

through our independent study of the proposals now before this committee as well as other potential wilderness units within Michigan. We unreservedly support the designation as wilderness of the proposed areas in the Michigan Islands, Huron Islands, and Seney National Wildlife Refuges. As a midwesterner, I will also speak for the Sierra Club today concerning the proposed Wisconsin islands wilderness area in Wisconsin.

The Mackinac chapter is gratified to note that the legislation to designate these Michigan wilderness units is cosponsored by both Senator Philip A. Hart and Senator Robert P. Griffin and by all 19 members of the Michigan delegation in the House of Representatives. This strong bipartisan support further demonstrates the noncontroversial nature of these proposals, which were overwhelmingly endorsed by citizens and groups appearing at the administrative field hearings held in Michigan. Similarly, the Wisconsin islands proposal is noncontroversial—in fact, at the field hearing and in communications received for the hearing record the support for this proposal was unanimous. The strong support these proposals are receiving indicates, we believe, not only the outstanding merit of the wild lands involved, but the excellent job which has been done by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife in identifying and documenting the wilderness values of these lands and in preparing these proposals.

The national wilderness preservation system established by the Wilderness Act of 1964 was meant, I think, to be just that: a nationwide system for the preservation of samples of the wilderness and great natural diversity of the American landscape. It is a system to protect these areas for a diversity of conforming uses and values.

The Huron Islands National Wildlife Refuge and the Michigan Islands National Wildlife Refuge illustrate one special kind of value and use for which we are preserving wilderness; that is, as scientific natural reserves. The proposed Wisconsin islands wilderness is of this same type. These are all small areas: 12 acres in the Michigan islands, 29 acres in the Wisconsin islands, 147 acres in the Huron islands. Size, however, is not an accurate test of quality in this case, for these are island gems of pristine wildness. As islands they are protected by a buffer of water and by the difficulty of boat access through shoaled waters, and have thus far escaped the pressures of development. The few necessary developments on one of the Huron islands are not expected to be extended and do not conflict with the legal qualification of the entire 147 acres of this refuge as wilderness. These island refuges retain, close to more developed areas, a vestige of the wildness of the Great Lakes country. They are reservoirs of native birdlife which finds shelter and protection on these islands precisely because they are unspoiled and undisturbed. The varying elevation above lake level of these islands exposes them to differing environmental conditions, so that we have a fascinating sampling of a spectrum of ecological conditions and resulting life communities. These islands have a great value as study areas thoroughly insulated from outside influences and hence maintaining the natural conditions and balances which are of growing interest and concern. Their values as study preserves will increase as the surrounding areas become increasingly and unnaturally developed. As isolated gems of wildness and as scientific reserves, and simply as undamaged samples of natural environment to be handed on to future generations, these areas should receive the best possible protection.