain kingdom of North America. Mt. St. Elias towers more than 18,000 feet above the Pacific Ocean only 18 miles away and a number of other peaks rise above 16,000 feet. Glaciers of every variety abound. Bering Glacier, 127 miles long, is the largest and longest in North America and Malaspina Glacier is larger than the State of Rhode Island. Heavy glaciation from the Great Ice Ages to the present has carved a mixture of high, steep pinnacles and ridges separated by deep valleys and broad basins. The Copper and Chitina Rivers surround the Wrangells and the area supports a great diversity of plant and animal life.
2. Mt. McKinley Area -- Lands north of Mt. McKinley National Park are primarily lowland tundra and spruce and spruce-birch forests and are striated with a multitude of streams. They include the critical remainder of the ranges of the primary out-ranging park wildlife species: wolf, grizzly bear, Da11 sheep, moose, and caribou (a portion of the summer caribou range lies south of the park). Lands south of the park include granitic cathedral spires and their glaciers, and part of the Mt. McKinley massif with spectacular peaks and glacial systems.
3. Iliamna This unit, on the upper Alaskan Peninsula between Bristol Bay and Cook Inlet borders Lake Iliamna, the seventh largest lake in the world. The varied habitat supports a diversity of wildlife including the Alaska Peninsula caribou herd of about 15,000 animals. The peninsula and related estuaries produce a fall flight of over half a million ducks and 10,000 whistling swans and in October serves as a staging area for the entire world populations of American emperor geese and black brant. The area is of prime importance for sport, subsistence and commercial fisheries. The Kvichak River system is the largest red salmon producer in the world.
4. Lake Clark Pass This area, less than 100 air miles from Anchorage, is characterized by its resource diversity and high recreation potential. Landforms include glacier-clad mountains, two active volcanoes, extensive lowlands, and a deeply-incised seacoast with glacier-formed bays. Wildlife abounds and the fisheries are significant.
5. Yukon Flats -- On the Arctic Circle, about 100 air miles north of Fairbanks, the Flats include the Yukon River and its tributaries in Eastern Alaska. Topography ranges from flood plain to alpine highlands. The area contributes over two million waterfowl to the fall flight annually, is a major spawning grounds for fish, and supports a variety of big game animals. The Steese-Forty Mile caribou herd of 50,000 animals ranges the upper Yukon and the Porcupine caribou herd of 150,000 ranges the upper Porcupine River.
6. Gates of the Arctic -- In the central Brooks Range, this is a wilderness of gaunt peaks and deep glacial valleys. It includes some of the basins of the Atlanta, John and North Fork of the Koyukuk, the upper reaches of the Noatak and Kobuk, and the entire Killik River Watershed on the Arctic slope. Walker Lake, one of the region's most beautiful, has been declared eligible for natural landmark status. The study area embraces several complete ecologic units like the entire Killik

basin, and it constitutes extremely important habitat for caribou, Dal1 Sheep, grizzly bear, wolves, and the golden eagle.

7. Noatak -- This area in the Brooks Range presents a unique opportunity to preserve an entire large river basin virtually untouched by human uses. Its scientific importance could be enormous. Wilderness and scenic values are outstanding and the area supports a diversity of wildlife: two-thirds of the Arctic caribou herd of 300,000 animals pass through it annually. The three major streams, the Noatak, Kobuk, and Ambler, have been recommended for study for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System. Cape Krusenstern to the west contains the remains of seven prehistoric cultures dating from 3000 B. C. and is considered one of the most important archeological sites in North America.
8. Imuruk -- This area is 90 miles north of Nome in the north central part of the Seward Peninsula. Its significance lies in the continuing story of evolution in Arctic terms over an extremely long period as told by its marine, terrestrial, and aquatic habitats and their interactions; by the effects of two types of volcanism in at least six separate eruptions; and by the fact that the area has never been glaciated. Superimposed over this mosaic of natural diversity is an archeological record of over 5,000 years of continuous human use beginning with the Bering Land Bridge theory. The area is an important waterfowl habitat and is a staging area for spring and fall migrations.
9. Yukon Delta -- The vast Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta ranks among the richest faunal regions in Alaska and is justly famous as an outstanding waterfowl and other migratory bird producing habitat; for example, it supports estimated breeding fowl populations of 1.3 million ducks and an average fall flight of 2.7 million. Even without its vast populations of waterfowl, the Delta would still be unique for its awe-inspiring number of shore and waterbirds. Its coastal habitats provide staging areas for shorebirds whose wintering areas extend from Australia and New Zealand to the Antarctic and many countries in South America.
10. Aniakchak Crater -- This 4,450 foot high volcano on the Alaska Peninsula is a registered National Natural History Landmark. Its crater is 30 square miles and its rim is dotted with ice fields. The floor of the vast caldera contains Surprise Lake (2 square miles), several subsidiary cones (one of them 2,200 feet high), boiling Sulphur pools and hot springs. The Aniakchak River, which issues from a spectacular gash in the crater's east wall, will be under study for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.