Statement of Assistant Secretary John A. Garver, Jr.,
before the National Parks Subcommittee of the House Interior
and Insular Affairs Committee, re H.R. 2775 and H.R. 3244;
also H.R. 5013 and H.R. 5049 -- July 6, 1961

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The Secretary is unable to be here today; he has not returned from
his trip into the Colorado River Canyon in the Four Corners Area of Utah.

I am privileged to submit his statements on both the Point Reyes
proposals and on the Padre Island proposals. Before doing so (and I
shall be pleased to read them if the Committee desires), I'd like to
offer a couple of informal comments on the bills, not on their contents,
but on their relationship to other proposals for this kind of addition
to our national park system.

The preservation of seashore areas for future enjoyment in their
natural state is receiving extensive attention -- in the Executive
Branch, by the Congress, and in the public press and magazines. Our
Department has given you its views or is now developing views on five
major projects in this category -- Oregon Dunes, Indiana Dunes, Cape
Cod, and the two we are considering today -- Point Reyes and Padre
Island.

You will recall that beginning in 1954, the National Park Service,
with funds donated for the purpose, made reconnaissance surveys of sea-
shore recreation areas on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, summarized in a
beautiful pamphlet as "Our Vanishing Shoreline" in 1955. This was
followed with similar surveys of the Great Lakes and Pacific Coast
Shores, and the three publications "A Report on the Seashore
Recreation Area Survey of the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts", "Remaining
Shoreline Opportunities in the Great Lakes States", and "Pacific
Coast Recreation Area Survey" are catalogues of this priceless kind
of resource.

We have been giving careful thought to the possibility of assign-
ing priorities among these areas, and among the various legislative
proposals which had their impetus in the studies, as a means of assist-
ing this Committee and the Congress. Such action has been urged on us;
we have been told that this may be the only or the best way of getting
favorable action on any one proposal.

In complete candor, I must tell you that we feel we cannot make
that kind of discrimination. This is for the simple reason that they
are all important and, more significantly, they are all faced with the
same calamitous prospect.

To some extent, they assign themselves priorities -- based for
example on the existing threats to them, their size, their proximity
to densely populated areas, and the like.

But in a general way, it can be said as to all the proposals now
pending as bills in this Committee that if they are not preserved and
protected against commercial and other development in the next very
few years, they will be lost forever.

Making a choice for priorities in this situation is like unto the
old dilemma; if two of your children are drowning and you can only save
one, which do you select? This has always seemed to me a highly
artificial question -- the parent would have to react in the natural way of a parent. Reason and logic to the contrary, he will attempt to save both -- and probably succeed because of some superhuman strength drawn out of the situation.

We are in the same position. The public interest demands that we save all of the seashore areas which have been identified as having national significance.

While on the subject of priorities, it seems to us that seashore preservation is entitled to consideration not less important than other proposed additions to the national system -- important as they all are. With the exception of certain areas in the Virgin Islands, no additions have been made to our seashore preserves for nearly a quarter of a century.

Americans have "seashore fever". Given the rate of population growth, the greater buying power of Americans, the additional leisure time they have, and the fantastic mobility they are achieving -- four forces pushing in the same direction -- and then add to it this compulsion to the seashore, and you see the critical nature of this kind of bill.