

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF THE WEATHER BUREAU
United States Department of Agriculture
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Hon. W. M. Jardine,

Secretary of Agriculture.

Sir:

I have the honor to submit herewith a report of the operations of the Weather Bureau during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1926.

Respectfully,

E. H. Mann

Chief of Bureau.

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Conforming to the plan inaugurated a year ago in the interest of economy in printing, the annual report of the Chief of the Weather Bureau for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1926, is submitted in greatly abridged form.

This is the 56th year of the operation of the meteorological service of the United States, and for a score of years or more the field of effort has covered practically every feature of meteorology in a service for the benefit of agriculture, commerce and navigation. The details of these activities have been covered in previous annual reports, and it need be said now only that the work has been maintained at even a higher stage of efficiency and economy, based on experience, than heretofore.

The beneficial effects of the operation of the provisions of re-classification and of retirement of civil employees have expressed themselves in numerous ways, and the personnel of the organization is perhaps in a more satisfied and contented state than at any time since the beginning of the war. Further improvements are gradually being worked out in these respects, and the entire organization of the Weather Bureau is in a good condition.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Report of the Chief of the Weather Bureau

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Legislation in support of air navigation. Many of the public will recall the great agitation that prevailed during a considerable portion of the calendar years 1925 and 1926 in connection with the governmental policy concerning aeronautics. The final outcome of this has been a very satisfactory and definite program of support of both civil and commercial aviation on the part of the Government, in the form of more definite programs for the military branches of the Government, and the enactment of the so-called Air Commerce Act, which had been before Congress in various forms for several years and which charges the Secretary of Commerce with important responsibilities in regard to civil aeronautics. Certain sections of this legislation conclusively define and describe certain duties of the Chief of the Weather Bureau in respect to the conduct of meteorological observations and advices for the benefit of aviation.

During the last days of Congress appropriations were made for carrying into effect the provisions of the Air Commerce Act, and include items for the extension of Weather Bureau work in this field. As these appropriations were not available until the beginning of the new fiscal year, the discussion of work and activities in this field is appropriately deferred until the next annual report.

Fire weather warnings. The enormous economic losses suffered by the public and private forest interests as the result of forest fires have impressed upon the Bureau the importance of furnishing meteorological advices and information to Federal, State, and private forest interests regarding weather conditions adverse to, or favorable for, the inception and spread of fires. The need of funds with which to organize work of this character was stressed in previous years without success until emphatically urged by representatives of the great lumber and forestry interests in the western section of the country. As a result, certain special appropriations were made available to the Weather Bureau for the development and extension of the fire weather warning work which had been inaugurated several years before in a tentative way on a part time basis, with the cooperation of private forestry interests who bore part of the expenses.

As the result of the definite appropriations made for the purpose, a conference was held at Portland, Oregon, in the spring, between representatives of the Weather Bureau, including the Chief of the Bureau, and Federal, State and private agencies of the northwest interested in the forest fire fighting problem. The whole program of meteorological service in aid of forest fire fighting is necessarily a cooperative one, requiring the closest coordination of effort of the forest fire fighting agencies with the forecasters and meteorologists who supply the weather information.

The conference in question is believed to have been productive of a highly satisfactory understanding, and as a result of the conference an outline of the program of work for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1926, was formulated. It is hoped that the details of this work may be more fully presented and reported upon in the next annual report.

Precipitation and the level of the Great Lakes. It seems appropriate at this point to comment on one of the more notable contributions in the work of the Bureau during the past year, namely, the publication of a carefully

prepared digest of all of the observations available from 1875 to 1924 concerning the precipitation in the drainage area of the Great Lakes, by P. C. Day, in Charge of the Climatological Division. The problem of the decreasing levels of the Great Lakes has become one of critical importance to the States and municipalities adjacent to the Lakes, and especially to the shipping traversing those waters. It is believed that the publication of these very definite facts concerning the water supply to the Great Lakes serves a very definite and valuable purpose in stabilizing thought regarding the causes of changes of lake level.

Those interested in the question must of course consult the original publication, but it seems proper briefly to state that for a score of years or so the records show a general deficiency of precipitation as compared to averages of annual precipitation prevailing over an equal period of years preceding the opening of the twentieth century. The Weather Bureau is disposed to believe such differences in precipitation represent changes over relatively short intervals of time, and that recurrences of wet periods, so called, may reasonably be expected, in which case it is the Bureau's opinion that there will be a corresponding increase in the lake levels, with the accompanying benefits to shipping and other interests.