

# The Future of the Fisheries

## IV. National Fisheries Policies and Programs for Our National Needs

DAVID WALLACE

Perhaps it would be well at the start to summarize briefly a statement of national fisheries policy. You heard yesterday of the severe decline in the stature of our fisheries production among the nations of the world, from first to sixth as of 1971. You heard of the depletion of stocks off our own coasts, caused by increasing intrusion of foreign fleets and—we should admit in some cases by our own practices. And that the situation in our fisheries has affected not only those so engaged, but our entire economy as manifest in a substantial contribution to our national trade deficit, with two-thirds of the fish consumed in the U.S. being imported.

It can be said in a number of ways—but simply—it is our national policy

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in this area to maintain the U.S. fisheries as a viable sector of our economic strength. We can argue over this statement but resolution would not be difficult. The hard part is coming to grips with how to go about it, what



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methods and programs and practices we can undertake to provide the most good for all. I want to make sure that those of you not familiar with the structure of U.S. fishing interests understand this before I go on.

The fishing industry is not as homogeneous as one might suppose. Commercial and sport fishing interests are often in conflict with respect to solutions to problems such as species taken, areas fished, and resource allocation. Within the commercial sector, solutions seeming to satisfy one segment, say nearshore or coastal fisheries, often inflict severe hardships on distant water fisheries, and so on. Add to these the difficulties of prescribing the management practices of our domestic fishermen while foreign fishermen off our coasts remain relatively immune.

Thus, it is the methods we are employing today to resolve such problems, whose solutions are essential if we are to make headway toward national policy, that I will examine.

As the first speaker on living resources at this conference, I would like to touch upon four points:

1. We must conserve our fisheries resources and insure our fair share for our domestic fishermen.
2. We must preserve our marine waters as a viable habitat for fish and shellfish.

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3. We must encourage and support the development of mariculture; and
4. We must foster the growth of our industry and insure quality products at fair prices to the consumer.

Our institutions for management of our fisheries, with a few notable exceptions, have failed to provide a structure for the preservation of resources and encouragement to our private enterprise system. Our management systems suffer from the deficiencies of overlapping jurisdiction, international mechanisms which fail to recognize the realities, and in some cases a total lack of adequate management authority. We need to create systems which will assure simultaneously sustained availability of fish and an encouraging commercial climate. Such systems require cooperation—between our states, between the states and the federal government, between the three marine fisheries compact commissions and the federal government, between the federal government and other nations, and between these government institutions and the industry which must operate within these management systems. Our policies must cope with short-term realities while laying a foundation for longer-term needs.

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Creation of such systems requires wisdom, ingenuity and dedication. Nobody likes the restraints that fisheries management inevitably brings, but the alternatives are worse—gradual destruction of our fisheries and a further decline in the industry.

The short term can provide only partial help. But we are optimistic about the long-term outlook. Indeed, as we look back over the developments of the past several decades and forward to the next two, I am led to believe that the fishing industry is undergoing a major

transition from a bleak period for many segments to one in which all parts can be important, self-sustaining, economically vital forces. Rising world demand for protein foods guarantees this outcome—but only if we manage wisely.

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Let's look at some of the things that we are attempting to do. Our foremost goal is to secure appropriate national and international control of the common resource. As all of you know, our long-range approach is to secure international agreement on the jurisdiction and control over global marine fisheries resources through the United Nations Law of the Sea deliberations which will finally start this year. The position of our government is simple. We seek coastal nation control over coastal species, coupled with a coastal nation preference to the fish, based on that country's capacity to harvest. We seek control by coastal nations of anadromous species and we seek international control over the species that are highly pelagic, such as tuna.

Attainment of these objectives even under the best of circumstances is some years off. What about the interim?

We are moving immediately within our existing authorities to strengthen a State/Federal management program targeted for specific species within the territorial seas and the contiguous zone, and beyond. We have under preparation management programs for the lobster, the surf clam, the Dungeness crab, and other species. Our present authorities do not allow us to do the job fully. As a first step to securing adequate authority for both the State/Federal management program and international management efforts, the administration has submitted the High Seas Fisheries Conservation bill. The President highlight-

ed the importance of this act in his environmental message.

We recognize that not all will agree with every provision of the bill. We hope for the sake of our fisheries and the industry that there will finally emerge a strong act which will permit building rational fisheries management systems.

We must use whatever tools are at hand to move toward the accomplishment of our goals of conservation and a fair share of the resources for our fishermen. Two techniques, which have been in use for some time, are international regional commissions and bilateral agreements. We are taking an increasingly hard line in our international negotiations. An example of the new firm attitude is best demonstrated by our actions in June, 1973 in Copenhagen at the annual meeting of the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries. I would like to use this illustration as I was one of the three U.S. Commissioners.

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***“ . . . our opening position in ICNAF was that the total fishing effort had to be reduced . . . ”***

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Some progress has been made over the past two years. But it has been apparent that the steps taken were inadequate to protect and restore the stocks and provide a fair deal for American industry. Our opening position in ICNAF was that the total fishing effort had to be reduced to a point where rapid recovery of the stocks could be anticipated. This proposal was rejected by the Commission, which suggested that it would be willing to consider a reduction using the total quota concept.

The U.S. then proposed a total quota of all species sufficiently low to bring about a reasonably rapid recovery of the stocks and the opportunity for our own fishermen to fish to the full extent of their capability. This position

is consistent with the U.S. position on fisheries as already enunciated before the Law of the Sea Preparatory Committee.

