Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Acting Secretary of the Interior Elmer F. Bennett today announced the Department has submitted to Congress proposed legislation that would advance the date for Federal purchase of the 15,000-acre marsh on the Klamath Indian Reservation in Oregon.

Under existing law the marsh is scheduled to be purchased on April 1, 1961, and set aside as a National Wildlife Refuge. The Department's proposed legislation would provide for the purchase to take place on the earliest date after September 30, 1959, that duck stamp money is available to pay the purchase price.

The new date for the acquisition is being proposed so that the Government can pay immediately to the Indians the purchase price for land which the Government has already decided to buy, instead of lending them money to meet their current subsistence needs. The realization value of the Klamath Marsh, as established by a reappraisal completed last December is $474,841.

”The Indians who have elected to withdraw from the tribe," Acting Secretary Bennett pointed out, "will be without funds for subsistence until the purchase price from the sale of the marsh and the forest is available for distribution. These subsistence needs will, therefore, have to be met with loans from the Indian revolving loan fund. If the sale date for the marsh is changed as proposed, the need for additional loans from the revolving loan fund will be decreased. If the Federal Government is already committed to the purchase of the marsh, it seems unreasonable to make loans to the Indians rather than pay them the purchase price that is due. If the bill is enacted, funds will be available for the payment of the purchase price from the sale of stamps under the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act of March 16, 1934, as amended.”