Office Distribution
10-13-4

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

Fish and Wildlife Service

For Release Thursday, OCTOBER 13, 1949

SEA LAMPREYS HURT FISH THEY DON'T ATTACK

The transfer of fishing activity from lake trout — which are being destroyed in the Great Lakes by the parasitic sea lamprey — to other fish like the chub threatens the commercial fish resources of the Great Lakes, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service said today. The Service explained that the indirect effects of the sea lamprey on the fishery are as important and destructive as the direct effects.

Lake Huron's trout fishing has been completely destroyed by the sea lamprey, Lake Michigan's is 50 percent reduced, and Lake Superior's potentiality is 30 percent below that of former years — the latter's decline caused by the increased rate of exploitation, rather than by direct attack of the sea lamprey. This decline in the trout fisheries has caused fishermen to redirect their efforts to other species of fish.

The take of chubs in Lake Michigan has increased more than 400 percent in the last few years. Commercial fishermen are greatly concerned about the maintenance of the fishery under this increased catch.

Fishery scientists at the Great Lakes Laboratory of the Fish and Wildlife Service at Ann Arbor, Michigan, emphasize that any program directed toward the study and control of the sea lamprey must take account of these indirect effects of the sea lamprey — such as increased exploitation of the remaining trout and the redirecting of commercial fishery activities toward other varieties of fish — as well as the direct attacks of the lamprey on trout. Government scientists are at present working on methods of lamprey control, and Congress recently made additional funds available for the study.

The lamprey, an eel-like parasite which latches onto trout and certain other fish to drink their blood, entered the Great Lakes through the Welland Canal into Lake Erie in 1921.

x x x