

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

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GABRIELSON APPROVES FIRST PROJECT UNDER FEDERAL-STATE WILDLIFE PLAN

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Changing a Utah "death trap" for wild ducks into a safe feeding and nesting refuge is the aim of the first project approved under the new Federal-State cooperative program for wildlife restoration.

Plans by the Utah Department of Fish and Game for improving the Weber River delta area in Weber County to reduce waterfowl losses from western duck sickness — a form of botulism or food poisoning — were approved today by Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Chief of the U. S. Biological Survey.

Shallow ponds on the flat, alkaline lands in the delta region become stagnant during summer. This condition encourages the development of the causative organism of the disease — a bacillus, Clostridium botulinum, type C. As a result large numbers of waterfowl and their young that use these ponds are fatally poisoned.

Construction of a 5-mile dike on the area to impound fresh water from the Weber River for the use of waterfowl and to keep the heavy concentrations of salt in the Great Salt Lake from entering the area will get under way shortly. Federal funds amounting to \$7,500 and \$2,500 from the State will be available this year for building the dike and necessary water control structures. Under the cooperative plan the participating State provides funds equal to one third of the Federal allotment. Unskilled labor for the project will be supplied by C.C.C. enrollees from a Biological Survey camp on the State's nearby Ogden Bay Game Bird Refuge. The main expenditures will be for structural material and for the operation of drag lines and other heavy equipment.

114-39

Botulism was also a cause of heavy waterfowl mortality at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, 15 miles north of the Weber River delta region, prior to its establishment as a Federal refuge in 1928. A system of dikes now separates the Bear River delta region from the Great Salt Lake and also controls the flow of fresh water from the river into the several water impoundment areas. Botulism there is no longer the menace that it was several years ago.

"Each season Utah produces a good waterfowl crop as many species nest there, but in some places botulism claims a heavy toll", says Doctor Gabrielson. "Preventing conditions that encourage the disease appears to be the best control measure."

One dike $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles long already has been completed on the Weber River area through the cooperation of the Biological Survey. The new dike will be linked with the one already completed so that water can be stabilized on about 3,000 acres. Eventually the Survey and the State game officials hope to divide this area into several units by building cross dikes. This will enable refuge officials during the periods of water scarcity to provide ample water for some of the units while others go dry.

Doctor Gabrielson announced that cooperative wildlife-restoration projects for other States will be passed upon as speedily as possible. Federal cooperation with States in this program has been made possible by the Pittman-Robertson Act approved last fall. It authorizes Congress to make appropriations equal to the revenue derived annually from Federal taxes on firearms and ammunition. The first appropriation, however, would not have been available before next year, and to get the program under way this year Congress appropriated \$1,000,000. Allotments are based on the participating State's size and number of hunting licenses sold.