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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT ACTS TO SAVE ENDANGERED BLACK-FOOTED FERRET

A program to protect the rare and endangered black-footed ferret and to control its more numerous associate and prey, the prairie dog, was announced today by John S. Gottschalk, Director of Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Nearly all of the remaining ferrets are reported in South Dakota.

Areas of that State already selected for prairie dog control to help farmers and ranchers now will be searched carefully for the presence of ferrets. The first such area will be the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, where the Bureau will work closely with the Tribal Council and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Sections of the reservation on which no ferrets are found will be treated to control the prairie dog population. If ferrets are found, the prairie dog "town" or "colony" either will remain untreated and provide living area for the ferrets--or the ferrets will be live-trapped and moved to an area where they will receive complete protection, such as a National Park.

The new program also features a comprehensive study of the life history of the black-footed ferret, its habitat, and ecological relationships. The program resulted from a meeting in Pierre, South Dakota, of Bureau personnel and representatives of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. The Bureau will set up programs in its several districts to determine if ferrets are still present. While the ferrets, which are large weasels, were never very numerous, their original range was a broad area of the Central Plains States that included the States represented at the meeting. R. A. Hodgkins, Director of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department, has pledged cooperation in measures to save the ferret and to control the prairie dog.

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