

former Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, was hearing officer. The Bureau was represented by Mr. W. L. Towns, Associate Regional Director, Atlanta, Georgia.

1. Public hearing transcript

During the public hearing, 32 statements were presented or read into the record. These statements came from one State agency, three local cities, four agencies or boards of Indian River County, 18 organizations, three individuals, and three local schools. Testimony was unanimously in favor of the wilderness proposal. Local support from public officials, civil groups and residents of Indian River County, in which Pelican Island Refuge is located, was particularly strong.

In conjunction with statements presented orally or read into the hearing record, a number of petitions and resolutions supporting the wilderness proposal were turned into the Hearing Officer. These represented 34 different organizations and were signed by over 1,260 individuals.

The primary reasons given for supporting the wilderness proposal included: protection of colonial birds and their nesting and feeding habitat; protection of estuarine and fisheries resources; long-range preservation of natural areas for scenic, aesthetic and ecological values; preservation vital to long-range social and economic interests of citizens of Indian River County; and preservation of Pelican Island Refuge because of its historical value as the Nation's first national wildlife refuge.

At least 15 statements presented during the hearing and many of the petitions and resolutions turned in recommended that the proposed wilderness area include Roseate Island, Pauls Island, Nelsons Island and the west side of Preachers Island which had not been included in the Bureau's proposal because of past ditching and spoils deposits. Arguments for including these islands were that the disturbed areas are rapidly reverting to a natural condition and that these islands are essential as buffers against future developments.

Mr. Beidler, representing the County Mosquito Control District, indicated that the outlets of existing ditches on Roseate Island must be kept open for mosquito control purposes. The final wilderness proposal includes these islands.

2. Communications from citizens

Forty-five communications were received from individuals, all in favor of the wilderness proposal. The principal reasons given for supporting the wilderness proposal were to provide additional protection against developments that would destroy the colonial bird and marine resources of the Pelican Island area, to preserve the unique ecology of this area for its scientific value and to preserve the resources and natural beauty of the area for its recreational values.

3. Communications from organizations

Twelve communications were received from organizations, all of them expressing support for the wilderness proposal. The principal reasons for support were: the need for preserving wilderness areas for the future, and protection of the area and its resources against encroaching development.

4. Comments of elected officials

Six communications from elected officials or groups were received for inclusion in the record. All were in support of wilderness designation for the islands in Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. They were:

Congressman Paul G. Rogers, Florida

City of Vero Beach, Florida

City Council of Sebastian, Florida Board of Commissioners, Indian River County, Florida

Indian River County Public Schools

Indian River County Chamber of Commerce

5. State agencies

Communications from two State agencies were received. A letter from the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund took no position on the wilderness proposal but expressed interest in protecting rights of riparian owners in sections 4 and 9. Dr. Maurice Provost, Director of the Entomological Research Center, Florida State Board of Health, Vero Beach, endorsed the wilderness area concept but expressed disappointment that refuge islands would not be available for research involving construction of impoundments.