Even our second position in ICNAF did not prevail at this meeting. However, I believe the U.S. delegation made the point crystal clear that our concerns are real and we are determined to obtain relief. The fact that the other nations of the Commission are calling a special meeting in October devoted exclusively to seeking ways to meet the U.S. demands for reduced fishing effort indicates that they now recognize our determination to have these problems solved.

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***“ . . . we must start developing fisheries and markets for latent stocks. . . ”***

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Our drive to establish wise management programs cannot succeed unless we also foster scientific research and assessment efforts to provide the information base on which these policies depend. It is fundamental that we have adequate data on fish population dynamics, assessment of stocks, the effects of pollution upon fish and so forth. We intend to insure that this nation has the scientific and technological base of knowledge vital to the development and prosecution of management policies.

In addition to these institutional measures, there are some technological avenues available to us for increasing the supply of product. For example, we must start developing fisheries and markets for latent stocks not presently widely used in the U.S. Many of these resources offer excellent opportunity for expanded domestic and export sales. We in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration believe this is an area for increased Federal attention. We have begun programs of resource assessment and research into new harvesting techniques, as well as new processing and handling technology.

While we are developing our management regimes we must dedicate ourselves to the preservation of the marine environment as a viable habitat for our fish and shellfish. In this effort the estuaries are equally as important as the ocean, where the bulk of the catch is taken. Some two-thirds of all our commercial species spend at least part of their life in the estuaries for spawning, for nursery areas, or for living and growing as adults. Our estuaries have been badly degraded over the last fifty years. For example, on Long Island, New York, one-third of the wetlands have been physically destroyed by dredging sand from the bay and filling the wetlands for housing and other development. These actions have destroyed the bottom and eliminated the productive wetlands.

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***“... we must have comprehensive planning and management of our estuaries and inshore waters ...”***

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Dredging of deep water channels and uncontrolled mining of sand and gravel have also taken their toll in the degradation of the estuaries as a suitable environment for fish and wildlife.

It is quite apparent that we must have comprehensive planning and management of our estuaries and inshore waters if we are to put into proper balance the many needs of people and industry. The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, establishing a joint State-Federal effort, was a major progressive step in that direction. This legislation sets up the machinery for the states, with Federal financial support, to develop comprehensive plans for the multiple use of the coastal zone taking into consideration the needs for industrial use of the resources, navigation and commerce, housing along the shore, recreation—ranging from bathing to sport fishing and commercial fishing.

As Senator Magnuson indicated in his keynote address yesterday morning,

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there are approximately 9½ million saltwater recreational fishermen in the United States. It is NOAA's position that both commercial and recreational interests must be considered in developing solutions and attaining our national goal. We must recognize that there are areas of agreement and also areas of disagreement between these two major fishing interests. It is generally agreed, by both of these interests and by the Federal government, that improved fisheries management is an absolute essential if we are to enhance the lot of our fishermen. We are developing a nationwide sport fisheries program that will include the identification of appropriate methods to help solve areas of conflict between marine sport and commercial fishermen.

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***“... mariculture ... offers promise for the controlled production of many different kinds of fish and shellfish ...”***

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When one talks about expanding the resource base available to us, one must consider the potential of mari-

culture. Although we have a long way to go in developing the science and technology of mariculture, there's no question in our minds that over the long term, it offers promise for the controlled production of many different kinds of fish and shellfish. We have been cultivating oysters and clams for years, but that is only the beginning. As you might expect, species of high economic value will be developed first. It is clear that the scientific understanding and the technology are now emerging for the mass artificial culture of salmon in pens, as is now being demonstrated in Puget Sound, and for the mass production of shrimp as well as shellfish. It is in this kind of new science and technology, using a systems approach, that the Federal government is beginning to make investments in collaboration with industry and the universities, which will enable private industry to move ahead by itself. In NOAA we are making increasing investments in mariculture, through our Sea Grant program and through our National Marine Fisheries Service.

Our fishing industry today, while it has been plagued with many vicissitudes, has some things going for it. We are working with industry to develop

new processing techniques, so that high quality products can be presented in a manner acceptable to the consumer at a fair price. At the same time we are exploring methods whereby our industry can take advantage of devaluation of our currency with the corresponding favorable price structure in foreign markets. We have the opportunity to develop fishery exports almost for the first time in our history. We in government must combine forces with industry in trying to attain this goal.

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***“...the marine environment is still basically sound. . .”***

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The marine environment is still basically sound and there are expanding programs, both Federal and State, to keep it that way. Some of our fisheries are still prosperous, and with enlightened management we can restore others that are in trouble. We are already moving in that direction.

We still have a fishing fleet reason-

ably intact, a healthy processing industry, a wealth of technological know-how and a large potential market for the right products in the right places.

With these capabilities in mind, I want to emphasize again that we must press aggressively to establish a management regime which will insure high levels of production and at the same time reserve for our domestic fishermen the maximum share of the stocks that they are capable of taking.

We in government are dedicated to attain these goals.

*MFR Paper 1001. The paper above is from Marine Fisheries Review, Vol. 35, No. 9, 1973. Copies of this paper, in limited numbers, are available from D83, Technical Information Division, Environmental Science Information Center, NOAA, Washington, DC 20235.*