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BEAR RIVER MARSHES, UTAH, SAVED FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS

President Approves Measure to Establish Refuge for Wild Fowl

Carrying authorization for an appropriation of \$350,000, the Bear River Migratory-Bird Refuge Bill, which has been pending in Congress for the past two sessions, has been approved by President Coolidge. This important conservation legislation authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to construct at Bear River Bay and vicinity, Utah, such dikes, ditches, spillways, buildings, and improvements as may be necessary for establishment of a suitable refuge and feeding and breeding ground for migratory wild fowl and to acquire, by purchase, gift, or lease, water rights and privately owned lands necessary for the purpose.

The Bear River marshes, on Bear River Bay, comprise the greatest wild-fowl area of its kind in the Rocky Mountain region and form the gathering place for millions of wild ducks and geese during their north and south migrations. The new law seeks to improve conditions at Bear River Bay so as to prevent a recurrence of the enormous losses of migratory wild fowl that have resulted from the concentrated alkaline waters there. It is estimated that in the past few years not less than 7,000,000 ducks alone have perished, owing to scanty rainfall and the diversion of water for irrigation purposes from Bear River and other streams tributary to the marshes in that district, the shallow waters in many parts of these marshes during summer and fall of each year becoming

concentrated solutions of alkali.

The building of dikes and other improvements to store waste fresh waters, now flowing into Salt Lake, for the purpose of reflooding the Bear River marshes will eliminate the death areas and afford a breeding ground for great numbers of the birds. Instead of a death trap the area will become a supply point for the surrounding region, producing vastly increased numbers of wild fowl.

During the summer of 1927, with the cooperation of the Associated Sportsmen and the United Duck Hunters of California, an engineer of the Bureau of Public Roads made a careful study for the Bureau of Biological Survey of conditions at Bear River Bay. His report showed that the project is entirely feasible and indicated that an appropriation of \$350,000 would cover the cost of the development of a refuge in the region, which will include the marshes of the delta proper and provide for impounding fresh water over the broad marginal flats. The act stipulates that not more than \$50,000 shall be expended for the purchase of land, and that not less than 60 per cent of the area acquired shall be maintained as an inviolate sanctuary for migratory birds.

The Bear River project is primarily the heart of the wild-fowl conservation problem of the 11 States west of the Rocky Mountains, and it has been conclusively shown by the bird-banding operations of the Biological Survey conducted in the region that these marshes form a distributing center supplying migratory wild fowl to all the surrounding States. It is predicted that the food value of the birds that can be saved in a single season, not to mention recreational and esthetic values, will be far in excess of the cost of the proposed improvements. Sportsmen and conservationists throughout the country will welcome the measure as a most far-reaching step in the wild-life conservation program. The acquisition of lands for the refuge and its administration when established will be by the Bureau of Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture.