



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release SEPTEMBER 1, 1957

HOLLA BEND ISLAND, ARKANSAS, BECOMES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Holla Bend Island, Arkansas, a potentially great waterfowl area long-sought by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as a refuge, has just been acquired from the General Services Administration, the Department of the Interior said today.

The area will be developed into a national wildlife refuge by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife with emphasis on the management of Canada geese. Holla Bend is on the Arkansas River in Pope County about halfway between Little Rock and Ft. Smith.

The 4,068-acre shield-shaped island will be converted to a wintering ground for Canada geese and wild ducks. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife will begin immediately to build Holla Bend Island into a waterfowl food-producing area to offset the heavy losses sustained to natural food production in northern Arkansas because of flood control projects.

At present the new refuge is composed of 2,838 acres of agricultural land, 880 acres of timber, five acres of water and 345 acres of sandbars. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife will bring the agricultural land up to 3,200 acres by reclaiming some land not being used. This land will be share-cropped by local residents to provide browse and grain for waterfowl use.

Following a soil survey which will be the basis for an intensive and scientific farming program the area will be planted to corn, sorghum, soy beans, wheat and other grains with emphasis on nonsurplus crops.

The new refuge, when developed, will be of inestimable value to the national waterfowl situation, Bureau officials say. Locally the refuge will add to the economy through the share-cropping policy and by expenditures in the area by hunters. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife will take steps to establish headquarters, develop access roads and generally enhance the wildlife values of the refuge.

Holla Bend is expected to compare favorably with Santee, Kentucky Woodlands, Reelfoot and Wheeler National Wildlife Refuges where like conditions prevail and where the cropping is done by local farmers on a share basis. At the Wheeler Refuge near Decatur, Alabama, 6,000 acres of share-cropped land support a wintering population of 80,000 ducks and 20,000 geese.

The land was transferred without cost to the Department by the General Services Administration pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 537, 80th Congress. Previously it had been part of the Holla Bend Cutoff flood control project but was declared surplus last fall by the United States Corps of Engineers.

Holla Bend became an island five years ago when the Corps of Engineers completed a channel across the base of the bend, cutting off about six miles of winding riverbed. The biological and physical characteristics of the land offer outstanding opportunities for its development as a waterfowl area which will provide an important food supply not available at such other Arkansas watershed developments as Bull Shoals, Norfork Dam, or the proposed Dardenelles projects which are of value as resting places for migratory waterfowl.

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