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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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COOPERATIVE WILDLIFE STUDY PLANNED FOR BIG CANADIAN HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECT

An international cooperative study to find ways to minimize fish and wildlife losses from the proposed construction of the huge Grand Rapids (Cedar Lake) Hydro-Electric Project in Manitoba, Canada, is scheduled to begin June 20, the Department of the Interior reports.

A four man team consisting of two wildlife biologists, one fishery biologist, and one hydraulic engineer, all from the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Service, will be joined by one wildlife biologist, one fishery biologist, and other personnel of the Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources. The survey party will be in the field for about one month.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service was asked to participate in this study because of its wide experience in river basin studies to determine the effects of water development projects on fish and wildlife and their habitat. The request for assistance was made to Ross Leffler, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, by G. W. Malaher, Director of the Game Branch of the Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources.

Under present plans the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board will build a dam at Grand Rapids on the Saskatchewan River just above Lake Winnipeg. The water will back up almost to The Pas. At full pool the level of Cross Lake will be raised by nearly 30 feet, Cedar Lake by about 13 feet, and Moose Lake by about six feet. In addition to these lakes which total about two-thirds of a million acres, the project will flood nearly a million acres, much of which is good moose range, and fur animal habitat. This will include the Summerberry Marshes, a major waterfowl breeding and fur-producing area of about 350 thousand acres in the Saskatchewan River Delta. The major fur animals involved are muskrat, mink, and beaver.

The Saskatchewan Delta is an important breeding area for waterfowl which range through large parts of the North American Continent. Mallard, scaup, and Canada

geese are among the more abundant species produced there. The effects of the project on these populations is of particular interest to the Fish and Wildlife Service, since the area contributes ducks and geese to the flyways within the United States.

Current thinking is that a subimpoundment in the northwestern portion of the project area might save several hundred thousand acres of wildlife habitat without materially affecting the power development. The subimpoundment would be created by a dike which would stabilize water levels, and protect the area from extreme high water stages during the period of the year that the main pool is at full level. It is also thought that this area would lend itself to water manipulation and other management practices which would greatly enhance its value to waterfowl and fur animals.

The survey team also plans to investigate nearby areas not included in the project area and report on the possibility of developing and managing them as further mitigation of the waterfowl and other wildlife habitat losses which are expected.

Fishery resources of the area will be investigated and evaluated in light of the proposed development and operational plan of the reservoir. Of particular concern will be the effect of the proposed winter drawdown on spawning conditions for lake white fish and on spring and summer conditions for walleye, northern pike and gold-eye. Effects of the dam on fish migrations to and from Lake Winnipeg will also be considered.

The estimated cost of the Grand Rapids Hydro-Electric Project is $140 million. Practically all of the area concerned is Government land. There is only one privately owned farm and two small Indian villages in the entire one and one-half million acres.

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