



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

85 acres (Univ. of Ark.) \$25,716
211 " (Priv. Sale) \$33,500
\$59,216

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LAND PURCHASED IN ARKANSAS FOR FISH-FARMING RESEARCH

Purchase of two tracts of land in two important Arkansas rice, soybean, and cotton growing areas for the development of a fish-farming research station was announced today by the Department of the Interior. The land acquired for the projects totaled 296 acres.

The purpose of the research is to provide practical ways by which fish-farming can be conducted profitably in conjunction with agricultural crop growing. The University of Arkansas, through its network of agricultural experiment stations, has long been interested in finding income crops for rotation with rice production, and experience in recent years indicates that fish might be such a crop. However, numerous problems on stocking, disease control, predation, competition and reservoir management must be solved before that type of fish-farming can be economically feasible.

On March 15, 1958, the President signed a bill which authorizes two major fields of activity:

(1) Biological research on all the problems of fish rearing--selection of species, parasites and diseases, reproduction, food requirements, water quality, predation and competition and selective breeding for special qualities of growth, disease resistance, and tolerance to special conditions.

(2) Technological improvement--harvesting methods and preparation of fish for the market.

The two Bureaus of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service--the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries--will work together to carry out all the provisions of the Act. The former, which does research on fish cultural problems and freshwater fishery management, and operates some 100

fish hatcheries over the country, will have responsibility for the biological research, and the latter for technological and market promotion aspects.

One of the purchased tracts comprises 85 acres immediately adjacent to the Rice Branch Experiment Station near Stuttgart. The other is 211 acres adjoining the Southeast Branch Experiment Station at Kelso (P. O. Rohwer). Thus there will be excellent opportunity for close cooperation, joint research effort, especially in crop rotations, and day-to-day consultation. These opportunities are enhanced by the fact that crop research specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture are stationed at one of the two University experiment stations.

Biologists of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Agricultural Extension Service, and the Soil Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture have had a long-time interest in managed farm ponds and reservoirs for multiple use, including fish and waterfowl. They have provided technical and extension services and consultation to farmers and the general public on pond and reservoir construction, stocking and management with the best information available.

Other activities, like fishery economics and market promotion and development, are long-established functions of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and limited assistance has been given to fish farmers already. The very great problem of weed control will be given attention principally by the University of Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with fishery biologists.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife of the Fish and Wildlife Service is making plans for construction and staffing the new station. The Stuttgart site will have a headquarters and laboratory building, experimental ponds and a small reservoir. The southeastern land will be developed for larger-scale experimentation to extend and test the laboratory findings. Although long-range and fundamental research will be included in the program, it can reasonably be expected that useful results will come from time to time for practical application. These will be made available promptly through publication to all interested, and to the State Game and Fish Commission, the Agricultural Extension Service, other State conservation agencies and the Soil Conservation Service for use in their technical and extension activities.

The Stuttgart property will have a modern, functional laboratory, fish holding facilities, a service building for shop, garage and storage, a reservoir of about 30 acres, and experimental ponds ranging from one-tenth acre to one acre in surface area. The Kelso land already has a building and a high gallonage rice well, and an adequate surface water supply. Well-stabilized levees have been constructed on three sides of 160 acres of the plot. Five-, ten-, and twenty-acre reservoirs are planned for the site. There is excellent prospect for experimental work on two nearby 80-acre reservoirs to be constructed by the landowner.

Construction of facilities and the development of the two tracts of land for research purposes, and initial staffing will proceed as soon as appropriations are made. Engineering specifications have not been drawn up, but a general layout plan has been made with the advice and assistance of Dr. S. W. Ling, fishery expert for the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. Dr. Ling recently visited the sites in Arkansas as well as several research stations and fish hatcheries in the South.

Professional staffing contemplates a team of research specialists in aquatic biology, microbiology and parasitology, physiology, biochemistry, biostatistics, and genetics. There will also be supporting personnel for fish handling, water management, and maintenance.

Work with several groups of fish can be foreseen now. The catfishes, buffalo fishes, and basses will be important, and additional good possibility is for carefully controlled experiments with a desirable import which has not yet been tried in the United States.

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