Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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The Department of the Interior announced today that it has taken joint action with the Department of Agriculture in designating the Klamath Indian Forest and Klamath Marsh on the Klamath Indian Reservation in Oregon.

The designations were made under a law enacted last August 23 which amended the Klamath Termination Act of 1954. Under terms of the amendatory law, 617,000 acres of the Klamath Indian Forest will be offered for sale to private purchasers in appropriately sized forest units. Purchasers will be required to manage the lands “as far as practicable according to sustained-yield principles so as to furnish a continuous supply of timber.” The Klamath Marsh consisting of 15,000 acres will be purchased by the Federal Government and used as a national wildlife refuge.

Sales of forest units and the Federal purchase of marshlands may not be at less than the realization value as determined by a group of appraisers who are now reviewing a previous appraisal which was made several months ago. No sales of forest units may be made before April 1, 1959.

If all the forest units are not sold before April 1, 1961, the United States will purchase as much of the forest land as has, together with the marshland, an appraised value of not to exceed 90 million dollars, unless a different amount is authorized by law in the meantime. Federally purchased forest land would be added to the national-forest system.

The original proposal to establish the national wildlife refuge at Klamath Marsh was approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission composed of members of Congress and members of the President's Cabinet. Their approval was based on the assumption that Wocus Bay, an area of some 1,000 acres, would be included in the refuge. However, the Klamath Indians who elected to stay within the tribe did so on the basis of a plan which, among other things, provided that Wocus Bay would be retained as a part of their tribal lands. Private trustees will administer the bay along with other tribal lands. The bay's value for hunting purposes will be materially enhanced because of the adjoining refuge. It is also vital to control of the water level in the marsh.

The Department of the Interior says that if the refuge cannot be developed and managed compatibly without Wocus Bay, then the Government will be forced to acquire the bay and make it a part of the refuge.

Proceeds from the sale of tribal lands will be paid out on a proportionate basis to the 1,659 members of the Klamath Tribe who chose at a tribal election last April to withdraw and receive such payments. This represents over 77 percent of the 2,133 enrolled tribal members. A portion of the Klamath Indian Forest consisting of about 145,000 acres will be retained by the 474 members remaining in the tribal organization and will be managed as a sustained-yield unit.

About 85,000 acres of tribal lands are not included in the Klamath Indian Forest and Klamath Marsh by the designations because they consist mainly of grazing and farmlands. The grazing and farmlands contain scattered tracts of timber which can be offered for sale immediately without sustained-yield

restrictions. Sales of these lands are being processed now.

The descriptions of the designated Klamath Indian Forest and Klamath Marsh areas will be published in the Federal Register in the near future.