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LARGE WILD-LIFE REFUGE BEING  
ESTABLISHED ON UPPER MISSISSIPPI

With initial steps under way for the purchase of lands for the creation of the Upper Mississippi River Wild Life and Fish Refuge, provided for by act of Congress in June, 1924, the dreams of conservationists who fostered the movement will soon be realized. This refuge, along the upper reaches of the Mississippi, is designed as a feeding and resting place for wild fowl and other migratory birds, and as a natural home for fur animals. In addition, it is established for the preservation of fishes, and of trees, wild flowers, and other native plants.

The Izaak Walton League of America originated the idea of the refuge and urged the passage of the act. This section along the river is one of the many areas needed for the perpetuation of migratory game birds and the many other forms of wild life.

The Secretary of Agriculture has been given authority to purchase the lands for the new refuge and administration is through the Bureau of Biological Survey, which maintains many of the other wild-life refuges of the Federal Government. Jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture within the refuge will extend to wild birds, game animals, fur-bearing animals, trees, wild flowers, and plants, while the Department of Commerce will have jurisdiction with respect to fishes, mussels, and other aquatic animal life. The two departments are authorized to make suitable regulations governing hunting and fishing on the areas acquired.

The bill became a law on approval by the President on June 7, 1924, and authorized appropriations not to exceed \$1,500,000 for the acquisition of overflowed lands on either side of the Mississippi in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota, for a distance of about 200 miles from Rock Island, Ill. to Wabasha, Minn. The appropriation bill for the Department of Agriculture for the year beginning July 1, 1925, carried \$400,000 for beginning the work.

The superintendent of the new refuge has established headquarters in the Post Office Building at Winona, Minn. He is actively engaged in locating available lands for purchase, in harmony with the desire of the department to be in position to carry out the purposes of the refuge with the greatest possible expedition.

The Biological Survey is working to obtain the cooperation of people in the Upper Mississippi Valley in the development and enjoyment of this wild-life refuge. When the lands are obtained and the refuge thoroughly organized it will be one of the greatest establishments of the kind in the possession of the National Government. Here the wild animals, birds, and fishes will under careful conservation have opportunity to increase their numbers, and along with this, the public will be given the enjoyment of the sport of hunting and fishing to the fullest extent consistent with maintaining the wild life supply within the area in maximum abundance. The region is a beautiful and picturesque place in which great numbers may seek healthful recreation and sport in the out-of-doors.

The areas to be purchased for the refuge are specifically limited to the bottom lands between the river and the bluffs which rise precipitiously on either side from 200 to 400 feet. The average price of the lands can not, under the law, exceed \$5 per acre. In this region the Mississippi flows through a valley averaging 3 to 5 miles in width to the bluffs. At times of high water a large part of this area is overflowed and not suitable for agriculture. There are many

permanent sloughs and bayous, some of them navigable to boats of light draft. Many of them are dry in summer, but the land exposed is not suitable for cultivation. To save the fishes in these cut-off bodies of water, the Bureau of Fisheries sends agents each year to return them to the Mississippi or carry them to other localities for restocking depleted streams. In this way hundreds of millions are rescued every year by Federal and State agencies in one of the greatest spawning grounds in the United States for such species as bass, pike, sunfish and others.

The pearl-button industry, with an enormous annual output finds an important part of its raw material in the mussel shells obtained in the waters of this region. It is noteworthy that the spawn of certain shellfish can be disseminated only in the gills of certain fishes, so that the mussel-shell industry in this region depends for its existence upon the conservation of the fishes frequenting these waters. The industry will not only be unhampered by the creation of this reservation but by its establishment will be assured of perpetuity.

The Mississippi Valley is described as the great American highway for our migratory birds, and many of their feeding and resting places are found in the very midst of the new refuge. Quail and ducks have in the past bred here, and during migration the refuge is an ideal place for many species of warblers. The principal fur animals indigenous to these lands are muskrats, minks, raccoons, foxes, and skunks, and in the southern part some few opossums. These animals will be of no small economic importance in the legitimate uses of the refuge.