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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

To: Regional Director, Region 2  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Date: Sept. 24, 1958

From: Assistant Regional Supervisor, Branch of Wildlife Refuges,  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Subject: Inspection Report

State: Utah Project: Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge

Time and Date of Inspection:

From: September 16

To: \_\_\_\_\_

On Tuesday, September 16, accompanied by Dr. Jessop Low and Assistant Refuge Manager Gueswel, a brief inspection was made of the Fish Springs proposed refuge in western Utah approximately 100 miles south of Wendover. Mr. Gueswel had made several reconnaissance trips to the Fish Springs area during the past summer, assisting Engineer Miller in locating section corners and accumulating data as an aid to future mapping and management of the area. Dr. Low had visited the Fish Springs project many years previous, and my last previous visit to Fish Springs was in 1944.

The area has remained virtually unchanged over the years, except for the addition of the bullfrog venture and some changes in the handling of water by the Gerbers and by Jim Harrison. At the time of this visit Mr. Harrison was found living in the large ranch house at the center springs and was apparently engaged in muskrat trapping operations. During the conversation with Mr. Harrison, he indicated that he had obtained a life-tenure muskrat trapping concession through the Gerbers that would remain in effect under our ownership. He also stated that officers from Dugway Proving Grounds were hunting the area on a membership fee basis and that many of the posted signs were installed by these people.

Mr. Harrison raised questions as to when the Bureau would take over management and was informed that this was not yet definitely known. He questioned whether hunting would be permitted this year and was advised that in all probability it would be since ownership had not yet passed to the Bureau. Mr. Harrison asked numerous other questions about future management and offered many suggestions for both waterfowl management and muskrat production. He requested consideration

for a caretaker's job, which he felt would fit in well with his future plans.

Mr. Harrison stated that irrigation practices were still being carried on by him and certain water diversions had been made recently to provide better waterfowl habitat.

Facilities that were constructed for the bullfrog production venture still litter the area around the south springs. The question of ownership of these facilities in the purchase transaction should be cleared so that this junk yard can be cleaned up soon after the refuge is put in operation. This is also true of the buildings, corrals, fences, etc., over the entire project. It would appear that the first job undertaken by the Service upon final acquisition would be to completely clean up the area of unusable property and select a suitable headquarters site.

Based on general observation and without having tested the various spring waters for quality, it seems likely that the headquarters site should be raised somewhat above the spring heads on higher ground where more adequate landscaping could be provided. Tests should be made to determine availability of ground water of good quality on the alluvial fan above the principal springs.

Consideration should continue to be given the use of aircraft and radio contact between Fish Springs and Bear River Refuge to facilitate travel and management, since 75 to 100 miles of dirt road travel would be required between the refuge and the nearest town in any direction.

It is imperative that a topographic map be prepared of the Fish Springs project at the earliest feasible date. This will allow an orderly development consistent with available water.

The principal habitat need of Fish Springs appears to be waterfowl food production through the medium of impounded units and aquatic food plants. This will, no doubt, reduce the acreage of emergents to some extent, but since the idea of agricultural crops appears unfeasible, it is the only system that will provide a balanced habitat.

The construction of dikes will, of necessity, have to take into consideration the presence of muskrats, and construction design should be the least adaptable to muskrat burrowing.



Another factor to be considered in the development of a sound plan is soil characteristics. It is apparent that some of the lands in this vicinity are of a nature that will hold water with very little seepage, while others that are striped with organic materials, principally peat, will have to be coped with.

In view of the isolation of the refuge, this area cannot be managed satisfactorily until the headquarters unit has been constructed. This, then, should be high priority. Management prior to the construction of suitable facilities for operating and for living accommodations might be facilitated by a house trailer for temporary tours of duty while the principal operation is administered from the Bear River Refuge where housing accommodations could be made available.

Pending final acquisition of the area and assignment of a refuge manager, it is recommended that personnel at Bear River continue to make occasional visits to the Fish Springs project for the purpose of keeping track of activities in that area and obtaining more definite information on waterfowl use and other biological factors.

Marcus C. Nelson

REVIEWED BY:

*William T. Krummes*

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Chief, Division of Wildlife

Date:

9/29/58

cc: Bear River Refuge