

[From Fall 1996]

Impoundment Borrow Ditch Cleanout Begins

In August, contract work began to clean out borrow ditches adjacent to certain moist soil management units.

The refuge actively manages fourteen impoundments or moist soil management units totaling over 2600 acres for the benefit of waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds. These units were created by constructing earthen dikes which retain water. Water control structures were placed in the dikes in order to provide the capability of changing the water levels within each unit. The first dike was built in 1951, creating the first refuge impoundment. Impoundment management in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s concentrated on providing wintering habitat for ducks, geese, and swans; since then the management has expanded to include shorebirds and wading birds.

Over the past 40 years of impoundment existence, the borrow ditches which were created at the time of construction have filled in. The ditches were formed when the bottom material was "borrowed" to create the dikes of each of the impoundments. As a result of the filling of these ditches, timely draw downs of some of the units has been affected.

The project was initiated in the summer of 1994 and was expected to be completed last summer. However, due to equipment problems and high water conditions, the project was postponed until this summer and will be completed this year. In addition to improving moist soil management capabilities, this project will provide a supply of fresh water for all wildlife.

*Bob Wilson,
Deputy Refuge Manager*