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PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON WILD LIFE
SUBMITS FEDERAL CONSERVATION PLAN

Coordination of Federal Agencies Under New Officials
Recommended -- Diversion of Over 6,000,000 Acres
of Submarginal Crop Lands Proposed

The immediate acquisition of five million acres of submarginal agricultural land in 44 States, and the gradual acquisition of an additional eight to ten million acres for wild life production and related purposes was recommended to the President today by the President's Committee on Wild Life Restoration in a report presented by Secretary Wallace and the Committee. This would be part of the Administration's program to buy submarginal farm land, perhaps to the amount of 50,000,000 acres.

This program is a major section of a broad plan for the better utilization of our national resources, involving land utilization, erosion control, water conservation, flood control, forestry management, and the diversion of submarginal land from agriculture to more profitable purposes.

The report of the Wild Life Restoration Committee calls for a coordination of Federal conservation agencies under a Restoration Commissioner. Tentative projects numbering 401, submitted by fish and game officials of 45 States, the Bureau of Biological Survey and others, proposing acquisition and diversion of 6,013,074 acres of submarginal

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lands from unprofitable crop production are included.

The Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce, under the proposed coordination, would comprise a committee to which the Commissioner of Restoration would be responsible. Directors of Erosion Control, Fisheries, Wild Life (new), National Parks, and National Forests are listed under the Commissioner in the proposed new administrative set-up.

The plan, upon which the Committee has been engaged since appointment (Jan.2), and for which executive approval and early inauguration are recommended by the Committee, contemplates substantial employment.

It is proposed that \$25,000,000 be "ear marked" for the sub-marginal land requirements of the committee's plan. A similar amount is suggested for allotment from PWA and CWA monies for payment of workers required for the restoration and improvement work recommended.

Future maintenance of the tracts acquired is planned out of revenue from four sources: "Duck Stamp" Bill revenue, a tax of one dollar on waterfowl hunters (passed in the Senate February 6); part of funds to be made available under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act; a proposed continuation of the tax on arms and ammunition, already agreed to by the manufacturers interested, and appropriations of public funds, such as are made for forests and parks. Subsistence farmers, under trained supervisors, would manage the areas.

The report of the committee, composed of Thomas H. Beck, Wilton, Conn., Chairman; Jay N. Darling, Des Moines, Iowa, and Professor Aldo Leopold, Madison, Wis., states:

"We commend to your attention the fact that we have considered all species of wild life and all values of restoration, instead of confining ourselves to game.

"The plan to withdraw by purchase submarginal lands unsuited to profitable agricultural use affords an unusual opportunity to carry out a vast and pressingly urgent national program for wild life restoration.

"At no time in history have we had such an opportunity to fulfil our obligation under the Migratory Bird Treaty and to accept the responsibility imposed by the Lacey Act passed in 1900.

"There is incontrovertible evidence of a critical and continuing decline in our wild life resources, especially migratory waterfowl, due to the destruction and neglect of vast natural breeding and nesting areas by drainage, the encroachment of agriculture, and the random efforts of our disordered progress toward an undefined goal. We found no evidence of a comprehensive or coordinated plan or effort to correct the situation, which is patent to all informed persons. Therefore, the need for a national program seems too apparent for extensive comment.

"At present, as in the past, authority over wild life is scattered through several departments and bureaus to the great disadvantage of orderly progress in conservation and restoration. Nothing included in this report, so far as we know, requires any immediate legislation and, therefore, the proposals, if approved, may be put into execution promptly.

"Striking evidence of the unanimous and unified support for immediate action on the proposals we are making is had in the 'treaty' drawn and signed by the Chairman of the Special Senate Committee on Conservation of Wild Life Resources, the Chairman of this (President's) Committee and the 47 representatives of interested organizations, including the National Grange and the American Farm Bureau Federation, at the Senate Committee hearing held January 25, 1934, and presented to the President.

"The adoption of this program and putting it in prompt operation will meet with the unqualified approval of, and capture the imagination not only of 7,000,000 licensed sportsmen but, what is more important, millions of nature lovers, students of wild life and the children of this and future generations. The economic values are enormous and the cost less than one great bridge or housing project."

"Migratory waterfowl," the report states, is "a great economic and recreational asset once present in prolific abundance, now threatened with virtual extinction by the destruction of breeding and nesting areas."

"An ironic commentary on our neglect of waterfowl nesting areas is had in the proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt setting aside Lower Klamath Lake, Oregon, as a sanctuary. He said, 'This is one of the greatest wild fowl nurseries in the United States . . . an outdoor museum . . . which will prove of great educational value' . . ."

"And in the report of F. L. Lathrop in 1932, which states, 'Lower Klamath Lake was drained after much difficulty and expense and dried up - devastated by numerous fires and abandoned as unfit for agricultural development.'

"Our supply of native upland game birds, once the finest in the world, has been reduced to a remnant of its former abundance. Extensive restoration of wild turkeys, grouse, quail, and other upland game will provide profitable utilization for millions of acres of rural land which is unprofitable for farming and stock raising and much of which is ideally suited to the production of game crops."

Pointing out that retirement of submarginal farm land will have a beneficial effect on upland birds, the report continues: "Such areas, when cropped for game, can become valuable object lessons to demonstrate that the growing of an under-produced crop of wild life is a better and more profitable use than the growing of overproduced staple crops which has heretofore prevailed."

Song, insectivorous and ornamental birds, small and large mammals are recommended for attention of the Director of Wild Life Restoration. A total of 36 projects for utilization of submarginal lands in facilitating restoration of these species is included in the report.

"The immediate need for an administrative executive is imperative," it is stated. "The work of putting into effect this or any national wild life restoration program and carrying on the essential conservation cannot be done with the requisite speed or resourcefulness with the pre-existing personnel. On the other hand, it is absolutely essential that every trained man and all available information be utilized to the utmost.

"To coordinate all co-related Federal conservation and restoration effort, the Committee has the temerity to suggest the appointment (by promotion) of a Restoration Commissioner under the direction of a committee of the three Cabinet members most concerned, i. e., the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce.

"The Commissioner should supervise and coordinate the wild life restoration work of the following services: Federal Parks, Federal Forests, Reclamation, Fisheries, Wild Life (new), Erosion Control, Public Domain, Emergency Conservation Work and Mosquito Control."

"The President," the report continues, "should be respectfully asked to issue an executive order requiring this, and to place the jurisdiction over all wild life (on federal lands) in the United States and possessions under the federal wild life director. This jurisdiction is now scattered 'all over the lot' from the Light House Service to the Marine Corps.

"The destruction of our once abundant wild life resources, through waste and neglect, constitutes one of the sorriest chapters in our national history," the report concludes.

"The knowledge, the facilities and the funds necessary for restoration are available if we will put them to work.

"Extensive restoration of our wild life will recreate a national resource of incalculable value, which will add measurably to the health, happiness and prosperity of the people of the United States."