

## **U.S. Rejects ICNAF Fishery Regulation Proposal, Cites Excess Fishing Pressure**

The United States officially rejected a mid-summer proposal from the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF) which would regulate the overall fishing off the U.S. coast from Maine to North Carolina in 1976, the Office of International Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, reports. Under the proposal, the total catch would be reduced to 650,000 metric tons in 1976 from the allowable catch of 850,000 metric tons in 1975, but squid would be excluded from the quota—which was not the case in previous years. Quotas on squid will allow a catch of 74,000 tons of that species in 1976, up from 71,000 tons in 1974. The United States and Canada voted against the proposal at the ICNAF Annual Meeting, which was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, 10-20 June 1975.

At the catch level of 650,000 tons plus the squid, scientists estimate that a full decade would be required for stock recovery. In addition, there is an associated probability of approximately 30 percent that recovery will not begin in 1976 at this catch level, and hence a longer period of recovery may be required.

The United States had proposed a quota of 550,000 tons, including squid, which would have meant a 5-year recovery period with a 90 percent probability of recovery starting in 1976. That proposal, along with others ranging up to 800,000 tons (13-year recovery, 59 percent chance of success), was rejected by the Commission before the 650,000 level was agreed upon unani-

mously. A later proposal to exclude squid from the total was carried by a majority vote over U.S. objections.

In announcing the official objection, which will exclude the U.S. from applicability of the proposal if it becomes effective for others, Ambassador Thomas A. Clingan, Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and Fisheries Affairs, called the situation "intolerable." "The United States has been watching massive overfishing off its coasts for some years now," the Ambassador said. "This kind of situation cannot be allowed to continue. Nor can we any longer afford the luxury of a leisurely approach to fisheries problems. The resources have been too badly depleted, and the American fishermen have suffered too much, to avoid the hard decisions which are required now by all fishing nations."

The chief U.S. representative to ICNAF, David H. Wallace, Associate Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce, said that the ICNAF decision to increase the U.S. quota from 211,600 tons in 1975 to 230,000 tons in 1976 had not persuaded the United States Delegation to vote for the proposal, or the United States Government to accept it after it was adopted by majority vote.

"We attach as much importance to the conservation and protection of the valuable natural resources as we do to the protection of the American fishermen," Wallace declared. "Starting to give the fishermen a real opportunity to produce an adequate supply of fish for

the American market, as they were once able to do, is not enough. We must also restore the productivity of the stocks. Virtually every species off our Atlantic coast has been overfished, some very severely. The only way to correct the situation is by a drastic cut-back in catch and fishing effort, and this is what the United States is insisting upon."

The question of the overall allowable catch and the exclusion of squid from it was to be taken up again at a special ICNAF meeting in Montreal. A decision had already been made to schedule the meeting to discuss various matters, mostly related to the Canadian coast, which had not been resolved at the Annual Meeting. The United States placed the quota and squid issue on the agenda for the special meeting, which was to be held 22-27 September.

Each individual species or stock is the subject of a separate quota and national allocation. These were adopted by ICNAF in June and do not appear to be in question. The overall quota is less than the sum of the individual quotas, and is designed to focus fishing effort as precisely as possible on target species.

One reason the stocks are so depleted off the U.S. coast is that there is an unusually high species mix, with the result that many fish are taken as a by-catch, or incidental to the target species. Such fish are often simply discarded at sea, or made into fish meal. The basis for this "two-tier" quota system was laid at a special ICNAF meeting in Ottawa in October 1973 after the 1973 Annual Meeting had ended in complete failure. At that time the United States was seriously considering withdrawing from the Commission, but acceded to the pleas of other members to enter into the special negotiations. They

### **Bicentennial Fishery Symbol Adopted**

The Commerce Department has adopted a new symbol (right) to be used during the Bicentennial to commemorate America's fishing industry.

The symbol was developed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service to be used



by the public and by the fishing industry to make signs, posters, recipe booklets, place mats, window decals, bumper stickers, and other appropriate items. Copies of the logo, which are suitable for reproduction, may be obtained from the Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, Washington, DC 20235.

produced an agreement that the catch would be reduced to 923,900 tons in 1974 and 850,000 tons in 1975 from the over 1,100,000 tons it had reached in 1972 and 1973.

The agreement also specified that the catch would be further reduced in 1976 to the "amount which will allow the biomass to recover to a level which will produce the maximum sustainable yield." However, the agreement did not specify how long the recovery period was to be. That led to the present difficulty.

