$27,422 Additional WPA Funds Allocated to Combat "Mormon" Cricket Invasion in Idaho and Nevada.

Deputy Administrator Aubrey Williams today announced allotments totaling $57,422 to Idaho and Nevada counties for further aid in the defensive fight against the "Mormon cricket," dreaded insect scourge of the western range country.

The counties are:

Idaho, Washington County, $3,000; Nevada, White Pine County, $15,506; Eureka County, $10,000; and Elko County, scene of one of the worst outbreaks, $28,916.

Grants from the Emergency Relief Act of 1935, totaling about $216,000 have been made to afflicted States. The affected area includes parts of Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Washington and South Dakota.

Appearing this year out of their mountain valley nesting places in numbers never before equalled in history, the "cannibal cricket," as it is sometimes called, is moving in the biggest swarms close upon the cultivated lands of Idaho, Montana and Nevada, destroying hundreds of thousands of dollars in crops and range grass. By eating the seeds of the range grass, the crickets prevent the grass from reseeding itself. Thus, the
insects are an important factor in soil erosion. Minor outbreaks have occurred in Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and Washington. They have entered South Dakota for the first time this year.

With the aid of funds from the Works Progress Administration and under general supervision of State departments of entomology, relief workers are battling the hordes of devouring crickets with sheet metal barriers and sodium arsenite dust and lime.

Before the oncoming battalions of crickets, traveling in bands sometimes as much as 11 miles wide and 20 miles long, workers erect sheet metal barriers about a foot and a half high immediately behind trenches or pits. Because the cricket, ordinarily about four inches long, is wingless it cannot fly over the barrier. In their march across the sage brush, the crickets fall into the pits where they are exterminated by workers with sodium arsenite dust guns.

The insects, which are technically wingless grasshoppers, have appeared in the infested areas in untold billions, according to Department of Agriculture officials recently returned from an inspection trip. In order to indicate the vast numbers of the pest, it was pointed out that in one community alone in the state of Nevada, 62 trenches before a barrier two miles long were filled in 24 hours. The town of Carlin, near Elko, Idaho, had erected a barrier all around it to keep the insects out of the houses and the community's water supply. Farmers have to build barriers around their houses in some parts of the plague district.

An area near St. Anthony, Idaho, contains nearly 35 miles of barrier, which is moved periodically in sectors from place to place in order to trap the insects. There are approximately 25 miles of barrier in the State of Nevada.
Erratic, feeding on one thing and then another, the crickets creep down out of the high mountain fastness with a curious high-pitched singing sound. Individually, the farmers seldom know how to combat the pests. At one time the crickets may move into a hay field cutting every blade of grass, at another time they may not touch the hay but move on to destroy a potato field. No crop is safe. Even the tough sage brush is often stripped before an onslaught.

Science has not yet solved the problem of the cause of the cannibal cricket. Attempts have been made to correlate their outbreaks with climatic records. It is known that hot dry weather is favorable to the crickets, although peak outbreaks have been known to coincide with relatively wet spells. Nor is it yet known what puts an end to the scourge. It is believed that some peculiar climatic condition, such as a heavy rainfall upon young crickets just after they have been hatched, will do much to decimate their ranks.

Historically, the States suffering most from cricket scourges are Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Years in which the plague has occurred in some districts of the area have been 1847-8, (the year when the new Mormon colony near Salt Lake City was almost wiped out by the pest and from which event the name is probably taken), 1872, 1879, 1883, 1894, 1900, 1902, 1905, 1922-28, 1923-25, and 1924-28.