

highway scheme began to capture the attention of local promoters, James Silver and J. Clark Salyer of the U.S. Biological Survey urged members of the Society to contact members of the Norbeck Committee in the U.S. Senate and urge quick action to acquire the property. A survey of a route for a scenic highway got underway in January. The Governor signed a bill approving permission for the Federal government to acquire a right-of-way for the road across the Swamp in March. In February and March a series of events were sponsored by the scenic highway boosters in Waycross and Lake City to drum up public support for the project. Congressman Deen supported the project. Fortunately for the Refuge supporters, state highway funds were seized by Governor Eugene Talmadge and the project was placed on hold.⁴⁵

In late June 1935, Ivan Tomkins, a naturalist from Savannah, wrote to Francis Harper that he had heard "a fairly good rumor that the Okefinokee is to be bought as a preserve, and no roads are to be put through it." Harper replied that Congress had authorized the purchase of the Okefenokee and "the highway foolishness" had been stopped. He added: "It has been a long struggle of over 20 years for me, and it is hard to realize the outcome as yet. If only it could have been saved in the shape in which I first knew it!"⁴⁶

During the following months the red tape in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. Biological Survey finally ran out. On March 15, 1936 the Biological Survey acquired an option to buy the Hebard property and began a survey of the property boundary. A few days later the action was embraced by Georgia Senator Walter George who was credited with "having funds for this purchase made available." J.N. (Ding) Darling and Ira N. Gabrielson of the Biological Survey also lauded the decision. Following the boundary survey, the Hebard Lumber Company was offered \$1.50 per acre for its holdings, which they accepted. The Biological Survey announced that it was assuming responsibility for the management of the property at midnight on November 30, 1936. On February 1, 1937, the Biological Survey reported that John M. Hopkins had been placed in charge

⁴⁵ Report: Okefenokee Swamp by James Silver, U.S. Biological Survey, March 15, 1935. J. Clark Salyer to Lucien Harris, Jr., December 7, 1935. Brantley Enterprise, July 12, 1935. Waycross Journal-Herald, January 18, 1935; January 21, 1935; February 9, 1935; March 9, 1935; April 4, 1935; June 8, 1935; June 11, 1935; June 14, 1935; July 17, 1935. Savannah Morning News, January 24, 1935; February 20, 1935; March 9, 1935. Francis Harper and Delma E. Presley, Okefinokee Album (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981), p. 8.

⁴⁶ I.R. Tomkins to Francis Harper, 6-26-1935. Francis Harper to I.R. Tomkins, 7-2-1935.