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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FWS REPORTS ON STUDY OF CANADIAN POWER PROJECT

Recommendations for measures to mitigate wildlife losses in the Grand Rapids hydroelectric project, Saskatchewan River, Manitoba, Canada, have been made to the Manitoba Provincial Government by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall announced today.

The advice of the Fish and Wildlife Service on effects of the project on fish and wildlife resources was asked by the Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources, with concurrence of the Canadian Government in Ottawa.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife is particularly interested in the effects of this project because many of the waterfowl produced in the reservoir site, or which utilize the area during migration, are taken by hunters in the United States. The birds especially utilize the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways.

A cooperative field investigation was carried out by biologists of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the Manitoba Game and Fisheries Branches during the summer of 1960. The report of the investigation was transmitted last week to the Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

The project is being built at a cost of $140,000,000 by the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board, an agency of the Province, and will be completed in 1964. It will inundate 1,600,000 acres of land and water areas in the famous Saskatchewan River Delta between The Pas and Lake Winnipeg. The levels of four major lakes--Cross, Cedar, Moose, and Cormorant--which total 835,000 acres, will be raised by several feet.

About 730,000 acres of prime wildlife habitat will be destroyed or damaged by the reservoir. Almost all of this area lies in the 942,000 acre Summerberry Fur Rehabilitation Block operated by the Manitoba Game Branch. The affected area is prime production habitat for many species of ducks, especially for scaup, blue-winged teal, canvasback and mallard. It is excellent habitat for muskrats and other fur animals and carries a good population of moose.

The compensating measures recommended by the Bureau include installation of dams and control structures in the upper reaches of the reservoir site to prevent inundation of 263,000 acres of wildlife habitat and the development of portions of a 240,000 acre area west of The Pas. Also recommended were biological studies to provide data for proper development and maximum fish and wildlife production on the managed areas.

Bureau economists estimated that the monetary value of the wildlife resources of the project area would average about $593,000 per year over the next 50 years if the project were not built. Of this value $289,000 is attributable to fur resources, $212,000 to waterfowl and $92,000 to moose. Annual wildlife losses were determined by evaluating existing resources and estimating the value of the resources under expected project conditions.

If the Bureau suggestions are followed, the economists say, the managed areas would produce $218,000 more in wildlife values each year than would be produced as the project is now planned. Less than fifty percent of the anticipated annual wildlife losses would be mitigated.

There is no sport fishery of importance in the project area at present but it is estimated that one of moderate value will develop. The commercial fishery of the affected areas, mostly for walleye, whitefish, northern pike and goldeye, was estimated to have an average annual value of about $108,000 over a 50 year period without the project. Some loss of fishery productivity is predicted as a result of the project and detailed studies are needed to determine more fully the effects of the project on spawning, rearing and migration of fish in the reservoir; on productivity of the reservoir; and on the fisheries of Lake Winnipeg through blockage of fish runs at Grand Rapids. The results of these studies would permit a decision on whether fishery mitigation measures are needed and feasible.

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