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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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EMERGENCY WELL REVITALIZES AREA IN TIME FOR FALL WATERFOWL FLIGHT

An emergency well, drilled just as the migratory waterfowl were starting south, is providing urgently needed water for flocks of as many as 100,000 ducks and 70,000 geese at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri, Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton said today.

The drilling was necessary, the Secretary said, because severe drouth conditions had dried up all water areas in this refuge which is an important station in that part of the flyway. The nearest resting and feeding area south of Squaw Creek is about 250 miles away.

According to Fish and Wildlife Service officials, wells supply water for other refuges, but none has been drilled under such dire emergency conditions as the one at Squaw Creek. Within a week after the decision was made to drill the well, water was transforming dry lake beds into renewed resting and feeding areas for the southbound waterfowl.

National wildlife refuges which get all or part of their water from underground sources include Merced National Wildlife Management Area in California, Camas and Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuges in Idaho, Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota, and Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge in Texas. At the Laguna Refuge, the Service is using water from wells driven unsuccessfully for oil.

Several States have also "gone underground" to get water for waterfowl areas. In some instances, the water is used to flood grain fields to make the feed more accessible to the ducks and geese. In many instances Federal aid funds were used for these projects.

Honey Lake Waterfowl Area in California is a State project on which Federal aid funds were used to supply supplemental water pumped from the ground to help in flooding 1,000 acres of feed. At the Los Banos Waterfowl Refuge, also in California, well water is used for flooding 500 acres of feeding grounds.

In Arizona, wells supplement waste irrigation water on 400 acres in the Gila River Waterfowl Development Project. At the North Lake Development Area in Idaho, wells are used to keep water in potholes during the duck nesting season and to irrigate several hundred acres of feed and habitat. At Ohio's Resthaven Sanctuary Development Project, wells have been drilled to augment the water supply during periods of drouth.

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