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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

The President announced today that he is designating approximately 3,600 acres of Federally-owned land at Beltsville, Maryland, to be set aside for recreation, conservation, wildlife preservation, and related educational and scientific activities. The 3,600 acres were reported by the Department of Agriculture to the General Services Administration to be excess to the needs of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.

Among the 28,000 acres of contiguous Federally-owned properties lying along the Baltimore-Washington corridor, there are now some 3,300 acres devoted to conservation and wildlife preservation and several thousand additional acres which are in an essentially natural state and, although used for other primary purposes, are nevertheless devoted secondarily to compatible conservation and wildlife preservation purposes. The availability of the additional 3,600 acres now provides an opportunity to further enhance the environment of the National Capital Region.

The 3,300 acre Patuxent Wildlife Research Center is contiguous to the 3,600 acres which are excess to the Agriculture Research Center needs. Its purpose includes research on endangered species and pesticides. Approximately 900 acres of the excess land will be made available to the Center to carry on its research and eventually to add other facilities for conservation and nature study, including trails through selected areas in order that wildlife in its natural habitat can be viewed and studied. A visitors center at the Wildlife Research Center will be provided in time for Bicentennial use in 1976.

The President has directed the Secretary of the Interior to prepare a long-range plan for the development of the recreation, conservation, wildlife preservation, and related educational and scientific activities potential of the remaining 2,700 excess acres.

The lands being rededicated are the second largest parcel to be made available for recreational purposes under the Legacy of Parks program.

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