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INTERIOR TO REORGANIZE FISH AND WILDLIFE ACTIVITIES

Secretary Fred A. Seaton announced today that action has been initiated to reorganize the fish and wildlife activities of the Department of the Interior to carry out the provisions of the "Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956" which was signed August 8, by the President.

Secretary Seaton described the new law as "an important step forward in providing greater recognition at the national level of the country's vital stake in fish and wildlife conservation."

"This Act," he said, "will enable the commercial fishing industry to attain its proper place in the national economy and will assure sportsmen that the Federal Government is increasing its management efforts to develop adequate fish and wildlife resources for recreational purposes."

Under the terms of the Act, two new top-level posts will be established. One will be an Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, and the other will be a Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife. Appointments to these positions will be made by the President and will be subject to Senate confirmation.

Secretary Seaton said that no decision has been reached as to who will fill these two positions.

The new Assistant Secretary position is the first to be created since May 24, 1950 when four Assistant Secretaries were authorized by Congress. It is the first major reorganization of the Fish and Wildlife Service since 1940 when the Bureau of Biological Survey and the Bureau of Fisheries were combined to form the service.

The Act also provides for the creation within the Department of a new United States Fish and Wildlife Service which will replace the presently existing Fish and Wildlife Service.

The new Service will consist of two separate agencies, each of which will have the status of a Federal bureau. One of these agencies will be known as the "Bureau of Commercial Fisheries" and the other as the "Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife." Each bureau will be headed by a director who will be appointed by the Secretary of the Interior.

Both Directors will handle their responsibilities under the direction of the Commissioner who, in turn, will be subject to the supervision of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife.

The Bureau of Commercial Fisheries will be responsible for all functions of the Service pertaining to commercial fisheries, whales, fur seals, sea-lions, and related matters.

The new law directs the Secretary to effect the reorganization of the Service as soon as practicable but not later than 90 calendar days after its approval.

One of the new functions authorized by the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, and proposed by the Department of the Interior, is the making of loans at three percent interest to mature in not more than 10 years "financing and refinancing of operations, maintenance, replacement, repair, and equipment of fishing gear and vessels, and for research into the basic problems of fisheries."

A fisheries loan fund will be created to be used by the Secretary as a revolving fund to make these loans. The Act authorized \$10 million to provide initial capital. The actual appropriation of this sum was included in the Second Supplemental Appropriation Act for 1957 passed by the 84th Congress shortly before adjournment.

Another highlight of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, also proposed by the Department, is the extension of provisions of the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act of July 1, 1954. This Act gave the Department of the Interior, for a three-year period ending June 30, 1957, 30 percent of the gross receipts from duties collected under the customs laws on fishery products to promote the free flow of domestically produced fishery products. The new law continues this arrangement on a permanent basis. The limitation of \$3 million annually on the funds has been removed and the money becomes available on an "annual accrual" basis. This is expected to increase the amount to about \$5 million.

Secretary Seaton pointed out that this balanced program of technological, economic, market development, and biological studies and services to aid the domestic fishing industry has been highly commended by the industry during its first two years of operation. At the last meeting of the American Fishery Advisory Committee, held in May at Long Beach, Calif., the committee went on record for an "enlarged and extended Saltonstall-Kennedy Act as the best way to aid the industry."

The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 also provides for the transfer to the Secretary of the Interior of "all functions of the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, and the head of any other department or agency, as determined by the Director of the Bureau of the Budget to relate primarily to the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of commercial fisheries." This provision, however, does not affect the authority of the Secretary of State to negotiate or enter into any international agreements or conventions concerned with fish and wildlife resources.

President Eisenhower in signing the bill (S.3275) August 8, issued the following statement:

"In signing this bill, I do not regard as a directive the provisions of section 8 which relate to United States representation at international conferences and negotiations concerning fish and wildlife matters. If they were to be so construed they would, in my judgment, be unconstitutional as limitations on the authority of the President of the United States to conduct negotiations with other governments through agents designated by him or at his direction. Accordingly, I regard these provisions as merely an indication of the desire of the Congress that the resources of the Interior Department be utilized in the formulation of United States policies affecting fish and wildlife matters, which of course I fully share and which is and has been my policy."

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