

SECTIONAL REVIEWS

Middle Atlantic

NEW JERSEY: The production of fish in the New Jersey area during September was considerably less than for the same month in 1945, while the shellfish production was slightly higher than that in September of last year, according to the Service's Fishery Marketing Specialist in New Jersey.

The dredging of hard clams and oysters have been restricted by the State Shellfish Board, except where adequate planting has been done on private ground and where public beds are definitely known to contain quantities of shellfish adequate to withstand dredging.

The soft clam beds in the vicinity of Barnegat Inlet which were severely damaged by dredging operations several years ago, show signs of natural rehabilitation by early 1947, unless further disturbed by dredging.

Hard crabs were reported in abundance in the waters of Barnegat Bay.



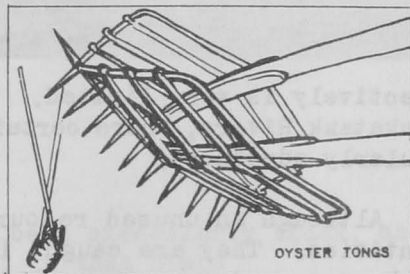
Chesapeake

VIRGINIA: The 1946-47 oyster season opened in Chesapeake Bay with the largest number of patent-tongers in recent years participating in the fishery, according to the Service's Fishery Marketing Specialist in that area.

Although the catch of the patent-tongers graded below the shaft-tonged oysters, it brought unusually high prices. Boats averaged 30 to 40 bushels a day.

Patent-tonging is permitted only in waters specified in the State regulations. The season is limited to 3 months, ending December 31, although the Commissioner of Fisheries has the power to make certain changes in seasons and areas.

Patent-tongs were devised in the last century by a Maryland man to take oysters beyond the reach of shaft-tongs, which cannot operate in much more than 20 feet of water. When the patent expired, the tongs came into general use. They resemble ordinary tongs, except that they are larger and heavier, and instead of the long wooden handles, or shafts, have ropes which pay them out and allow them to work in any depth of water. They can be made by any blacksmith. A small motorized derrick raises them. Oysters thus taken are held to be inferior to shaft-tonged oysters, because they are usually irregularly shaped and thinner than oysters from shallow water. This is because they are frequently crowded together, buried in mud, and cut off from growth-stimulating light.



OYSTER TONGS

Although complete reports of alewife canning in 1946 have not been received, enough data are at hand to indicate that the pack exceeded that of 1945 by approximately 20 percent. Substantially less pickled fish was produced in 1946 because of greater profits offered by the canned product.

The river herring, or alewife, industry has undergone considerable change in recent years. Twenty-five years ago, the fish were processed into the following products: canned roe; canned fish; and salted cut fish, with roe and without. An extensive market for the salted fish was established in the interior of the State, where generations of Virginians had been reared to regard salted river herring as a staple food, as well as a delicacy. At one time, alewives ascended rivers as far as the Blue Ridge mountains, and thousands of citizens took them each spring to salt down. When dams and pollution, as well as increased fishing activity in tidewater areas, cut off this inland resource, salt fish were supplied by the firms along the Bay.

At the present time, salted alewives are almost unobtainable in Virginia. New England and Canada supply most of the salt fish demand with mackerel and cod. Producers have been turning fish formerly salted into vinegar-cured fish because of greater profits from the latter. This pickled product is bought in bulk by Northern packers, who have developed seasoning formulas using wine, spices, or sour cream. After seasoning, the fish are marketed in jars as hors d'oeuvres.

The canning of alewives continues, but other varieties are being added. Formerly, an alewife cannery operated only during the spring runs (approximately April and May). Several Bay canneries now operate the year round, putting up menhaden (from pound-netters), whiting (from ocean trawlers), sea trout, and mackerel roe. The latest pack to be introduced is albacore from the New Jersey Coast.



The 1946 soft crab production exceeded that of 1945. Although not so high as in 1945, prices maintained a good level. Operators of the crab fyke, or peeler trap, reported one of the longest seasons in memory, with the traps producing from May to September. Usually such traps cease to yield about August 1.

The area in which peeler traps function effectively is very limited. They are used principally in the Rappahannock and Piankatank Rivers, where certain characteristics of the shorelines make them particularly adaptable.

Although an unused resource in Virginia, conchs are taken in considerable quantities. They are caught in crab pots off the York River. Crabbers believe conchs are predators on oyster beds, and they destroy each one found.



South Atlantic

Shrimp production along the South Atlantic Coast this season has averaged considerably less than that of the corresponding period in 1945, according to the Service's Fishery Marketing Specialist in that area.

The expected run of shrimp in North Carolina failed to materialize. When several large catches were reported at Engelhard, in Hyde County, the wide publicity brought many boats from other localities to this small port. Although several large catches were obtained, the average catch was less than 100 pounds per trip.

With the shift of the wind from southeast to north and northeast, the beach seiners and long haulers brought out their nets in anticipation of the "mullet shift." Although no large catches were reported through September 30, these fish had been observed coming down the beaches in abundance.

Large quantities of croakers were landed at Atlantic, N.C., during the latter part of August and the first two weeks of September.



Sorting a Shrimp Trawl Catch

The United States Naval Section Base at Morehead City has been acquired by the North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development and will be under the direction of the Commissioner of Fisheries. Among other purposes, the base will be used as an anchorage for the fleet of vessels used by the Commissioner to enforce fishing regulations. The Commission also plans the establishment of a fishery biological laboratory, aquarium, and museum at the base.

The University of North Carolina has undertaken a survey of the fisheries of that State in an effort to determine the cycle of abundance of the North Carolina fisheries, and to assist in the economic development of these resources.



Gulf

MISSISSIPPI: The fishing thus far in 1946 has been exceedingly slack, according to the Service's Fishery Marketing Specialist in that State.

The production of crabs began to decline about mid-June, and by the latter part of the month none were being taken. The production has been estimated by many crab producers as only 25 percent of normal. It is reported that the yield of crabmeat is even lower, since the recovery of meat began to drop simultaneously with the scarcity of crabs. Because there is no uniform system of grading, and the crabs are usually boiled rather than steamed, crabmeat from the Gulf area

seldom commands as high a price as crabmeat from Chesapeake Bay. Therefore, considerable trouble has been experienced in marketing Gulf crabmeat at a profit.

Shrimp in Mississippi waters have been less plentiful this season than at any time in the history of the seafood industry, according to officials of the Mississippi Seafood Commission. The catch was 20,000 barrels less than during the corresponding period in 1945.



FISH IN THE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

Every producer or primary wholesaler of fish and fishery products should make his interest in the school lunch program felt by everyone whom he supplies. In his contacts with the trade, he should inquire what it is doing to establish relations with schools and school systems. He should suggest that it offer to help school authorities to make full use of fishery products in their lunchroom activities.



An educational process is involved in meeting this challenge. It is not enough to offer to sell fish to schools. In many instances, school lunchroom authorities are not familiar with fishery products in detail. The trade must work with them to the end that they can serve

fish attractively, cheaply, and without unusual efforts. Trade literature, such as recipe pamphlets, should be made available to the schools.

An interest in fishery products must be awakened in the pupils, if it does not already exist. The dealer can help the schools make the use of fish an adventure and a pleasure in many areas where fish on the menu has been a rarity.