



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For Release: October 28, 1988

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FIRST U.S. PROJECTS UNDER NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT PLAN TO OPEN

The first projects in the United States to rebuild the continent's population of ducks, geese and other wildlife under a far-reaching international program will be launched November 15.

Inauguration of the U.S. portion of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an operation to expand and enhance wetlands across the United States and Canada, will take place at the Upper Texas Coastal Prairie at Nome, Texas, near Houston. The first Canadian project at Quill Lakes, Saskatchewan, was dedicated September 27.

"This is an important first step in the United States toward reversing the decline of waterfowl," said Frank Dunkle, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "The next few years will be crucial in restoring these birds to the numbers we used to see."

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The North American Plan, established by the United States and Canada in 1986, aims to restore wildlife habitat reduced by drought and development. Participants include the Federal Governments of both countries, states and provinces, and a coalition of national conservation organizations and other private sector groups.

The North American Plan calls for methods such as acquiring critical areas, providing incentives to private owners for restoration of wetlands, and improving habitat on existing wildlife refuges, military bases, and other public lands. U.S. Federal participation in the plan is administered by the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Upper Texas project involves the leasing of about 1,000 acres of rice land for use as a protected site for wintering waterfowl. Each fall the privately-owned lands attract tens of thousands of pintails, blue-winged teal, mallards, snow geese, and other migratory birds.

Under the North American Plan, owners and guides have agreed to short-term leases with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by which rice stubble will be flooded to provide roost sites. Ranging in size from 150 to 400 acres, these areas will not be hunted, thus providing sanctuary for wintering birds.

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Other new projects under the North American Plan include:

ALABAMA. Mobile Bay--More than 50,000 acres of privately- and state-owned forests will be managed for waterfowl.

Mobile--A cooperative agreement has been signed with Scott Paper Company to provide technical assistance in forest management to benefit waterfowl on 27,000 acres.

CALIFORNIA. Upper Butte Creek Wildlife Area, Butte City--A 2,255-acre site of prime waterfowl habitat has been purchased by the California Department of Fish and Game, and more may be added. In addition to this core of public lands, a program of incentives for nearby private landowners to enhance habitat on their farms will provide an even larger waterfowl complex.

DELAWARE. Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, Milton--Marsh rehabilitation work is under way that will significantly improve 1,500 acres of wetlands for black ducks and other wildlife.

IOWA. Four-County Project, Dickinson, Emmet, Kossuth, and Clay Counties--On the southern tip of the continent's great waterfowl-producing region, the area once contained important lakes and potholes left from the Ice Age. More than 2,300 acres in the vicinity have been bought or restored through cooperation of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, and concerned Iowa citizens.

LOUISIANA. Mouton Tract, Kaplan--An area of 640 acres, part of a rice farm, is being leased by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a resting and feeding area to aid wintering waterfowl.

Vermilion, Cameron, and Jefferson Davis Parishes--Tracts of up to 6,100 acres will be flooded until March 1 as winter habitat for waterfowl. In Cameron Parish, 4,400 acres of drained wetlands are being restored and threatened wetlands maintained.

Winn Farm, Lake Arthur--A lease agreement has been signed allowing use of a 1,040-acre rice farm as a winter waterfowl refuge for five years.

Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge, Avoyelles Parish--When all land designated for the refuge is acquired, it will encompass 30,000 acres of wetland, bottomland hardwood forests, and agricultural lands.

MONTANA. Comertown Project, Comertown--In a 221-square-mile area with many lakes and marshes, lands are being purchased or enhanced by means such as lease or easement, planting nesting cover, and grazing management. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nature Conservancy, and Ducks Unlimited are collaborating on the project.

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NEW YORK. Northern Montezuma Wetland Complex, Wayne, Cayuga, and Seneca Counties--The project will unify management of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, a Federal facility, three state-operated areas, two large privately-owned wetlands, and an additional 10,000 acres proposed to be acquired and restored by the State.

SOUTH DAKOTA. Lake Thompson Project, Kingsbury County--Once a marsh, the site has become the largest natural lake in the state, covering 18,000 acres. The project is intended to protect wetlands by acquisition, lease, and easement, and management of the area for wildlife, flood control, and recreation. Costs are being shared by the South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, and the National Wildlife Federation.

In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is reaching out to farmers in many States to restore and enhance wetlands under the conservation reserve program. This work is being done to protect important wetland resources with the cooperation of the Farmers Home Administration of the Department of Agriculture.