

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



will have one-third of the seats surrounding the floor," she said.

University officials hope to have the enlarged facility ready for the 1999 basketball season, Watkins said, but for every semester students pay the \$2 fee before the facility is ready, they will receive vouchers to buy tickets to the basketball games at student rates for the same length of time, even after they graduate.

If approved by the State Regents for Higher Education, the fee will first appear on student charges in the fall semester 1997. Students enrolled in five or fewer credit hours will not pay the fee. Students taking more than 18 hours will only be charged up to 18 credit hours for the fee.

—GERRY CHERRY
11/12/96

ENVIRONMENT

NEW LAW INCREASES NATIONAL FOREST ACREAGE IN OKLAHOMA

■(GIT) Tuesday, President Clinton signed HR4236 into law. The "Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996" profoundly affects Oklahoma's forests, as well as parks, forests, trails, rivers or historic sites in 40 other states.

A land swap between the U.S. Forest Service, Ouachita National Forest, and Weyerhaeuser Corporation was part of the bill. "We were dealing right up to the last minute, trading value for value," Deputy Forest Supervisor Dave Hammond said Wednesday. Weyerhaeuser Corporation owns and manages pine forests for renewable sources of wood and paper products.

In the exchange 47,500 acres of National Forest land in southeast Oklahoma and Arkansas was traded to Weyerhaeuser for 180,500 acres of land in the same region. In Oklahoma, the Forest Service swapped 28,000 National Forest acres for 115,000 Weyerhaeuser acres, of "watershed around Broken Bow Lake, some pine plantations, 15 miles along the Glover River and some land in McCurtain County," Hammond said. The Glover River is southeast Oklahoma's last free-flowing river, he added.

One parcel in Arkansas, 24,000 acres along the Cossatot and Little Rivers will become the 501st National Wildlife Refuge.

Some of the land acquired by the U.S. Forest Service is cut-over; but Hammond

said some of it is already good wildlife habitat and foresters will be working to improve other newly-acquired parcels. "Our work is just beginning," Hammond added.

More than 100 resources are included in the new law, some natural, some manmade. On the west coast, provisions in the law would improve the management of the Presidio in San Francisco.

Another laudable provision, the President said, authorizes appropriations of \$17.5 million to help the New York-New Jersey Palisades Interstate Park Commission to acquire lands within the Sterling Forest Reserve, just 40 miles from midtown Manhattan. This is one of the last areas of pristine forest in the Northeast and the area is critical for supplying safe drinking water to northern New Jersey.

The Act also establishes the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Kansas.

The Act also provides for ten separate nonfederal national heritage areas in Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Iowa, Ohio, and New York. Other provisions would help to preserve the Nation's cultural heritage by authorizing memorials, protecting historic areas, designating the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail in Alabama, and authorizing the establishment of a Martin Luther King, Jr., memorial in the District of Columbia.

Park boundary adjustments, land exchanges (including the Arkansas/Oklahoma deal), and provisions to assist agencies in protecting national parks, forests, and public lands are also included in the new law.

Excluded from the bill, President Clinton said, were provisions "that would have adversely affected the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, the Shenandoah National Park and Richmond Battlefields National Park in Virginia, the Sequoia National Park in California, and other national parks and Federal lands.

—GERRY CHERRY
11/13/96

"The best frame of government is that which is most likely to prevent the greatest sum of evil."

James Monroe
"Observations of the Federal Government"
1789

WILLIAMS DONATES PIPE FOR HACKBERRY FLAT

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The Williams Companies, Inc. has agreed to donate approximately 16 miles of steel pipe to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation for use in its Hackberry Flat wetland restoration project. The pipe will be used to deliver 2,352 acre feet of water supplied by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Mountain Park Conservancy District of the Hackberry Flat basin in Tillman County, Oklahoma, from a supply source located approximately 16 miles north of the state.

"This generous pipe donation is an important link in our effort to restore these wetlands to their original prominence," said Greg Duffy, director, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. "Williams is a leader in pipe donations for wetlands conservation and an important partner in Oklahoma's efforts to provide habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds."

Hackberry Flat is a 3,750 acre natural basin in southwest Oklahoma that was at one time the largest isolated wetland in the state. Prior to its drainage and conversion to farmland, it was an important stopover for thousands of migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Once the area is restored, it is expected to be used by more than 200,000 waterfowl and shorebirds, including the endangered whooping cranes.

—OKLAHOMA DEPT. OF WILDLIFE
11/13/96

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

LAND COMMISSION HOLDS ROUTINE MEETING

■(GIT) The Commissioners of the Land held a routine meeting Tuesday, approving the appraisal of nine tracts of land for sale and authorizing the commission's general counsel to execute certificates of purchase in the absence of its secretary.

Leasees on nine tracts of land totaling more than 600 acres had asked that their land be appraised for possible sale. Those appraisals were approved by the commission without discussion. Also approved was the appraisal for a separate tract of land which will now be subject to sale.

Following a brief executive session, the commission directed its staff to proceed with participation in a settle conference in the