

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release December 26, 1976

McGarvey 202/343-5634

## NATIONAL WETLAND INVENTORY BEGINS MAPPING

The National Wetland Inventory project of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has begun operational mapping of the wetlands of the United States.

The project will classify and map all coastal wetlands of the United States, as well as parts of the Dakota prairie pothole and Mississippi delta regions during fiscal year 1977. Starting in Florida, the inventory staff expects to complete the entire United States by the end of 1979.

The loss of habitat is the most serious threat to wildlife in the United States today. Wetlands are vital nursery areas for many forms of wildlife, fish, and fowl, yet marshes, fens, bogs, and swamps across the Nation are being drained and modified at an alarming rate. The need for a national survey of remaining wetlands was recognized several years ago and preparations for operational mapping were begun in fiscal year 1975.

The last National Wetland Inventory was completed in 1954 and surveyed only the lower 48 States. The new National Wetland Inventory will maintain a data base, in both map and computer form, in which wetlands data will be stored and updated.

Several preliminary publications have been completed since preparations began, and are available to the public on a limited basis. They include:

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(1) Interim Classification of Wetlands and Aquatic Habitats of the United States. The classification system used in the 1954 survey identified 20 wetland types, all of equal stature. The new interim classification system is much more detailed and useful to scientists with varying interests. This system was tested at 22 sites throughout the country.

(2) Existing State and Local Wetland Surveys. This report compiles information on wetland inventories conducted by Federal, State, and local governments as well as private conservation groups since 1965. The study is issued in seven separate sections. Six regional sections contain 1:750,000 State maps showing the location and extent of major wetland inventories. The seventh section contains a narrative description, by State, of all known inventories since 1965. This description includes such inventory information as the classification system used, the purpose of the inventory, the methods used, and the legislation involved.

(3) Index of Selected Aerial Photography of the United States. The index displays on 1:750,000-scale maps the location and extent of selected aerial photography taken since 1970.

(4) Ecoregion and Land-Surface Form Maps. This is a series of 468 1:250,000-scale maps of the lower 48 States which display ecoregions, physical subdivisions, and land surface form.

Requests for copies or access to these publications should be directed to: Information Transfer Specialist, Office of Biological Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.