



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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WATER DIVERSION TO FRESHEN TOPOCK WATERFOWL AREA AUTHORIZED

The diversion of 30 second feet of water from the Colorado River to freshen the Topock marsh area of the Havasu Lake National Wildlife Refuge, between Needles, California, and Topock, Arizona, has been authorized by Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton.

Since the water will return to the river there is expected to be no measurable consumptive use. Secretary Seaton's decision was based upon an exhaustive study of the Topock marsh situation by the Department's Technical Review Staff.

The marsh is an important ancestral wintering ground for migratory waterfowl and for six months of the year provided at one time habitat for about 40,000 ducks and geese. At present it is habitat for about 20,000 ducks and geese which might otherwise be committing depredations upon California and Arizona crops.

Following construction of Parker Dam, which impounds Havasu Lake, siltation in the Colorado River between Needles and Topock became increasingly serious and caused flooding at Needles. In order to relieve this situation, the Bureau of Reclamation launched a dredging program which, as an incidental result, cut the upstream inlet to the marsh off from the river. These changes resulted in a stagnated water situation in the marsh with unfavorable effect on the aquatic habitat and an accompanying deterioration in the value of the area as a waterfowl feeding ground.

It was determined by the study that this could be remedied by a diversion of water from the river, flowing it through the marsh and back into the river. Secretary Seaton then directed the Bureau of Reclamation in consultation with the Service's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, to install a 36-inch pipe and gate valve in the east dike of the channel to permit sufficient flow of water to freshen the marsh and to permit return flow to the river. The amount of water necessary will be 30 second feet. The cost of the inlet will be paid for from the Colorado River Front and Levee funds of the Bureau of Reclamation.

The problem is somewhat complicated by the suit now in the United States Supreme Court between California and Arizona to determine water rights along the lower Colorado River. A commission is also working on the location of the State line between Arizona and California. This will not interfere with this emergency action to correct conditions in the marsh. However, final solution of other area water problems must await settlement of the boundary and water rights disputes.

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