



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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EIGHT-MILLION-DOLLAR PARTNERSHIP TO AID FISH PRODUCTION

The Federal government and 39 states have joined together in an \$8 million study of eight drugs that might be used to enhance state and Federal fish production. The greatest need in aquaculture is for drugs to control infectious diseases that often cause a complete loss of fish production in hatcheries.

The study, already under way, addresses the current lack of approved drugs to reduce disease-related mortality in fish and improve production efficiency and quality. The goal is to identify useful chemicals and ensure their safety to humans and the environment.

Two Interior Department agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Biological Survey, have formed a partnership with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and its state members to fund the study. Conducted by NBS' National Fisheries Research Center in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and the Fish Farming Experimental Laboratory in Stuttgart, Arkansas, the study is scheduled to continue through June 1999.

Currently, only one anesthetic and three therapeutic drugs are approved and available, and the therapeutic drugs are labeled only for controlling a few diseases in a few aquatic species. The study's findings will be of vital importance to the future of this country's aquaculture industry, which faces intense competition from other countries to supply fish for human consumption here and abroad. The findings also will have significant implications for recreational fisheries.

"It is our hope that the development of data on fish drugs will, in the long run, provide healthier fish and improved fish culture conditions in our Nation's public and private fish hatching and rearing facilities," said Service Director Mollie Beattie. "As that occurs, there will also be important direct benefits to the commercial and recreational fishing industries in the United States."

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"This initiative is unique because so many states have voluntarily pooled their money with Federal funds," said Bob Lange, chief of Federal Aid for the Service's Great Lakes-Big Rivers region, headquartered in the Twin Cities, Minnesota. "This is a comprehensive and diverse partnership to solve a shared problem on a national scale for both private and public aquaculture."

The estimated cost to obtain the necessary approval for these eight drugs is \$135 million. "The minimum cost to meet only the basic data requirements for an unapproved drug to treat one fish species for one disease is \$3.5 million," said Rosalie Schnick, registration officer with NBS' National Fisheries Research Center. "Therefore, it is imperative that this study provide ways of reducing the high costs associated with the approval process." At least 40 fish species are produced commercially in the United States for food fish, fee fishing, or stocking.

"We believe this partnership is an outstanding example of cooperation among Federal and state governments and the private sector," said IAFWA President Jerry Conley. "The impact of the data collected as part of the study will be enormous on state fish production."

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LIST OF STATE COOPERATORS

Alaska	Maryland	Ohio
Arizona	Massachusetts	Oklahoma
Arkansas	Michigan	Oregon
California	Minnesota	Pennsylvania
Colorado	Missouri	South Carolina
Georgia	Montana	South Dakota
Hawaii	Nebraska	Tennessee
Idaho	Nevada	Texas
Illinois	New Jersey	Virginia
Iowa	New Mexico	Washington
Kansas	New York	West Virginia
Kentucky	North Carolina	Wisconsin
Louisiana	North Dakota	Wyoming