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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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MALHEUR CARP CONTROL PROJECT COMPLETED

A mammoth carp control project in waters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Oregon has been completed, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay stated today.

It is estimated that at least 1,500,000 carp died of the toxicant placed in Malheur Lake by the Fish and Wildlife Service in late October. It will be several years before the carp again increase to numbers capable of doing serious damage to the waterfowl feeding areas in the lake, Fish and Wildlife Service spokesmen said.

After the main eradication job was complete, careful scrutiny of the lake was made and isolated areas, apparently freshwater seeps, which still harbored small bunches of carp, were given added treatment. Wildlife officials say that 99 barrels of rotenone toxicant were used in the 10,000-acre lake. Additional amounts were used to treat more than 100 miles of streams and innumerable ponds and lagoons in the area.

Rotenone kills fish by affecting the gill as it is drawn through the gill with the water. It does not enter the body of the fish. Fish killed by rotenone can be and are used as food by human beings.

The Malheur rehabilitation project was done primarily in the interest of the migratory waterfowl which use the lake and the adjacent area for a resting and feeding spot. Most such rehabilitation jobs have been done primarily to rid fishing waters of trash fish to permit restocking with more acceptable types.

Malheur Lake is an important link in the Pacific Waterfowl Flyway and until the advent of the carp it was one of the finest feeding grounds in the West. Its shallow waters and broad expanse provided space and feed for hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. During the past two or three years not more than ten percent of the customary numbers of ducks stopped at the lake because of the destruction of waterfowl food plants by the carp. The carp not only root up and consume sago pondweed and other aquatic plants but they so muddy the waters that sunshine cannot penetrate to stimulate growth of new plants.

Malheur Lake had a maximum depth of only 14 inches at the time of the eradication.

In recent years waters in almost every part of the Nation have been rehabilitated by the use of rotenone compounds. The Malheur Lake project is by far the largest as far as water surface is concerned. Two other huge projects conducted

by States recently under the Federal Aid in Fish Restoration program are the Marias River job in northwestern Montana and the Diamond Lake project in Oregon. In each of these instances the respective States planned and executed the projects.

The Marias River work was completed a few months ago. It consisted in killing the fish in the Marias River from Tiber Dam to the headwaters of all the tributaries. Willow, Medicine, Cutbank, Francis Lake Creeks and other tributaries were all given the rotenone treatment. The project was timed to rid these waters of trash fish before the gates were closed on the new Bureau of Reclamation Tiber Dam. The streams will be restocked with game fish.

The job on Diamond Lake in Oregon was unique in many respects. The lake covered about 3,000 acres. It was 52 feet deep before eight feet of water was drawn off preparatory to the eradication effort. More than 100 tons of rotenone were used and an estimated 32,000,000 Klamath roach, or chubs, totaling about 400 tons, were killed in a few days. The work was done in 1954. It will be open for fishing in 1956.

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