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MEDICINE LAKE, MONTANA,  
NEW WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

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A new Federal wildlife sanctuary has been created in the plains regions of northeastern Montana and designated the Medicine Lake Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, reports the U. S. Biological Survey. The project, says the Bureau, is part of the national waterfowl-restoration program.

Established by a recent Executive order, the new refuge comprises a 23,700-acre submarginal area 21 miles south of Plentywood, in Sheridan and Roosevelt Counties. The duck population is made up mainly of pintails, mallards, baldpates, shovelers, canvasbacks, and a few teals. Avocets, sandpipers, willets, cormorants, and pelicans also are on the area. Marsh and aquatic plants, consisting principally of ruppia and marginal bulrush, grow prolifically, and a sand-dune portion of the refuge is sprinkled with shrub thickets useful to upland game.

The improved refuge will serve not only as a breeding area but as a resting place during migrations. When completed, the project will also include the impounding and distribution of water that previously, with the melting of spring snows, has either spread out over nonproductive lands or else run off into already swollen streams, constituting for years a waste of water in a section where its conservation is of great importance. The refuge will be closed to agriculture and fenced, and areas adaptable for crops will be planted to supplementary waterfowl foods and cover.

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Restoration activities already have begun. The program, as drafted, involves construction of an earth-filled dam across the nearby Big Muddy Creek, with concrete control works, to divert water into Medicine Lake through a diversion ditch to be excavated. When the level of Medicine Lake is thus raised, the water stored there will also be used to maintain a breeding area along Big Muddy Creek below the lake's outlet through this creek. Several dikes and ditches are also planned to divert water from Lake Creek, the lake's inlet, to potholes and natural depressions in the vicinity, for the development of a feeding and breeding area.

Headquarters buildings being constructed include a two-bedroom residence; a service building combining office, laboratory, and shop; a barn; a boathouse; and a pump house. Certain roads and bridges will be rebuilt.