

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

news release

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## WETLANDS PRESERVATION NEEDS STRESSED

Director John S. Gottschalk of the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife said today that the nation needs to step up acquisition of wetlands in face of rapidly diminishing habitat for waterfowl in this country.

In a report to Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel, Gottschalk said, "Highway building, housing and resort expansion, plus other developments along the coasts, and drainage of potholes in the prairies are quickly destroying many important waterfowl areas."

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has acquired about 1.1 million acres in a 15-year program to acquire 2½ million acres of wetlands by 1976. These areas are becoming part of the national wildlife refuge system--lands managed permanently for waterfowl and other wildlife.

The 1934 Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act provided money for land acquisition and waterfowl management by authorizing sale of duck stamps to hunters. In 1958 the act was amended to earmark all of that money for land acquisition.

But the duck stamp fund proved inadequate because of rising land costs, so Congress passed the Wetlands Loan Act in 1961, authorizing advance appropriations of up to \$105 million to accelerate the acquisition program. This money is to be paid back to the Treasury at the end of the 15-year period with 75 percent of annual duck stamp revenues.

Wetlands are famous for many kinds of wild animals, but they are particularly important for waterfowl breeding, feeding, and wintering. Since 1900, millions of acres of such lands have been rendered unproductive for wildlife through draining and filling.

Dr. Gottschalk said: "Regrettably, rising costs have actually prevented acquisition of some wetlands. Furthermore, there are other wetlands, such as estuaries, that should be preserved as part of our natural environment for the enjoyment of all our people, but no funds are now available to acquire these areas."

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