



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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SEATON APPROVES PLAN TO SETTLE LONG CONTROVERSY OVER TULE- KLAMATH LANDS

Controversial lands in the Lower Klamath-Tule Lake region in California and Oregon must be used in a manner that will fully protect the valuable waterfowl resources of that area, Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton decreed today.

Secretary Seaton's decision offers a solution to a controversy which has existed for nearly a quarter of a century over the question of a Federal policy of keeping control over several thousand acres of former marsh area in the Klamath Basin to meet the Department's needs for wildlife management and a Federal policy of opening these lands to homesteading.

The Klamath Basin has always been an important concentration area for migratory waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway, and remains so in spite of the fact that the original water and marsh area of 187,000 acres in Tule and Lower Klamath Lakes has been reduced by land reclamation to about 25,000 acres. The area provides feeding and resting facilities for a peak of more than 7,000,000 migratory waterfowl during their semiannual migrations. About 80 percent of the waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway pass through the area.

The lands involved include a portion of those which were ceded to the United States in 1905 by California and Oregon for reclamation purposes. They lie in the Klamath Irrigation Project, which supplies water to about 200,000 acres of farmland, and also are in the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuges. These lands have been reclaimed and are being farmed, but portions used for carrying out the Department of the Interior's responsibility for migratory wildfowl conservation have been retained under Federal ownership and farmed under lease agreements.

The center of the controversy has been about 10,000 acres in the bottom of the bed of what formerly was Tule Lake. This area serves as an emergency sump, or reservoir, for excess flood waters from the Tule Lake Irrigation District. These lands are farmed under lease by veterans of World War II. The leases contain cropping regulations calculated to provide wild fowl food after the commercial

crops are harvested. The Fish and Wildlife Service and the game agencies of California and Oregon declare that retention of the present leasing system is essential to maintain the wildfowl population of the Pacific Flyway without danger of extensive crop depredation, unless or until substitute wildfowl habitat along the Flyway has been provided.

The Bureau of Reclamation is conducting investigations in an effort to provide substitute wildfowl habitat in the area. Should this experiment be successful it might provide a substitute area for growing the necessary waterfowl food. But until dependable substitute habitat is accomplished, Secretary Seaton's decision will defer homesteading. Amendment of present laws covering the project in conformance with the pattern of Secretary Seaton's decision is the next step.

Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1908. It contains 22,800 acres. Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1928, and now contains 37,337 acres.

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