

PLANNING FOR FISH AND GAME RESTORATION

Fifteen Minute Radio
Talk over WOI

November 21, 1934.

BY

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The comprehensive planning of a program of constructing, and restoring habitats suitable to wild life in Iowa, as undertaken by the Iowa Fish and Game Commission, has proven to be one of the outstanding parts of the manifold interests embodied under the Iowa State Planning Board Program.

The tremendous interest attached to such a program in Iowa is best demonstrated by the fact that as early as 1931 funds were allocated by the Board of Conservation and the Iowa Fish and Game Commission for the purpose of developing an Iowa Twenty-Five Year Conservation Plan.

Under the present program of the Iowa State Planning Board as it has been developing during the past seven months the recommendations of the Twenty-Five Year Conservation Plan have been incorporated and the field has been broadened to include plans of developments utilizing the assistance of relief labor in all parts of the State.

You will be interested in the various types of plans developed in connection with fish and game restoration. For instance a survey of all State-owned or meandered lakes as well as many of those privately owned has been conducted during the past several months. With the alarming decrease in the numbers of migratory waterfowl the need of an immediate, comprehensive program of lake restoration, and improvements on existing lakes for waterfowl production is paramount.

It is estimated by the United States Bureau of Biological Survey that during the nesting season of 1934, 117,000 square miles of former nesting areas through Nebraska, the Dakotas and the prairie provinces of Canada were practically devoid of nesting ducks. At the same time there was no apparent increase or concentration in areas which were suitable for such nesting.

Ornithologists agree that the prairie regions of northwestern Iowa were formerly the finest waterfowl nesting area in all of North America. With the continual draining of sloughs, tiling of lands and extensive agricultural developments continuing to lower the water table through this former wild life paradise, these birds have been slowly, but surely crowded into less favorable environments.

Iowa was among the first states to submit extensive recommendations to the Federal Government for the acquisition of lands to be used as waterfowl nesting grounds, refuges, and public shooting grounds. Both the Iowa State Planning Board and the Iowa Fish and Game Commission received favorable comments upon the completeness of these Federal recommendations. Federal Investigators approved of several tracts as being desirable. But the arresting factor in the final acquisition of any lands in Iowa is the price at which the lands must be purchased. Information from the Biological Survey is that \$10.00 or \$12.00 per acre for good waterfowl nesting area is the maximum allowed. In fact a large proportion of the 661,000 acres of land for which the Biological Survey has contracted at the present time is to be secured at \$2.00 or \$3.00 per acre. We are in need of unified assistance in finding suitable areas at low enough prices to interest the Federal Government.

The present program of land acquisition as stipulated under the provisions of the increased license fee of the Iowa Fish and Game Commission necessitates a balanced program or schedule of priority in securing these desirable areas for wild life. This has been one of the important accomplishments under this program. At the same time that the lake survey was being conducted, a similar investigation was being made of the reservoirs and ponds in southern Iowa. Prior to the inauguration of the recent program of artificial lake development this part of the state, except along the larger rivers, was practically devoid of suitable waterfowl areas. Already Lake Wapello in Davis County, the first of eight artificial lakes which are now being developed to be completed, has proven its importance as a waterfowl refuge and resting area. It has been noted that through the protection of waterfowl on this area there has been an improvement or an increase in the number of ducks to be found on surrounding water areas.

As a direct result of this reservoir survey certain of the larger and most suitable areas were established, through the cooperation of various City Councils or owners, as waterfowl game management areas. The Centerville City Reservoir, the new City Reservoir at Osceola, the Moulton Reservoir and Thayer Lake were closed to shooting and through the cooperation of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration workers were supplied to regularly distribute feed on these areas. It is believed that this method of attracting and holding migrant waterfowl in southern Iowa will not alone protect these birds, supply additional shooting in regions round about, but will demonstrate the feasibility of expending funds in southern Iowa for waterfowl resting areas.

Another very important part of the Planning Board Program has been the joint participation with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Iowa Fish and Game Commission in conducting a program of gathering suitable feed for use of wild life in the drought regions particularly in southwestern Iowa. Appeals were sent out for waste grains, elevator sweepings, fan mill screenings, cane tops or in fact anything that would be suitable as winter feed. Besides being a unique plan of State-wide interest in the preservation of wild life, this has proven to be a most adaptive program for the actual employment of large numbers of unemployed who are on relief rolls. Perhaps the most important phase of this program is the construction of shelters and feeding stations on suitable areas throughout southern Iowa. It is of tremendous interest to note that this program has caught the attention of sportsmen's clubs and conservation groups throughout the State. As a result these organizations are developing in their own communities the machinery for feeding programs and the construction of temporary shelters as well as permanent plantings affording protective cover to wild life.

It is stated that Iowa has assumed the lead in the program of stream improvement. Especially in northeastern Iowa low-head dams, deflectors and riprapping have been constructed to improve the conditions in these streams for fish life. At the present time the Iowa State Fish and Game Commission together with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Iowa State Planning Board have developed a program of stream improvement utilizing labor supplied through transient camps.

Working plans are now being prepared for the actual improvement of public lands from the standpoint of game, fishing or other recreational facilities. Areas such as abandoned gravel pits, abandoned highway, closed roads, lands which have reverted to Counties through tax delinquencies, in fact any lands which may be available for immediate public use will be considered. It is believed that by the use of relief labor on such areas that numerous wild life refuges, fish rearing ponds, picnic grounds and other recreational developments may thus be created during the next few months. Undoubtedly in your own community there is some tract of land under County or State ownership which may be available for such use.

The program of improved uses of submarginal land has received considerable publicity through the press. Recommendations on lands in Iowa have been presented to the Federal Government by the Iowa State Planning Board. These proposed the developing of submarginal lands into National Park areas, into National Forestry tracts and the removal of submarginal lands from agricultural use. This last proposal is the one on which I wish to speak briefly.

It has been advocated by the Iowa State Fish and Game Commission that tracts of submarginal land be utilized for intensive game production. It is believed that a more substantial income may be derived from this form of industry in southern Iowa than is being secured at the present time through agriculture.

A number of 5,000 acre units have been surveyed principally in Davis County. Some of these lands are heavily wooded which will supply some income from this industry. Others are practically denuded of trees and will necessitate reforestation. Examples have been selected which will allow

maximum production of fur as may be found along streams or other water-ways.

It is proposed that these lands be acquired by the Federal government under the submarginal land program. The final decision in this regard will undoubtedly depend upon the price of the lands. Approximately six families will be retained on each unit to be housed in federally-owned residences which will be selected from among those houses which are vacated with the rehabilitating of the additional families. These six families will be given employment on the area and will, in addition, receive a portion of the grain raised on the feed patches cared for on a crop-share basis.

Extensive surveys have been made by the Extension Department of Iowa State College to determine the soil types of this area, the economic returns to be expected from agriculture, and the returns from forestry as an industry. All of these recommendations have been coordinated through the Iowa State Planning Board, therefore the proposal to the Federal Government is the result of much detailed study by the outstanding departments within the State.

The substitution of this new industry to replace unprofitable agricultural practices in southern Iowa may be of vast economic importance within the next few years.

In closing I would like to express my appreciation at the splendid work being done through the Iowa State Planning Board program. Through the unified efforts of the Board, the staff, and the coordinating departments the results will unquestionably be a plan to better Iowa.

May I invite you, if you have specific questions regarding the planning

of Fish and Game Restoration in Iowa, to direct your requests to the office of the Iowa State Planning Board at Ames, the Iowa Fish and Game Commission, Des Moines, or if you prefer in care of this station, WOI at Iowa State College.

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