



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT APPROVES PROPOSAL TO STUDY EFFECT OF PESTICIDES ON FISH AND WILDLIFE

A comprehensive study of the effect which the use of billions of pounds of pesticides is having upon fish and wildlife is necessary for the protection of these valuable natural resources, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross L. Leffler has advised the Congress.

In commenting upon H.R. 783 which specifically directs the Department of the Interior to make such a study, Mr. Leffler stated that while he was certain the general powers of the Department provide authority to pursue such investigations, passage of the bill would "express the interest of the Congress in this particular program which we consider to be vital to the conservation of the Nation's fish and wildlife resources". The Secretary also stated that the 1958 budget contains a request for funds to carry out this work.

It was pointed out that last year 65 million acres of cropland--one sixth of the Nation's farm land devoted to crops--and more than three million acres of forests were treated with three billion pounds of pesticides.

"The importance of our forests and agricultural crops is unquestioned", the Assistant Secretary said. "Both are vitally needed. Likewise, insect and other pest control is necessary. However, pesticide programs have gone ahead without adequate information on the effects which the pesticides have on fish and wildlife resources. A multi-billion dollar recreation and commercial fishery industry of interest to more than 30 million Americans is involved.

He stated that some insecticides in concentrations "ten times the concentration which can be tolerated by wildlife" are being used with the resultant death of thousands of birds. He also gave examples of huge fish losses following extensive sprayings of forest trees.

Assistant Secretary Leffler said that it should be possible for sponsors of spraying projects to have advice on the possible effects of the spraying on wildlife, suggestions as to timing and the formulations needed to accomplish the desired effect with a minimum damage to fish and wildlife.

Also stressed was the need for pesticide studies because of the Department's obligations under the migratory bird treaties.

Mr. Leffler urged that combined laboratory and field investigations be conducted in cooperation with other agencies such as the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture. Some of the objectives would be:

Tests of the toxicity of new insecticides for birds, mammals and fish.

Development of diagnostic tests to permit determinations of whether or not animals were killed by specific pesticides.

Studies of the application of insecticides in forest pest control.

Studies of the effects on fish and wildlife of the control of grasshoppers, Mormon crickets, Japanese beetle, corn borers and other farm pests.

Marsh studies on mosquito production and control in relation to waterfowl habitat preservation.

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