

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Says

Nation Must Meet Demand for Outdoor Recreation

By WALTER J. HICKEL
Secretary of the Interior

Curing environmental ills is a major goal of this Administration. A better recreation environment is an im-



Hickel

portant part of the quality life we seek in these efforts. We are looking carefully at our natural estate in order to preserve the best of what we have, and to reclaim what we have defiled in the past. We have put teeth into water pollution control programs. We are expanding multiple use concepts for all Federal lands and waters. We are zeroing in on the knottiest problem of them all, the special environmental needs of our huge urban areas.

Above all, we are laying the foundation for greater participation on the part of State and local governments in assessing and combating the outdoor recreation shortages in their communities.

Annual 10% Increase

Direct action toward meeting the Nation's pressing current outdoor recreation needs is necessary if we are to accommodate the 10 percent increase each year expected in outdoor activities. This rate of growth is projected in the Nation's first nationwide outdoor recreation plan, produced for the Department of the Interior by its Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. Acquisition and development of lands and waters for recreation have not kept pace with the demand for open areas in which to roam and play.

The Plan reveals imbalance in the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities between East and West, shortages of public recreation areas in rural America, and a critical lack of recreation lands and facilities in the Nation's larger cities and their fast-multiplying suburbs. Local governments are unable to meet the ever-rising costs of providing them.

Parks to People

In recognition of these immediate needs we are considering an increased funding program for urban recreation projects, and for Federal action to establish national parklands in or near our cities. We are channeling the money and authority we now have to bring more parklands to our urban populations. The proposed Gateway National Recreational Area in metropolitan New York and New Jersey is only one example of our determination to invest Federal funds and efforts to bring Parks to People.

Throughout the country we are intensifying our activities to preserve and better use existing natural resources. Though the need for new highways and airports and industrial and residential development in this dynamic era of growth in many areas of the country cannot be denied, we are taking tough stands wherever we can to protect outstanding natural resources from these encroachments.

Now is the Time

As I told the Governor's Conference on California's Changing Environment in November last year, I think now is a good time to resolve that in the next decade our Net National Environment — and not our Gross National Product — will be the overriding objective of the Nation.

The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation maintains a con-

tinuing national and regional inventory of man-made as well as natural outdoor recreation areas and facilities to enable us to follow our progress in meeting outdoor recreation needs.

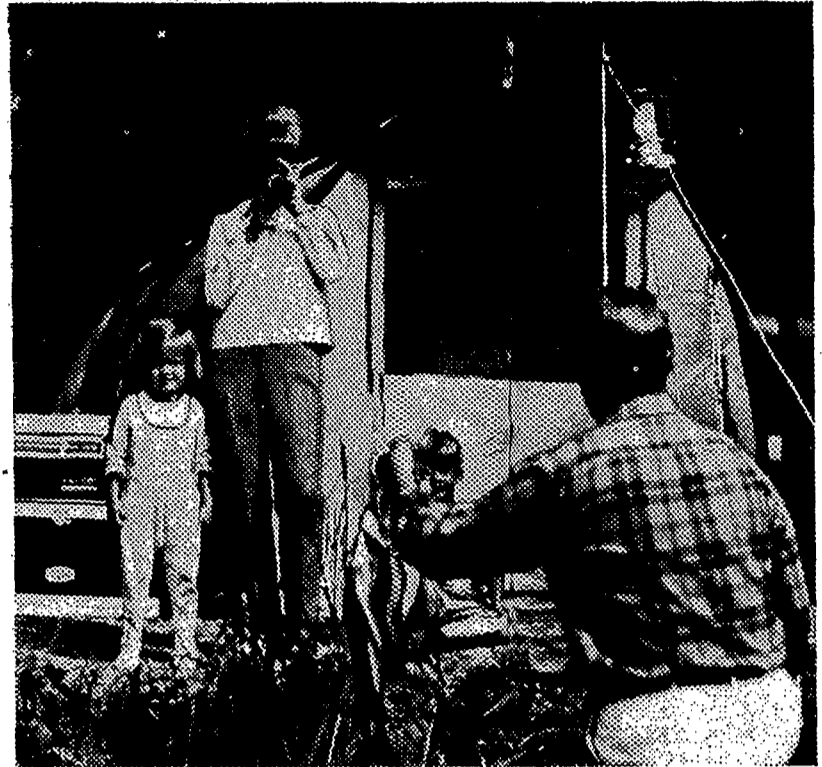
Under consideration is a proposal that a National Recreation Environment Account also be established to keep us up-to-date on where we stand in terms of quantities and qualities of our significant resources — shoreline, islands, wetlands, rivers and estuaries, deserts and wilderness, and historic, cultural and scientific areas. The Department of the Interior is evaluating this recommendation.

Other programs being considered in the Department could provide sorely needed technical assistance and re-

search and education that would help and encourage many levels of government, private citizens and industry, to improve the Nation's outdoor environment.

There has been a great deal of talk lately about how we are courting environmental suicide by ruining our outdoors.

The outdoors concerns all Americans today, inspiring constructive action, even among our so-called "disenchanted" youth. Where once they hailed our great technological advances as unquestioned victories and gave no thought to their effect upon our environment, they now cry for new technologies that will not only repair the damage to our earth but improve it. To me, this is one of the most encouraging aspects of our time.



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