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DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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SUCCESSFUL TESTS OF MIDWATER TRAWL INDICATE PROMISE FOR
NEW FISHERY OFF PACIFIC COAST

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall today announced what may be a major breakthrough in the establishment of a new commercial fishery off the Pacific Coast of the United States.

Secretary Udall said the Department's first successful use of an experimental midwater trawl to capture large quantities of hake, a close relative of the East coast whiting, indicates the feasibility of commercial harvesting of this abundant, but presently unused West Coast resource.

The trawl, a net with an 80-foot by 80-foot oval opening which fishes in the mid-depths of the ocean, was developed by gear specialists of the Department's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Regional Office in Seattle, Wash. It is many times larger than nets commonly used by United States commercial fishermen.

Secretary Udall said a significant factor in recent tests of the new trawl was that it was used on a standard commercial trawler, the St. Michael, a 75-foot vessel operating out of Bellingham, Wash., indicating the adaptability of the present fleet to this type gear.

The St. Michael, chartered by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, made four one-hour drags during the test in water depths of from 50 to 60 fathoms (300 to 360 feet). The catch amounted to 8,200 pounds the first trawl, 30,000 pounds the second, 42,000 the third, and 60,000 the fourth.

The fish were located southwest of Destruction Island, off the north coast of Washington, by an echo sounder. They averaged about 22 inches long and weighed from two to three pounds.

Secretary Udall said scientific studies have shown that hake is the most prolific fish along the Pacific Coast. He said the hake can be used as a food fish, makes a high quality white meal for animal and poultry feeds, and has great potential for use in the manufacture of fish protein concentrate, a powdered protein additive made from whole fish which is being developed as a dietary supplement for humans.

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