Sater or Barrington - Int. 2879

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

Office Use 2/18/55

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release FEBRUARY 16, 1955

SECRETARY McKAY ALLOTS MORE FUNDS FOR FLORIDA RED TIDE WORK

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay has allotted an additional $33,000 to expedite the Fish and Wildlife program to combat the red tide on the Florida west coast.

This money will be used during the remainder of the current fiscal year to charter planes and vessels and to purchase chemicals for large-scale control experiments. Additional personnel will also be needed to analyze scientific data which is accumulating rapidly.

These additional funds are available under the terms of the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act (Public Law 466, 83d Congress) which is designed to give special aid to the American commercial fishing industry.

With $20,000 previously allocated from Saltonstall-Kennedy funds, and $50,000 from regular congressional appropriations, a total of $103,000 in Federal funds is being used in fiscal year 1955 to ascertain how quickly the red tide work can be successfully concluded.

In the past two years the Service has intensified its efforts to determine the combination of environmental factors which "trigger-off" blooms of Gymnodinium brevis, the minute marine organism which causes extensive fish kills in waters along Florida's west coast.

The need for additional funds became apparent last month when members of the Service's Washington staff and the scientific staff of the red tide investigations met at the Fort Myers, Fla., laboratory to make a critical examination of the progress of the Federal research program.

The most striking feature brought out in the research review was the discovery made in the Service's laboratory at Galveston, Tex., that metallic copper in extremely small quantities is highly toxic to G. brevis.

After further experimental work in the laboratory, metallic copper in the form of large screens and possibly copper ore tailings will be tried on a field scale to determine its control effectiveness as a substitute for the more expensive copper sulfate.

In the meantime, control experiments using copper sulfate as the poison agent to curb the red tide microbe will be continued as the most expedient method of possible control so far developed.

Such experiments, however, are becoming increasingly expensive because the Service must depend largely upon charter and rental boats and planes to achieve useful results. Since G. brevis continues to be present in Florida waters, control experiments must be increased beyond those originally anticipated.

Methods of increasing the effectiveness of patrol along the red tide areas to detect outbreaks in their early stages were also discussed during the conference. The Service is now arranging for one of its float planes to be assigned to Fort Myers to determine if a rapid and effective means of patrolling and sampling the area can be done by air.

x x x

P.N. 75671