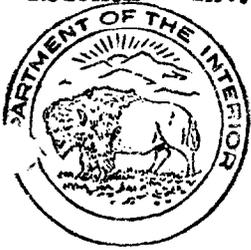


Office distribution  
5 9 48

# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release AUGUST 20, 1948.

#### ALASKA EXPLORATORY VESSEL LEAVES SEATTLE AUGUST 20

Exploration of Alaska's oceanic waters will be resumed after a lapse of seven years when a Fish and Wildlife Service exploratory fishing vessel sails from Seattle, Wash., for the Bering Sea on August 20, Milton C. James, acting director of the Service, announced today.

Mr. James explained that the exploratory boat will make a preliminary survey for two months to determine the varieties and quantities of fish present in the Bering Sea, south of Nome, between the coast of Alaska and the International Date Line.

During this voyage, fish preservation techniques and new types of commercial fishing gear will also be tested. Results of this cruise will establish a basis for future exploratory work.

The exploratory boat, a 100-ft. motor vessel named the Washington, was transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service from the Maritime Commission. It carries a crew of 12, including two fishery engineers and a biologist.

This cruise is the introductory phase of the Service's new, long-range Alaska Exploratory Fishing Program, authorized by the 80th Congress. In 1940 and 1941, the Service explored the southeast Bering Sea, leading to the development of the king crab fishery in that area. Because of the war, the exploratory program was discontinued.

Commercial exploitation of the vast fishery resources in the northeast Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea has been slight. Lack of specific data on the seasonal occurrence and the abundance of fish in the area, and little knowledge of actual operating requirements have curbed the fishing industry's development. After the Fish and Wildlife Service has explored the region and determined the extent of its fishery resources, the fishing industry will be able to apply the Federal findings to its own commercial operations.

The Service also hopes that off-season fisheries can be encouraged in south-east Alaskan waters. Salmon and halibut, the chief ones in the region, are only summer activities.

By October 20, the Washington will be back in Seattle for alterations and refitting for more intensified exploratory work. The vessel will sail to the Bering Sea again in the spring of 1949 for additional exploratory fishing.

X X X