



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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MAJOR EXPANSION OF FEDERAL FUNDING FOR STATE SPORT FISHING PROGRAMS ANNOUNCED BY INTERIOR SECRETARY CLARK

Interior Secretary William Clark today said that new measures to expand Federal support for sport fishing restoration programs by the States are "the most significant steps on behalf of fishery conservation and enhancement since original legislation of this type was first passed three decades ago."

Clark's remarks followed President Reagan's signing of the Tax Reform Act of 1984, which contains provisions adding about \$55 million to the financial base of the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration program (commonly known as the "Dingell-Johnson" program after its congressional sponsors). This program finances State fishery management and enhancement projects with excise taxes paid by anglers on fishing equipment.

Increased "Dingell-Johnson" funding will come from changes in the legislation that:

- Direct an estimated \$30 million from an existing tax on motorboat fuels into the "Dingell-Johnson" program;
- Extend the current 10 percent manufacturers' excise tax on fishing equipment to previously excluded types of tackle, including tackle boxes, adding a new three percent tax on electric trolling motors and flashing-type fish locating devices, and including import duties on fishing tackle and yachts, which would collectively yield an estimated \$25 million.

Other provisions of the bill covering boating safety and sport fish restoration would channel an estimated \$45 million in motorboat fuel receipts to the States and the U.S. Coast Guard for boating safety programs.

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"The Federal-State partnership for sport fishery restoration will benefit significantly from addition of this money and from the other provisions of this legislation improving the program's scope," Clark said. "Of course, ultimate credit should go to individual anglers and the boating public who pay the taxes for fisheries conservation and management. They are the ones who make this program work."

Other changes in the expanded program announced by Clark include:

- A provision requiring coastal States to apply a portion of the financial increase to programs enhancing salt water sport fishing. "This feature provides a much-needed source of revenue for improved management of our marine fishery resources," Clark said;
- The requirement that 10 percent of all restoration money be spent by the States on projects providing boating access to public waters;
- A provision enabling the States to spend up to 10 percent of restoration funds for aquatic education programs for the public.

Clark said the Federal government would have to revise current rules and regulations for the "Dingell-Johnson" program to accommodate the changes contained in the new legislation. He said the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which administers the program, will conduct meetings with the States and interested organizations to explain the need for revisions and obtain comment and suggestions on needed rule and policy changes.

Clark praised the efforts of Senators Howard Baker and Malcolm Wallop, Representative John Breaux, and the late Representative Edwin Forsythe, who sponsored the expansion legislation.

The original Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act was introduced by Representative John Dingell, Sr., of Michigan, and Senator Edwin Johnson of Colorado, and was approved by Congress in 1950. It was patterned after another program, the so-called "Pittman-Robertson" legislation, that established Federal funding for wildlife restoration and hunter safety education projects. Since the "Dingell-Johnson" program first began apportioning money in 1952, more than \$432 million has been made available by the Fish and Wildlife Service. Last year, over \$31 million was distributed to State fish and wildlife agencies.

Fish restoration funds currently come from a 10 percent tax on fishing rods, reels, creels, and artificial lures, baits, and flies. Distribution of funds is made according to a formula based on the number of fishing license holders and the land area of each State, including coastal and Great Lakes waters. The cost of each project is met through a ratio of 75 percent Federal funds and 25 percent State funds.