



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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SURVEY OF FEDERAL WILDLIFE REFUGES, FISH HATCHERIES
AND RESEARCH LABS IDENTIFIES WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY
AS GREATEST CONCERN; LITTERING IS MOST TYPICAL PROBLEM ON REFUGES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued a report on "Resource Problems" at its national wildlife refuges, national fish hatcheries, and research laboratories and centers.

Robert Jantzen, director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, said a survey of resource problems was initiated by the Service to obtain information needed to improve the management of fish and wildlife and their habitats.

"We wanted to identify in a systematic way the various difficulties encountered at our field stations so that we can better address and resolve these problems," Jantzen said. "This is in keeping with Secretary Watt's desire to take better care of the resources and facilities for which we are responsible. In fact, this survey is one of the important management objectives of the Interior Department." Jantzen said information gained from the survey is already being used to aid decisions about allocations of funds and personnel and to identify actions that can be taken to correct the problems.

For example, Jantzen said, facility and equipment maintenance and rehabilitation was the third most commonly reported problem for all field stations. "Secretary Watt has been saying ever since he took office that our wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries had been allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, and he has asked Congress for an additional \$22 million to improve maintenance and construct new facilities at refuges. We are also addressing inherited maintenance and rehabilitation needs at refuges, hatcheries, and research laboratories through the \$20 million that the Fish and Wildlife Service received under the 1983 Jobs Bill Act."

(over)

Jantzen noted that survey respondents were not given a standard against which to judge when a particular activity became a problem, but instead reported their own perceptions. There was also no indication of how serious a threat a particular problem posed.

"This could be misleading," Jantzen said. "For example, the most frequently reported problem on national wildlife refuges was 'littering,' which was reported as a problem by 261 refuges. And with 30 million birdwatchers, hunters, fishermen, and other visitors each year, one would expect that littering could be a problem. But in reality, we know it poses no serious threat to wildlife refuges. It is not a serious problem--only a typical one."

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