INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Information
Press Service

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Mr. H. Zahniser

Release - Immediate

April 9, 1937

1914 - Lo. Blg
R. I

ELEVEN SMALL REFUGES BRING
NORTH DAKOTA TOTAL TO 68

Owners Give Easements for Duck
Areas to Supplement Large
Federal Refuges

- - -

Since October of last year, eleven more small refuges for migratory waterfowl and water conservation have been established in North Dakota by the U. S. Biological Survey, under perpetual easements to the Government by the landowners. This raises to 68 the number of such projects in this State. They total 103,000 acres, and supplement larger Federal refuges.

With these recent acquisitions, this portion of the program of expansion is completed, according to M. O. Steen, Easement Project Administrator for the Survey. As part of its wildlife-restoration program, the U. S. Department of Agriculture is developing these areas with more than half a million dollars of funds allocated for the purpose through the Works Progress Administration. At present, approximately 600 persons certified from relief rolls are at work throughout the State completing improvements on these areas.

About half are actually completed. Ninety percent are far enough along to attract ducks. Water impoundment projects are complete on about 90 percent of the areas. Improvements will make the areas more inviting to both birds and animals, and for recreation.

1409-37

The rights conveyed by the easements are those of construction, inundation, maintenance, and refuge. A farmer, for example, will still use his land--excepting that portion flooded. Shooting is prohibited, but not trapping and fishing. Such easements are perpetual, exclusive and gratuitous to the Government. To facilitate this program of land acquisition, the State legislature authorized and directed the counties in which these areas are located to exempt from taxation all inundated land, and to waive collection of fees for recording and filing documents covering the transaction.

Supplementary Refuges

"These small refuges are needed to supplement larger units," says J. Clark Salyer II, Chief of the Division of Migrator Waterfowl of the Bureau, "both for feeding and nesting. They are attractive additions to waterfowl habitat, enhance the value of large refuges by attracting more birds to the area, lessen the danger of the birds nesting in isolated and unprotected spots and at 'pot holes' likely to dry up during droughts. Furthermore, they can be administered at low cost."

None of these refuges has a permanent keeper. Each is so developed, that it is almost self-sustaining. Supervisors of nearby major refuges oversee whatever need there may be for maintenance from time to time.

In an hereditary nesting area for migratory waterfowl, sites for these refuges were selected with two paramount needs in mind: That of water for the birds in breeding season; and that of adequate nesting cover, sparse here because of intense agricultural activity. Each area was chosen with due regard to its strategic location within migratory flight lanes, and to the need for sanctuaries as determined by concentration of shooting.

Water Conserving Devices

They were selected with a further aim of developing them into individual flood and soil-erosion control units. Thus, their final development, along the

same lines as with major refuges administered by the Biological Survey, in almost every case involves the building of storage dams, marsh embankments, and other devices that aid in conserving water. In most instances, submarginal or low-grade lands were chosen as sites for the water reservoirs.

In addition to the value of these refuges as recreational sites, flood and soil-erosion control units, other benefits have accrued to local residents and those of nearby areas. Impounding of water has stabilized and almost assures a permanent water supply. In some cases, before the erection of such dams, the supply of domestic water had failed. After the water was impounded, by percolating into glacial substrata, it has filled many wells and other sources of supply. Backwater, through subirrigation, has permitted cropping on many flatlands where no agriculture had been carried on before, or where the lands had been non-productive for many years. These dams, too, catch spring run-off to produce flood irrigation, leaving a more fertile soil when the water recedes.

The severity of future droughts in the vicinity of areas unwisely taken from migratory waterfowl can be lessened, the Survey believes, by these refuges.

- - - H - - -