



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### INDUSTRY AND INTERIOR VIEW COMMON FISHERY PROBLEMS

The recent "Industry-Interior" discussion on how to fit the commercial fisheries into the America of the future should prove a fitting note on which to end the old year and begin the new, according to Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler in an end-of-the-year statement on commercial fishing.

Assistant Secretary Leffler's reference was to the most recent meeting of the American Fishery Advisory Committee. At this meeting, numerous long-range problems were discussed with the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, United States Fish and Wildlife Service; several of the Bureau's current programs also were reviewed.

The Bureau is already working on some of the matters discussed and has "tagged" other problems for consideration at some appropriate time in the future. The Advisory Committee was created by the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act for the betterment of the domestic commercial fishing industry.

Among the problems discussed were: the effect of a 12-mile fishing limit, the effect of industrialization and subdivision on estuarine habitat, improvement of fish stocks by cross-breeding or selective breeding, the effect of "fish farming" upon the commercial fisheries, the need for more research on processing and preserving, the changing food habits of the consumer, the problems of foreign trade, and developing new uses for industrial fishery products.

One of the more urgent matters which will have lasting effects on commercial fisheries relates to the rapid removal of estuarine areas which is in progress in this country. Industrial construction, navigation channeling and real estate projects are altering or reducing the coastal marshes, rivers, and estuaries which are important areas for the spawning and rearing of fish and shellfish. Committee members urged an aggressive Federal-State program to halt the destruction of coastal marshlands until the full damage to fish and wildlife could be assessed and rectifying measures taken. The Fish and Wildlife Service has already begun a joint program with States on this matter.

The threat of other countries extending their territorial limits to 12 miles as far as fishing is concerned was discussed at length. Committee members recommended that the Department of the Interior work with other Federal agencies to try to hold to the present three-mile limit.

The Committee also urged the Department to use its energies and influence to get foreign markets open to American-produced fishery products. Trade specialists should evaluate foreign markets, efforts should be increased to eliminate trade barriers, balance-of-payment restrictions should be overcome, the fishing industry should be urged to exhibit in foreign trade fairs, and more favorable shipping rates should be sought.

The Committee reviewed the presently developing fish-farming-on-rice-lands trend in the United States and the possible effects of a potentially large production of catfish and buffalofish on established fishery marketing patterns. The Committee requested that the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries follow the development of this young industry and present a report on its progress at a future meeting.

Suggestions for developing better stocks of fish and shellfish through cross-breeding, selective breeding, or importation of foreign fish were generally approved, especially with regard to shellfish, and declared worthy of consideration after some of the more pressing problems were settled.

Mechanization of the fishing industry was listed as a problem for the industry itself, but the Bureau was urged to keep up its pioneer work in this field. Bureau programs include the introduction of the Gulf of Mexico shrimp trawl to the west coast, efficiency studies on equipment used in shellfish predator control, and a safety-at-sea program which should not only eliminate much human suffering but also save vessel owners insurance money.

Another consideration for future action, in the form of a pilot study, is the proposal to determine eating patterns of the populace and to predict fish consumption for years to come, somewhat similar to studies being made on agricultural products.

The Committee expressed interest in dehydrofreezing and dehydrocanning work which is now being done on agricultural products. It urged the Bureau to watch developments in this field but to avoid initiating costly experimentation. Under the dehydro processes, the agricultural product is partially dehydrated and then frozen or canned.

The meeting was opened with formal presentations by Bureau personnel on the shrimp program in the Gulf area, fishery problems in the atomic age, fishery products standards and inspection, and market promotion.

Assistant Secretary Leffler stated that the advice and counsel supplied by the Committee was of tremendous value to the Department of the Interior. He was pleased that the Committee was complimentary of the work being done by the Bureau. The next semiannual meeting of the American Fisheries Advisory Committee will be held on May 6, 7, and 8 in Duluth, Minnesota. Previous meetings have been held in Washington, D. C.; Boston, Mass.; Long Beach, Calif.; Chicago, Ill.; Biloxi, Miss.; Ketchikan, Alaska; and San Francisco, Calif.

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