

14410

state owned Murphy Act lands were formerly owned by the Model Land Company and were allowed to revert to the state because they were not worth the expense of taxes. Those Murphy lands in the Lake Okeechobee agricultural section are encumbered by such high drainage district taxes that they are of no interest to the Model Land Company.

2. The Model Land Company is now disposing of some of its lands which are submerged marl flats and mangrove swamps at five to ten dollars per acre. It is selling none of the lands which are above normal high tide, and is also selling no lands which are covered by exploratory contracts or oil leases.

3. Mr. Hawkins stated that the Model Land Company leases do not restrict oil companies from exploring or drilling in the vicinity of rookeries. However, he states that the leases call for the exercise of reasonable diligence in the protection of wildlife, according to a request made by Mr. John Baker of the National Audubon Society.

4. Mr. Hawkins said that as far as the Model Land Company was concerned that the conveyance of surface rights was out of the question until the oil problem was settled.

5. He stated that the Model Land Company still wishes to cooperate in keeping the program alive so that park establishment might be considered in the future.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 1944:

In the afternoon we held a conference in Jacksonville with Mr. Amos Elliot, oil engineer from California, who was contacted by the Director in Jacksonville on his way to Washington Sunday morning. It was Mr. Elliot's opinion that the Service could secure accurate information on the Florida oil problem by investigating the latest developments through the Office of the Petroleum Administrator for War. In this way the nature of the gamble which would be taken and the probable length of time involved to solve the oil problem might be clarified. In reviewing the state law which provides for a bonus of \$50,000.00 for the first commercial well produced, Mr. Elliot was of the opinion that this money would not be paid out until a well could be dug which would produce oil at a profit. It therefore appears that the Sunniland well will have to increase its output materially if the Humble Oil Company expects to claim the bonus for a commercial well.

Mr. Elliot mentioned one important technicality by which the Federal Government might exercise some control over oil explorations. He stated that cases in the West had indicated the only way Government lands could get into private hands was through public bidding. He said that in cases where the Government had conveyed lands to the states that a legal question was involved where the states conveyed these lands to private individuals or corporations, especially when the Federal conveyance provided for sale by the state through public bidding. It was suggested