Three other U.S. proposals were scheduled for the Montreal meeting: 1) To close a large area on Georges Bank, off New England, to fishing with bottom gear all year 'round in order

to protect the seriously depleted groundfish stocks in the area, such as haddock. 2) To license fishing vessels from all ICNAF members in the Northwest Atlantic. At the present time some members do not know where their vessels are or what they are fishing for. 3) To simplify and clarify the allowable exemptions in the ICNAF trawl regulations. This allows for a by-catch which is too high.

The second and third proposals were added to the agenda of the Montreal meeting at the request of the United States. These subjects had been discussed at the June and earlier meetings, but agreement was not reached on them in ICNAF. The Georges Bank closure proposal had already been referred to

the special meeting. Progress had been made on it in Edinburgh, but time did not permit conclusion of the discussions on some major details.

Members of ICNAF are Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, France, German Democratic Republic, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, USSR, United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, Cuba has indicated it might join ICNAF after discussions at the Montreal meeting. Vessels from most of these countries fish off the U.S. coast, but a few nations normally fish only in the ICNAF areas off Canada or Greenland. Source: U.S. Department of State press release, 18 July 1975.

## Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fishing Seasons, Quotas, Report and Enforcement Rules Set

Regulations limiting the catch of Atlantic bluefin tuna have been established by the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to help conserve stocks of the threatened species. The regulations, published 13 August in the Federal Register, permit the Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service to establish fishing seasons, quotas, reporting requirements, enforcement procedures, and penalties relating to the catch of the bluefin tuna.

Publication of the regulations followed the 5 August signing of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act of 1975 by President Ford, and, in effect, implemented recommendations adopted by the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. The Commission is responsible for the study of the populations of tuna and tuna-like fishes in the Atlantic Ocean, and recommends proposals for joint action by member governments to maintain fish stocks at levels permitting maximum sustainable catch. Member countries of the Commission are Brazil, Canada, Cuba, France, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Japan, Korea, Morocco, Portugal, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, and the United States.

The principal provisions of the new regulations:

1) Permit the Director, NMFS, to establish open and closed seasons

for Atlantic bluefin tuna weighing between 14 and 115 pounds or more than 300 pounds.

2) Permit anglers a daily bag limit of four Atlantic bluefin tuna weighing between 14 and 115 pounds; one of these four may weigh less than 14 pounds and one may weigh between 115 and 300 pounds.

3) Establish purse-seine quotas of 1,100 short tons of fish weighing between 14 and 115 pounds and 200 short tons of fish weighing more than 300 pounds.

4) Establish a quota for other than purse seine fishermen of 2,250 fish weighing more than 300 pounds. Of these 2,250 no more than 200 may be taken south of a line extending from the entrance to Chatham Harbor, Mass., east into the Atlantic Ocean.

5) Permit purse seine vessels fishing for Atlantic bluefin tuna weighing between 14 and 115 pounds to take incidentally, on any one trip, Atlantic bluefin tuna outside of these weight limits if the incidental catch does not exceed 15 percent of the number of fish, or four percent of the total weight of the fish caught which are within the 14 to 115 pound range.

6) Limit the catch of Atlantic bluefin tuna incidentally taken while fishing for other species to two percent of the total weight of the catch on any one trip or, in the case of traps, to a 30-day period.

There will be no open season for purse seiners this year since the 1,100 short tons of fish weighing from 14 to

115 pounds allotted to purse seiners have already been taken.

Prior to the enactment of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act of 1975, the National Marine Fisheries Service had proposed to declare the Atlantic bluefin tuna a threatened species. With the passage of the Act, this action is no longer required and the Director has taken steps to stop all actions to list the Atlantic bluefin tuna as a threatened species.

Copies of the complete regulations may be obtained from the Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, Washington, DC 20235, or the Director, Northeast Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, 14 Elm St., Gloucester, MA 01930.

## Sportsmen Asked for Bluefin Tuna Data

Thousands of recreational fishermen in New York and New Jersey are being asked to furnish statistical and biological data on the Atlantic bluefin tuna to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Grant Beardsley of the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Center, Miami, Fla., is the program leader for the survey. "We just don't have enough catch data on the numbers of bluefin taken off the New York and New Jersey coast by recreational fishermen," said Beardsley. "The annual catch estimate is, at best, poor because the catch is diverse and has not been adequately sampled before."

