



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### WEED CONTROL MAY HELP OFFSET LOSS OF WATERFOWL HABITAT

By making some of the remaining wetlands capable of sustaining more migratory waterfowl, America may be able to offset some of the waterfowl habitat being lost by drainage and development, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler said today.

One of the current efforts along this line is weed control research which the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, is conducting in cooperation with various States. The purpose of this research is to find ways of eliminating undesirable marsh plants and to substitute plants which will produce food for migratory waterfowl.

The project entails testing various new herbicides to discover those which will eliminate the noxious weeds without injuring wildlife values and without hampering planting programs. Not only is it necessary to know what to use, but information must be developed on when, how, and under what conditions the selected herbicides should be used to give the best results.

Research to date indicates that effective killing of three of the worst pest-weeds--cattails, phragmites, and needlerush--can be accomplished expeditiously. But, alligator weed, a fourth nonfood-producing plant, has thus far defied effective control by chemicals or otherwise. However, in some of the experiments conducted in North Carolina, promising leads have developed. Each one of these pest-weeds occupies hundreds of thousands of acres in certain sections of the country.

Two hundred experimental plots in Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina were recently inspected by technicians from nine States, three chemical companies, and two Federal agencies, who spent four days studying the techniques and the results.

Most of these test plots are small, averaging 1,000 square feet, but some were an acre or more in extent. The small plots are used to screen the various herbicides; promising formulations are then used on the larger plots.

Formerly there were 127 million acres of wetlands in the United States but this amount has been cut to 75 million acres by drainage. About 9 million acres are considered good waterfowl habitat. Each year several hundred thousand additional acres of wetlands are converted to other use. The weed control experiments may point the way to convert hundreds of thousands of acres of waste marsh to duck and goose feeding areas.

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