



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

Heis
5/9/56

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release MAY 8, 1956

FWS WATCHES FOR EFFECT OF OCEAN UPWELLING ON TUNA FISHERY

A greater than usual upwelling of water in the mid-Pacific and its possible effect upon the tuna fishery of that area are being closely watched by the Fish and Wildlife Service, John L. Farley, Service Director, said today.

The huge upwelling has occurred along the Equator, south of Hawaii. The Service is studying the temperature and chemical content of the water, the speed and direction of the ocean currents and the abundance of plankton in a 1,000-mile strip of ocean which spans the Equator southeast of the Islands. Upwelling of water is a common occurrence along the Equator but because of the potentialities of this particular action Service scientists felt it warranted attention.

The upwelling is caused by displacement of surface water by the prevailing easterly winds. This sets up vertical currents which result in the transfer of fertile water from the cool depths to the surface of the sea.

Because of its fertility, the "new" water has the ability to produce and maintain an extraordinary abundance of plankton.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has made two special studies, one on the Equator and the other at one degree north latitude to discover the speed at which the sea water was flowing away from the area of the upwelling. In this work drags were hung deep in the water from floats which were followed and checked for speed and direction.

The objective of the study is to find out where the drifting mass of fertile water, with its cargo of developing plant food, will be when it becomes a good tuna feeding ground.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials believe that if this objective is achieved predicting the location of a good tuna fishing area will be possible.

X X X