The objectives of the survey are: 1) to estimate the total number of Atlantic bluefin tuna caught and landed by recreational fishermen in 1975; 2) to obtain a representative sample of length, weight, sex, age, and stock characteristics of tuna landed in the area; 3) to estimate the Atlantic bluefin tuna recreational fishing effort; and 4) to establish a data and sampling base for

future monitoring of bluefin tuna recreational fishing catches.

Several means are being used to obtain the required data, but most of it is gotten from interviews with captains of charter boats, party boats, and private boats at designated fishing ports on a daily basis. Charter boat crews have been solicited to maintain daily logs of fishing activity and catch. Postal cards were distributed to selected fish-

ermen who volunteered to report their daily catch and effort data. A list of bluefin anglers was compiled and weekly telephone surveys were made to augment catch and effort data received from other sources.

"We feel that this sampling will give us the data necessary to make sound management decisions and maintain the bluefin tuna as a viable recreational resource," said Beardsley.

## ***Fast and Accurate Method Developed for Detecting "Red Tide" Poison in Shellfish***

A procedure for detecting the presence in shellfish of saxitoxin—the paralytic shellfish poison sometimes associated with the so-called "red tide" blooms on the west coast—one hundred times more sensitive than any previous method has been devised by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Sea Grant chemists at the Berkeley campus of the University of California. "We are hopeful," said Robert B. Abel, Director of NOAA's Office of Sea Grant, "that this new technique may be used to prevent the unnecessary closing of shellfish areas. It should allow for the specific, rapid, and reliable inspection of shellfish for toxicity and be a much more desirable substitute for the present method of closing areas by calendar."

The new technique, developed under the sponsorship of the Office of Sea Grant of NOAA which is part of the Commerce Department, involves a chemical analysis of the shellfish that could provide a more scientific approach to the problem of paralytic shellfish poison than seasonal closings. Meat from the suspected animals is ground up and subjected to a series of relatively simple steps to extract any saxitoxin which may be present. The amount of saxitoxin, if any, can then be determined using a standard laboratory instrument called a fluorescence spectrophotometer.

"The procedure is so straightforward," claims Henry Rapoport, leader of the Sea Grant group at the University of California's Berkeley campus, "and the equipment needed so uncomplicated, that testing can be carried out on board a ship or in a small van on shore. The results are immediate and a

decision can be made on the spot whether or not to harvest."

The Berkeley Sea Grant team analyzed several samples of Alaska butter clams and California mussels taken from 15 separate areas that had been closed to shellfishing. The scientists were able to detect saxitoxin in concentrations as low as four parts per billion and found that shellfish from some of the closed beds would be considered safe for human consumption according to the compliance guidelines set by the Food and Drug Administration.

According to Rapoport, the chemical test can be carried out much more easily than the standard bioassay procedure in which mice are injected with an extract of shellfish suspected of harboring the poison—a method that is costly, time-consuming, and not always accurate. "While in theory," said Rapoport, "mice bioassay should be fairly sensitive, in practice however, this just hasn't been so, because the sodium ions normally found in shellfish mask the presence of saxitoxin at low concentrations." Rapoport noted a number of mice of a specified weight must be used to obtain significant results, and

even then there can be differences in susceptibility among various strains of mice.

No one understands exactly what triggers the blooms of toxic plankton called dinoflagellates or how to control them, but it is known that shellfish, feeding on the plankton, can retain minute quantities of saxitoxin. Although the shellfish themselves appear to be unaffected by the poison, people can become ill from eating the tainted meat. The amount of sunlight and the temperature and nutrient level of the water can affect the timing and size of the blooms. Since these events are generally seasonal, some state agencies, not wanting to expose people to the toxin, have felt the safest course is to close whole shellfish beds during certain months, even though the areas may pose no demonstrable threat to health. California, for example, prohibits the taking of mussels from May through October.

The results of Rapoport's research have been published in an article entitled "A Chemical Assay for Saxitoxin, the Paralytic Shellfish Poison," in *Agriculture and Food Chemistry*. Reprints are available free by writing Henry Rapoport, Department of Chemistry, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

### *Foreign Fishery Developments*

## **Canada Bars Soviet Fishing Fleet from Atlantic Ports, Claims Excessive Fishing**

Canada closed its Atlantic ports to Soviet fishing vessels on 28 July because of alleged overfishing by the Soviets in international waters off Canada's coast, the Office of International Fisheries, NMFS, NOAA, reports. Fishing in that area is regulated

by the 16-member International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF).

Romeo LeBlanc, Canadian Minister of State for Fisheries, stated in a news conference that in some ICNAF areas in both 1974 and 1975, the Soviets had