

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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## FIRST REPORT OF BIOLOGICAL SERVICES PROGRAM AVAILABLE

One of the Nation's most innovative programs aimed at protecting fish and wildlife and their habitats, while allowing for accelerated land and water development projects, has issued its first report, Director Lynn A. Greenwalt of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced.

The report, the first of the agency's new Biological Services program, provides an excellent overview of the possible environmental implications associated with energy development and also summarizes various research projects that were begun last year.

"Our primary purpose," Greenwalt said, "is to collect scientific information on national fish and wildlife resources and their habitats and make it available to decisionmakers at all levels of government. This information is essential if they are to accurately anticipate and minimize problems related to major land and water changes. It is precisely because this kind of ecological expertise was not available in the past that decisions were made which resulted in the permanent destruction of prime habitat and unnecessary degradation of the environment."

The program attempts to narrow the traditional conflicts between the "progress vs. environment" controversy. It does this by first identifying critical areas which would experience severe impact, then describing those options and alternatives which would be least harmful, and finally by recommending safeguards and stipulations necessary to protect fish and wildlife resources.

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In its first year the program focused major attention on the environmental implications of the Nation's accelerating energy development. Over 40 projects were initiated in the areas of coal extraction and processing, oil shale and geothermal energy development, powerplants, and Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas development. At the same time, a significant effort was devoted to more traditional land and water development issues: stream alteration, coastal ecosystems, western water allocation, and an inventory of the Nation's wetlands. Another study begun, and one of particular concern, is the identification of biological indicators, such as herons and other wading birds in coastal zones, which could alert scientists to a changing ecology before its effects have reached gross proportion or irreparable damage.

Since the goal of the program is to provide scientific information on which to recognize and weigh ecological alternatives, a substantial effort was also made to contact potential users of this information and make it easily available to them.

The first year's activities of Biological Services are described in the publication, "Biological Services Program, Fiscal Year 1975," Report No. FWS/OBS-76-02. It is available from the National Technical Information Services (NTIS), Springfield, Va. 22161, as Publication Number PB 251738. The cost is \$2.25 for a printed copy or for microfiche.

NOTE TO EDITORS: A limited number of free copies are available.  
Call 202/343-8095.