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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW WILDLIFE REFUGE IN ALABAMA

The new Choctaw National Wildlife Refuge, on the Tombigbee River near Gilbertown, Alabama, has been established with the signing by Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall of a general plan for wildlife conservation and management at the Jackson Lock and Dam Project, the Department of the Interior announced today.

The Choctaw Refuge, with its abundance of natural foods supplemented by cultivated crops, promises to become one of the better waterfowl wintering areas in the South, the Department said.

Located on lands acquired for the Jackson Lock and Dam Project by the Army Corps of Engineers, the 4,218-acre refuge will be on the west bank of the Tombigbee between river mile posts 122 and 129. This will include the lower portions of Turkey and Okatuppa Creeks, but public access to the river by boat through the main channel of each of these streams will be provided.

Under an earlier plan, the Corps of Engineers was authorized the acquisition of flowage easements only on approximately 2,025 acres. In 1960, however, Congress authorized fee title purchase of the 2,025 acres, plus an additional 2,193 acres specifically for establishing the Choctaw Refuge.

The general plan had previously been signed by Secretary of the Army Cyrus Vance and Claude D. Kelly, Director of the Alabama Department of Conservation. It provides for administration of the area by Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service under an indefinite term permit from the Corps of Engineers.

General plans to conserve and develop fish and wildlife habitat on Federal water development projects are called for under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. Proposed water developments are studied by Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with State fish and game departments, to determine measures needed to prevent or compensate for damages to fish and wildlife that might result from these projects.

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