DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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GROUNDBREAKING FOR NEW FISH DISEASE LABORATORY

Ground was broken for a new $4 million fish disease laboratory by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on December 20 at Leetown, West Virginia.

The ceremony was led by U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia.

The Eastern Fish Disease Laboratory, in operation since 1932, has gained worldwide repute as the finest disease research center in existence. In recent years the techniques for intensive fish culture have improved to the point where fish farming has become a major contribution to the supply of animal protein in ordinary diets.

The Eastern Fish Disease Laboratory has been one of the leaders in developing ways to control and prevent losses of fish in hatcheries due to diseases. The expansion of the laboratory will make it the most modern fish health research facility in the world. It will enable the Service to continue to meet its growing responsibilities in the vital area of fish disease research--the results of which are shared with States and others. It will also enable the Service to combine fish husbandry training schools with the existing Leetown school of fish diseases.

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There is an increasing demand on the Service from State fish and game commissioners, universities, other Federal agencies, plus foreign countries for new knowledge in fish disease research, specifically, new and more efficient methods for the diagnosis and control of disease and the training of personnel in diagnosis and treatment.

Knowledge of fish diseases in wild fish populations must be expanded also to respond to the Service's needs for protection of stocks of native fish species.

The construction of the new facility will begin in 1976. It will take about 2 years to complete and will triple the space of the present facility.

Plans for the new $4 million facility boasts a modern design which incorporates a series of solar panels around the second story. The panels will reflect the sun's rays at a series of water conductors. The temperature of the water flowing through the conductors will be maintained high enough to generate heat throughout the building, although an extensive back-up system will be available.

The new facility will enable researchers to expand their work and provide the future capability for delving into the area of saltwater fish diseases as well.

The new laboratory will include 30,000 square feet in its two stories.

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