



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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WETLANDS LOAN ACT EXTENDED FOR 2 YEARS;
TWO NEW NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES AUTHORIZED

Interior Secretary William Clark said today that "President Reagan's signature on the Wetlands Loan Act means more funds will be available to conserve threatened wetlands so vital for waterfowl and fish populations."

The President today signed a bill extending for 2 years the Wetlands Loan Act, first enacted in 1961, which provides a means for accelerating preservation of habitat for migratory waterfowl. The Act authorized up to \$200 million in advance appropriations to supplement the money derived from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps. Duck Stamp sales presently provide about \$16 million annually, which is used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. If the Wetlands Loan Act had expired as scheduled on September 30, 1984, the Service would have been required to begin repaying previous loan advances using 75 percent of yearly Duck Stamp receipts, reducing to only about \$4 million the funds available for waterfowl habitat acquisition. In addition, the remaining \$46 million authorized under the Wetlands Loan Act would not have been available, including \$21 million appropriated by Congress for FY 1985.

(more)

Extension of the Wetlands Loan Act makes possible the protection of many wetland habitats that might otherwise have been lost. From the 1950's to the 1970's, approximately a half million acres of wetlands were lost annually in the lower 48 States. Wetlands provide vital habitat not only for migratory waterfowl but also for many other kinds of fish and wildlife, including endangered species.

The law extending the Wetlands Loan Act also provides for the establishment and management of two new national wildlife refuges: the Connecticut Coastal National Wildlife Refuge and the Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge, Louisiana.

The 145-acre Connecticut Coastal refuge is comprised of four units: Chimon Island, off the coast of Norwalk, the most important heron rookery in Connecticut and one of the three largest wading bird colonies in the Northeast; Milford Point, one of the few remaining Connecticut nesting sites for piping plover; Falkner's Island, site of the only significant breeding population of roseate tern in Connecticut and the only major population of the common tern; and Sheffield Island, excellent potential nesting habitat for herons. The refuge has been established to enhance the populations of herons, egrets, terns, and other shore and wading birds as well as other fish and wildlife found within the refuge.

The Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge, located in Atchafalaya swamp in southern Louisiana, will preserve bottomland hardwood habitat, a type of forested wetland that supports a diversity of wildlife including herons, egrets, and other wading birds; mallards, wood ducks, and other waterfowl; black bears, deer, bobcat, muskrat, and other mammals; a large population of alligators; and fish such as Louisiana crawfish, bass, and catfish.