

ing and reviewing its proposal and the recommendations of citizen conservationists at the hearing, the Department of the Interior found that the Harding unit is fully suitable for wilderness status and added this additional acreage to its wilderness recommendation. Thus the proposal now made by the President and before the Congress is for a 3,750-acre area to be designated as wilderness in the two adjacent units.

A low-standard, dirt road, called the Meyersville Road and maintained by the Townships of Harding and Passaic, lies between the proposed two district wilderness units. The governing bodies of these two townships have indicated a willingness to vacate and abandon this road if the committee so desires and we would agree that such a step—to unify the two wilderness areas—would be a desirable if not an essential step.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife proposed to manage the Dodge unit as a natural area, and to reestablish pristine conditions in the Harding unit through restoration of natural swamp conditions. Low plugs would be provided to retain floodwaters and to offset the effects of the manmade drainage system established in earlier years.

In the language of the Wilderness Act, the Great Swamp "generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature." The act requires that the "imprint of man's work be substantially unnoticeable," preserving "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man."

Wilderness designation will specify that the Bureau is also responsible for maintaining the wilderness character of these units once they are designated.

The Dodge and Harding units are urgently needed as an "enduring resource of wilderness" in this urban setting. The wilderness system has been established by the Congress "in order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possession, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition." The threat of encroaching development is as serious at Great Swamp as in nearly any other area likely to be included in the wilderness system, and must be met with statutory wilderness protection for the area.

I will say this, if it is found prudent in the judgment of the committee, to eliminate the road which has been the subject of discussion at this hearing, the Society would certainly concur in such a judgment.

We have recognized the Bureau in good faith came forward with a good two-unit proposal, a proposal that encompassed two separate ecological entities, areas separated from each other by a dirt road. If it proves to be possible, and all evidence indicates that this is possible, that we can eliminate the road, we would certainly support such an action, but we feel that the Bureau has proceeded in good faith in following the mandate of the Wilderness Act in providing two proposals for wilderness designation of two separate areas with unique ecological features that come under the purview and requirement of the law.

We would of course strongly support the designation of the Great Swamp Wilderness Area either in a two-unit form as proposed by the Bureau or as a one-unit area if this is found to be most practical. We would favor the second alternative, of course.