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MALHEUR REFUGE AN AID TO BOTH BIRDS AND FARMERS

Certain landowners on the border of Malheur Lake have made a determined effort to defeat the purposes of this federal refuge in protecting waterfowl. At the beginning of the present duck season, two residents of this area, Culver Marshall and Wilbur Springer, inserted an advertisement in one of the Idaho papers offering to furnish excellent duck shooting within Malheur Wildfowl Refuge. Nearby the Biological Survey was feeding, banding and live-trapping ducks for scientific purposes.

It is to the credit of duck hunters that none of them offered to lease this area and take unfair advantage of the waterfowl. Schemes of this kind have been tried in other parts of the country but have always been thwarted by public opinion or stopped by state hunting restrictions.

Government experts have surveyed and appraised the privately owned land that might be desirable as part of Malheur Refuge. In order to be fair and avoid criticism, offers double the actual agricultural value have been made, and most of the area needed has been purchased. Those residents who have been guided by the advice of attorneys to hold out for high prices have lost out. Federal officers have decided not to be stuck by the exorbitant demands of private land owners. The balance of the funds allotted for Malheur Refuge will be used to improve the reservation.

Some people have always complained that where an area is set aside as a federal wildfowl refuge, it takes land out of use for grazing or cultivation. The situation at Malheur Lake is exactly the opposite. The most vital need in this area is a good supply of water. Without water, the bed of Malheur Lake might

be cultivated for one or two seasons. Then it would revert to a desert and be a loss both to men and birds. If a good part of the lake bed can be filled with water and this level maintained, all the land surrounding will be made useful for grazing by sub-irrigation. This will benefit the bonafide owners around the border of the reservation.

The leniency of the Biological Survey in dealing with some of the people who have squatted on the lake bed has brought on much more trouble than if this federal property had been rigidly protected. No squatters now living within the meander line of the lake have ever been given titles to the land by the government. They have fenced and are using government property. They pay no county or state taxes, and therefore have an unfair advantage over bonafide residents around the lake. Recognizing these factors, the Biological Survey is now taking steps to fence the entire lake bed. The fences of those who have come in from the outside and taken possession of government property will be torn down and no cattle will be permitted to graze over this area during the spring and summer nesting season of waterfowl.

A good co-operative plan will be worked out by the government with those ranchers and stockmen who own deeded land around Malheur Lake. In the late summer and early fall after the nesting season, a large amount of wild hay can be cut around the border. This will have its value both for stock and the lowering of fire risk. This is the policy adopted by the government on a large part of the land up the Blitzen Valley known as the P Ranch. Malheur Lake Refuge will prove of real value to residents of Harney County when the government has completed its plan.