

The two outstanding characteristics of a wilderness that makes its preservation desirable are implicit in this definition; namely, the persistence of the primeval environment or influence, and freedom from mechanized and related aspects of the urban, industrial life to which modern man is increasingly confined. Any area with these two characteristics, or with either, should be most thoughtfully considered for preservation before it is permitted to be altered.

A third, highly desirable characteristic is the presence within the area of an environment impressing the visitor with a sense of remoteness. This characteristic is in most instances a function of the size of the area. Diminishing the size of a wilderness is definitely damaging to this characteristic, and thus the boundaries of such an area to be preserved should be as far-flung as possible. This characteristic also, however, seems to be a function of the nearness of the area to centers of population, or perhaps a function of the abruptness with which evidence of urban, industrial influence disappear. Thus a tract of absolute wilderness rather near to a city or other densely populated, industrialized area affords a deep sense of remoteness and must be assigned this characteristic of wilderness even though its size does not meet such arbitrary stands as have been established for areas that are surrounded by many miles of thinly populated lands.

The Wilderness Society was pleased recently to reprint in our magazine, "The Living Wilderness," an article by Mr. Noble E. Buell, Assistant Director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Mr. Buell's article, entitled "Refuge Recreation: High Standards Equal Quality," discusses the program of the Bureau to provide refuge recreation opportunities, including the refuge wilderness program. As Mr. Buell points out, "wilderness should be a most compatible addition to a refuge interpretive program." In addition, we would point out that it is the special contribution of the national wildlife refuge wilderness areas to bring wilderness close to the people in our heavily developed urban and industrialized areas.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of these wilderness proposals. This hearing marks an especially significant step in the implementation of the Wilderness Act, as we begin consideration of the wilderness resources of the national wildlife refuge system.

Last Monday the President sent a special message to the Congress, transmitting the "Fourth Annual Report on the Status of the National Wilderness Preservation System." In that message the President said:

We must preserve for use by this and future generations, some of the America that tempered and formed our national character, an America where a man can be alone with all the glories of nature and can renew his spirit in solitary communion with the land. This is the reason why we shall not be content until we have a National Wilderness Preservation System adequately symbolic of our great national heritage.

The proposals before you today, Mr. Chairman, do just that—They increase the protection of a diverse sample of wild land symbolic of our great natural heritage. We urge early and favorable action on these proposals.

Senator METCALF. Thank you very much for a very helpful, informative and comprehensive statement. I agree with you that this committee today, in its hearing, is launching itself into the second stage of operation of the Wilderness Act. We passed the act and incorporated certain areas into wilderness but now we are going to see the practical application of many of the provisions of the act so this is an auspicious occasion.

You heard Mr. Soucie testify as to a specific amendment to strike section 3 of the separate and several acts and to amend section 2. I would like to have the opinion of the Wilderness Society, by you as director, on those amendments, if you can give it to me at this time.