



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Information
Press Service



WASHINGTON, D. C.

Release - Immediate

January 16, 1937

CHAUTAUQUA AREA IN ILLINOIS
NOW A U. S. WATERFOWL REFUGE

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A 4,428-acre tract in the Illinois River bottoms in Mason County, Ill., is being restored by the U. S. Biological Survey for the use of wild ducks and geese. The area was set apart by a recent executive order as the Chautauqua Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. In the days of waterfowl market hunting thousands of ducks and geese were killed each season in the Illinois River region and shipped to Chicago and eastern markets.

About 10 years ago the Chautauqua area was inundated when flood waters broke through a levee along the Illinois River. Since then no attempts have been made to drain this land. This area is in one of the principal stopping places for waterfowl using the Mississippi flyway.

By rebuilding the levee and constructing spillways the Biological Survey is stabilizing the water level on the refuge. This encourages the growth of food plants, and helps make the refuge more attractive to migrating waterfowl. As a result of these activities and Federal protection large numbers of ducks and geese are again stopping in this area. It lies about half-way between two other important concentration areas on the Mississippi flyway -- the Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge and the White River Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Arkansas.

Golden-eye and merganser ducks occupied the open water holes on the new refuge throughout the 1935-36 winter, and about 18,000 canvasbacks and several thousand redheads remained there last year from February 25 to the middle of April. Several thousand lesser scaups were also observed. Although shallow-water ducks do not stay long, the Survey plans to make parts of the refuge suitable for these species.

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