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WPA WORKERS IMPROVE  
WATERFOWL REFUGE IN  
DELTA OF MISSISSIPPI

President Roosevelt Allots Funds  
for Continuance of Work by  
U. S. Biological Survey

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The Biological Survey will continue its WPA work in developing and improving the Delta Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, through June 30 with a supplemental allotment of funds recently authorized by President Roosevelt from the Emergency Relief appropriation.

This refuge, on the east side of the major channel of the Mississippi and on the delta proper, is one of the nation's outstanding waterfowl wintering areas. Among the newest bird sanctuaries to come under Federal administration, it was established by Executive order of November 19, 1935, and ultimately will contain more than 45,000 acres made up almost entirely of the famous Delta Duck Club property, and lands that once were the estate of the late Joseph Leiter, wealthy Chicago sportsman.

Almost inaccessible, the Delta refuge has furnished to interested persons splendid opportunity to see a myriad of birds and a colorful cross-section of bird life in unspoiled, natural marshes. During the few months the area has been under jurisdiction of the Biological Survey, it has proved its value as a refuge. It is hoped that eventually it will winter about a million migratory birds annually. The principal ducks wintering here are the canvasback, lesser scaup,

ring-necked, pintail, baldpate, gadwall, mallard, shoveller, blue and green-winged teal, and the black duck. Blue, snow, and white-fronted geese also are abundant in winter. Other species of birds frequenting the area are coots, clapperrails, plovers, egrets, cormorants, ibises, herring gulls, royal and Caspian terns.

#### WPA Workers Improve Area

Since the Delta Refuge is entirely inaccessible by road, it was necessary to establish a camp on the refuge for the 175 WPA workers on the project. Through the efforts of John H. Sutherlin, assistant refuge manager and director of the project, four quarterboats for housing the workers were obtained from the U. S. Army District Engineers. Food and construction supplies are delivered by freight boats visiting camp bi-weekly. Bread goes by bus from New Orleans to Buras, La., and from there comes by mail boat to the camp. When necessary, men are transported to camp in trucks assigned for their use, driven from New Orleans to Venice, at the end of the nearest road, and from thence brought the remaining 8 miles to camp by boat.

Work so far has been confined to land improvement. On the refuge area stood an old quarantine station, abandoned by the Public Health Service in 1931. This was transferred to the Biological Survey, and the site selected for the new refuge headquarters. Built originally to withstand tropical hurricanes, the buildings were of exceptionally sturdy construction, and it was sometimes difficult to raze them so as to save materials for future use.

Fourteen buildings were torn down, however, salvaged, and several new structures reared or repaired from the materials. Three small cottages for permanent employees have been built, and a storage and tool house; a building containing a pump and light plant, a boat house, and a repair shop. From the old wharf has been built a boat slip. A new sea wall has been built around the site. Upon the foundations of an old office building a new one is already half completed.

A new residence for the refuge manager is under way, as is also a 120-foot lookout tower fronting the river. One old hospital building was repaired to serve as barracks for temporary workmen and survey parties.

After years of neglect, all existing trees, shrubs, and hedges--especially the great live oaks and camphor trees on the river front--have been trimmed and pruned back to promote more rapid growth, or replanted more advantageously.

On the boundaries permanent posting and metal markers were set up on creosoted posts, and about 15 miles of single-strand fence constructed along shorelines. All these posts, anchoring the fence, had to be moved as far as possible by boat, then carried or dragged through the marsh.

#### Marsh Improvements Now Planned

The Biological Survey is now giving special attention to improving marsh conditions. It is planned to open ditches, now closed by silt or undesirable aquatic plants; remove snags in navigable channels; control undesirable aquatic plant growth; do control work in the small ditches by use of bank blades, rakes, and fire--all man-power labor.

This opening of certain silt-closed passes will make patrols easier and allow for thorough circulation of water needed for a more profuse growth of duck and goose food.

The Biological Survey is planning a series of towers placed strategically along the coast lines, for use in patrolling and wildlife observation; for wing dams to divert and increase the flow of water through passes and bayous; and for the construction of gates on certain major ditches to keep silt-bearing waters out of ponds during periods of high river. The plans, finally, include the digging of several ditches to increase the natural flow of water to the coastline at desired points, and the removal of dead willow to promote more rapid growth of young trees for nesting habitat, natural bank revetment, and for surplus sale to U. S. engineers for use in artificial revetment in the region.