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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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SEARCH FOR LAMPREY POISON NEARS CLOSE

Search for a poison which can kill larvae of sea lampreys without injuring desirable species of fish is drawing toward a successful conclusion, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay said today. The Secretary added that additional testing must be made before a definite statement of success can be made, however.

The poison, specific to lampreys and harmless to other fish, will be used in connection with electrical devices which have already been proved and have been installed at various points in the Great Lakes, in a double-barreled attach on the sea raider which has moved into the Great Lakes with such disastrous results to commercial fishing.

The electrical devices block the lamprey from ascending to spawning grounds in the tributaries of the lakes. The poison, if it lives up to expectations, will kill the five generations of lamprey larvae which live in the mud bottoms of the streams. Adult lampreys, attempting to reach spawning grounds will be killed by the electrical devices.

About 5,000 poisons have been tested in the search for one which is specific for lampreys. Several poisons have been found which give excellent results in many tests in which lamprey larvae and fish have been treated under identical laboratory conditions. These selective poisons are undergoing extensive testing before field trials to make doubly sure that they will not be harmful to desirable fish, to game, or to man in concentrations at which they will kill lamprey larvae.

All United States streams tributary to Lake Superior known to have lamprey spawning areas have been blocked by the electrical devices. Canada is well along on its part of the program and will have the task completed in 1957. At present there are 72 electrical barriers operating on Lake Superior.

Lake Michigan fishing has already been disastrously hit by the sea lamprey. Recent test gill netting indicated that lake trout have practically been eliminated in that body of water since the influx of sea lamprey a few years ago.

During the search for a lamprey poison the Fish and Wildlife Service uncovered many promising leads for the development of other selective fish poisons which can be used in fish management. It is expected that additional work along this line will open up some entirely new approaches to fish population control.

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