

# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR STEWART L. UDALL AT THE OPENING PLENARY SESSION OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NORTH PACIFIC FUR SEAL COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D. C., NOVEMBER 26, 1962

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the city of Washington for the sixth annual meeting of the North Pacific Fur Seal Commission. The work of this Commission has been outstanding in demonstrating the results that can be obtained through international cooperation in managing a natural resource of international interest. All of you who are associated with this organization can be proud of the record you have made. At this time, when we are only beginning to recognize the importance of our marine resources in enhancing the standards of living of peoples throughout the world, it is most encouraging to have the accomplishments of this Commission as an example for other international endeavors.

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the signing of the original four-party treaty among Canada, Japan, Russia, and the United States for the conservation of North Pacific fur seals. During this period the fur-seal resource in the North Pacific has increased from less than a quarter of a million to over one and three-quarter million animals. During the term of the present Convention, all the fur-seal stocks in this area have flourished.

In 1958 an extensive cooperative research program was initiated under your auspices, involving investigations both on the high seas and on the rookery areas. Research vessels of the four Party Governments have ranged over a broad area of the North Pacific in a carefully coordinated study of the habits of fur seals in their marine environment. Other comprehensive studies recommended by the Commission have been carried out to good effect by the Soviet Union and the United States on the various fur-seal rookery areas under their respective control. The mutual research objectives of the parties have been advanced to a high degree through frequent exchanges of scientific personnel and through a free flow of data and ideas among their research teams.

Significant results from this research have included information concerning migration routes, intermingling of North American and Asian stocks, food habits, life history, and population dynamics of fur seals. We have learned, for example, that significant numbers of fur seals born on the Pribilof Islands appear some years later on the Kommandorski Islands off Kamchatka, and, conversely, that fur seals born on the fur seal islands off the Asian coast later are found in significant numbers on the Pribilof Islands.

Research programs approved by the Commission have accelerated the adoption of new management techniques. For instance, female fur seals of the North American

herd now are being harvested selectively on a large scale. It is gratifying to note ~~that~~ high-quality female fur seal pelts are increasingly in demand in the fur markets of the world. Through utilization of both sexes of fur seals, greater benefits can be realized from this resource as all of the North Pacific herds approach maximum levels of development.

The Interim Convention on Conservation of North Pacific Fur Seals entered into force on October 14, 1957, more than 5 years ago. It is now appropriate under the terms of the Convention that the governments reach early agreement as to the nature of future arrangements for international cooperation in the conservation of the North Pacific fur seal. During the past 5 years of intensive research, the Commission has accumulated a wealth of information upon which to base wise recommendations in this matter. I am most hopeful that the deliberations of this meeting will point the way to a permanent convention that will assure the conservation and rational utilization of this valuable resource for the benefit of all concerned.

Again let me welcome you to Washington. I hope that you will enjoy your visit and that your meeting here will be most fruitful.

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