

# A New Plan of Operation for U.S. Fisheries

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NONE OF US HERE denies now that our domestic fisheries face many different challenges. But only a few will deny that too often in the past the approach of state and federal government and industry to these problems has been myopic, narrow, parochial and concerned with a small part of the spectrum.

Fortunately, we have come to understand that commercial fisheries present more than just resource problems. We now recognize, for example, that people are the big part of the problem and that our past preoccupation with fish—almost to the exclusion of fishermen—was bad. We have come to understand that results must be measured not only in terms of maximum sustainable yield or total pounds of production but also in terms of economic and social values. Increased return on investment, increased earnings to fishermen, higher product quality and greater variety for consumers are expressions which have become an important part of the vocabulary of fishery administrators and will become even more so.

We have come to recognize that many disciplines are involved, not one or two. In brief, we have come to recognize that an approach which integrates many disciplines and many skills is necessary.

This is what the Joint Master Plan and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries reorganization are all about.

The Plan is a tool being forged to assist federal government, state government, industry and the academic community in identifying options and setting priorities. I repeat, the Joint Master Plan is a tool, a device for ensuring that alternatives and requirements are set out in an orderly fashion so that they may all be examined, so that priorities may be assigned rationally and so that the programs of action that develop will be the result of a comprehensive look at all possibilities and an intelligent choice among them, not the result of the wet-finger-to-the-wind technique that has often characterized past choices.

The Joint Master Plan is moving ahead. Following consultations during the past year with representatives of states, universities and industry to set preliminary priorities, we have done some experimental spadework and have developed a sample plan for the calico scallop fishery. Skip Crowther began meeting with industry people just last week to discuss this sample.

Our present timetable calls for a new round of joint meetings during the first quarter of calendar year 1970 and for six sample plans—one for each region—to be finished by mid-summer 1970. Meeting this timetable, of course, depends largely on the time and effort you and others interested in the fisheries are willing to spend on planning. We would like to move quickly.

The primary purpose of the Bureau's reorganization is to achieve the same high degree of integration in operations as the Joint Master Plan should provide in planning. In the past our operations have been set up on a discipline basis with each discipline, such as biology, exploratory fishing, technology and marketing, carrying on its work separately, sometimes competitively, and according to its own timetable. Coordination between disciplines took place

at the Director's level, as five Assistant Directors for different disciplines reported to him. Coordination under this system was minimal and slow.

Under the reorganization, integration of disciplines will take place at a lower level—in the offices of the Associate Director for Fisheries and the Associate Director for Economics and Services. These individuals, backed by a planning staff in Washington and Associate Regional Directors in the field, will use the Joint Master Plan as a primary planning and operational document. They will be in a greatly improved position to integrate the work of the different disciplines. In effect, this is a "system" or "problem solving" approach, where the efforts of laboratories and scientists can be focused on the specific problems of a fishery until a solution is reached. Then the effort can be shifted to another problem, perhaps in a different fishery.

I would like to stress the fact that while these changes in organization and in planning methodology may appear to be sweeping, they do not constitute basic changes in the Bureau's mission. They are simply steps to enable us to meet long recognized needs, to fulfill our original mission in closer harmony with all others working to improve the status of our domestic fisheries.

I don't want to anticipate the outcome of our Joint Master Plan efforts and the effect of Bureau reorganization, but I'd like to comment a little on some changes which are being brought into sharp focus already by the Joint Master Plan. If one looks back to the 1950's, he recalls that most of our concern and our efforts were focused on resource problems and needs. Then, in the early 1960's, as foreign fishing fleets appeared on traditional American fishing grounds, and imports of foreign fishery products doubled and tripled, our attention, and that of many others, moved to this problem area. These problems are with us still, of course, but new ones attract our attention.

A major emerging area of concern is that of high costs, involving all those factors which keep the cost of U.S. produced fishery products high—often to the point at which they cannot compete. I think of high costs of production caused by the resource being at less than the optimum abundance level because of overfishing. I think of high costs resulting from hours looking for fish, and high costs resulting from sending the wrong number of the wrong kind of fishing vessel with the wrong kind of gear to the wrong place in the ocean. These are all costs resulting from inadequate knowledge of the resource. I wonder how many biologists 15 years ago saw the connection between their work and the cost of production.

I also think of high costs resulting from technological inadequacies, from poor labor-capital combinations in the design of vessels and fishing strategies.

I think of high costs resulting from the poor institutional climate for the fishing industry, poorly designed fishery regulations, policies aimed at advantaging some other sector of society or the economy to the disadvantage of the fisheries, or the unique capital structure of the industry itself.

We will be attempting to do much more in this area of high cost in the future. We will continue our efforts to learn more about the resources so they may be maintained at high abundance levels. We hope to expand our efforts to delineate more precisely the extent and distribution of resources.

Speaking at EXPO in Seattle last month, Under Secretary Train said, "We intend to complete a long overdue inventory of United States fishery resources. We want to know just what resources we have, and where they are most likely to be found. It has been embarrassingly apparent that the research activities

of foreign fleets have provided them with better information than we have about the magnitude and distribution of fishery resources off our own coast."

Also to be singled out—we are beginning a serious attack on a variety of institutional problems with funds made available for the first time this fiscal year.

A further area of importance—both the Department and the Bureau are growing more and more concerned about the quality of the environment. For the Bureau it is particularly the quality of our coastal zones which are vital as breeding and nursery grounds for many commercially important species of fish and shellfish. Neither man nor animal can long survive with polluted water, and Secretary Hickel has recognized this as one of the most serious of our domestic problems. He has said, "Water pollution is a multibillion dollar headache created by overindulgence and a blind faith that technology would automatically supply the aspirin when the pain became unbearable." On another occasion Mr. Hickel said, "Before we fill a coastal marsh or bay, let's consider the balance of nature."

When we are talking about cost, we must also consider the cost of solutions to fish problems. As we identify the many needs, we see that funds available to federal agencies, states, universities and the industry are not likely to be sufficient to solve all problems at once. Difficult decisions must be made. Now I come back to where I started, for, as we see it, the Joint Master Plan will serve all of us well in making these decisions—in putting funds to best use.

I am sure many of you read the recent news release from the Vice President's office that outlined the administration's program for the near future on the scientific and environmental aspects of marine activities. Some people were surprised that fisheries were not included in that program. This should not be given much significance. It does not mean that the Secretary of the Interior, who is a member of the Vice President's Council on Marine Resources, does not assign a high priority to fishery matters. We have as Secretary of the Interior a man with intimate knowledge of the importance of fisheries. Secretary Hickel knows firsthand the value and potential of fisheries and the problems they face.

The new administration is reviewing recommendations on the entire spectrum of activities relating to marine science and the oceans. We in the Bureau are confident that when the new administration's policy for fisheries is formulated, it will be a progressive national fishery policy which will make it possible to utilize fully the vast ocean reservoir of protein.