



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries

For Immediate Release March 21, 1943. W

OWI-1449

The depletion of the Nation's fishing fleets by the armed services was the principal contributing factor in the reduction of seafood production from the previous year of approximately 1,250,000,000 pounds last year, Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes, said today. Lack of manpower and restrictions placed on fishing in certain areas are other important factors in the declining production of fish.

Immediately after the United States entered the war large numbers of fishing vessels and auxiliary craft were requisitioned by the various services. Security regulations do not allow publication of the total number but it was large and included numbers of the newer, larger, and more efficient vessels.

This year, with a production goal for fisheries set for a record high, the Army, Navy, and War Shipping Administration are cooperating with the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries in making plans for the return of these vessels which can be given back to the industry without jeopardizing our sea frontiers. Some vessels have already been returned.

"The services and the War Shipping Administration have shown every evidence of understanding the problems of the fishing industry," Coordinator Ickes said, "and there is reason to believe that they will do everything they can to alleviate the present situation. Anything they do to make vessels available for fishing again will show up in increased production".

Some areas have been particularly affected by the requisitioning of craft. These include the deep-water or ground-fishing industry of New England; the menhaden Fishery which extends from New York to Florida, and the sardine and tuna fisheries of California.

Among the fisheries most affected are the two which, in poundage, produce more fish than any others in the United States: the menhaden and the sardine. The California sardine, or pilchard, accounts for about one-fifth of the total production of fish in the United States and Alaska. The menhaden accounts for another 15 percent. The menhaden, almost entirely unknown to the general public, is pressed for oil and fish meal. The oil is used in treating steel, making soap, in paints, and varnishes, and the making of oil cloth. The meal is used as an ingredient of poultry food. Vast quantities of menhaden were taken before the war.

(over)

Last year after the salmon fishing season in Alaska, numerous craft were taken over by the Army. This included important auxiliary craft such as pile drivers, power scows, and cannery tenders. Arrangements have now been made for the return or replacement of many of these craft. Important fisheries, particularly that of the red salmon, one of the choicest commercial varieties of this fish, will be able to operate again. A concentration plan for the maximum use of the most efficient plants and equipment of the Alaska salmon industry was announced last week. This plan will materially reduce the amount of manpower, equipment, and transportation required and at the same time the plan is expected to result in increased production.

The Coordinator announced last week, after industry-wide conferences in Washington, that unless some of the restrictions under which the fishing industry operates were removed, production this year would fall more than 2,000,000,000 pounds short of the goal established by the Food Administrator.

#####