



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

For Release TO AM's FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 1944. W.

An order providing for the allocation among dealers of all Pacific halibut landed at United States ports on the Pacific coast and in Alaska was announced today by Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes. The order will become effective June 23.

Under the terms of the order, no person or firm may purchase halibut from fishing vessels after the effective date, June 23, without a permit issued by the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries in Seattle. Any person engaged in dealing in halibut during 1941, 1942, or prior to July 13, 1943, and who desires to continue such operations, will be issued a permit on request, but others, who desire to enter the halibut business, in order to secure a permit must satisfy the Coordinator of Fisheries that his proposed operations "would not unduly disrupt the marketing, processing and distribution of fish and would not interfere with the programs of the Office of Price Administration or the War Food Administration and would be otherwise consistent with the purposes of this order."

Advice of the Office of Price Administration, the War Food Administration, and the War Manpower Commission may be sought by the Coordinator of Fisheries in passing on applications for permits.

According to the text of the order the purposes of allocation are:

"To secure and facilitate the maximum production of halibut with a minimum expenditure of critical materials and manpower; to allocate halibut landings between dealers within ports so as to aid in the most efficient distribution of the processed product to meet war and essential civilian needs, so that the several markets will be supplied with substantially normal proportions of the product, to satisfy as near as may be, the demand which was developed largely during pre-war years; and to discourage violation of maximum price regulations in transactions between fishermen and dealers. The order is to be administered so as to cause a minimum of interference with normal economic processes in the industry."

The actual allocation of the American portion of the 51 million pounds of halibut produced in the Pacific Northwest will be carried out by assigning to each dealer who has a permit a definite percentage of the total landings in each port for the entire season. The allocation schedules for each port will be based on records of past purchases with such modifications as may be necessary to assure equitable distribution of the product into the normal channels of consumption. Industry committees may be set up in each port to advise on allocation schedules and other details connected with the administration of the order.

(over)

Although violation of the order will carry stringent penalties under the Second War Powers Act, ample provision is made for appeals and petitions for relief by any person who finds that compliance with the order imposes an unreasonable burden upon him.

The halibut allocation order is the culmination of a long series of conferences by Government authorities and members of the halibut industry in Seattle and in Alaskan cities, resulting from appeals of the industry for the establishment of an orderly system of marketing to replace the selling of halibut by auction or competitive bidding which is no longer possible under price control. As a result of wartime restrictions, the industry was disorganized, patterns of distribution were distorted, and black-market dealings were reported on the increase, according to the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries. These conditions caused grave concern on the part of the War Food Administration, which is responsible for maintaining an equitable distribution of all food commodities to consuming markets. The OPA was also alarmed by increasing black-market operations and with the threat of increased costs of living.

It was concluded, therefore, that restoring the normal distribution of fish by allocating landings to dealers on a historical basis would be the first and most important step in restoring distribution patterns and also in removing incentive to the payment of bonuses and black-market prices which would tend to be carried along the line to the ultimate consumer. The Coordinator of Fisheries, under existing Executive Orders, is primarily concerned with increasing food production from the fishery industries but any doubt as to legal authority for his allocating catches was removed by the issuance on June 3, 1944, of a Directive from the Economic Stabilization Director, Fred M. Vinson, granting full authorization of the allocation program.

Mr. V. J. Samson, Area Coordinator, Area II, 230 Bell Street Dock, Seattle 1, Washington, will be in charge of the administration of the allocation order. He will be assisted by Mr. Samuel J. Hutchinson as Field Supervisor who was recently detailed from the Fish and Wildlife Service, temporarily discontinuing his investigations of the pink salmon fishery in Southeastern Alaska which has been underway for the past several years. Other employees of the Fish and Wildlife Service will be detailed to serve as Port Supervisors of halibut allocation in Alaska at Ketchikan, Petersburg, Wrangell, Sitka, Juneau and Pelican City.