

NATIONAL FISHERIES POLICY SESSION

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The National Ocean Policy Study

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I am honored and delighted to have the opportunity to address you today as this symposium discusses developing national policies that can have significant effects on the future course of our fisheries. I firmly believe that symposia such as this one which you have organized are essential to the formulation of policies within our system of government. Consequently, I am looking forward to learning not only what our panelists have to say today, but also what you in the audience, with your extensive experience and interests, comment on during the discussions. It is important that all of you are heard in the development of such important matters.

I would like to discuss two things with you: First, the National Ocean Policy Study initiated by the Senate to undertake a comprehensive analysis of national ocean policy and the federal ocean programs, and second, other efforts to formulate fisheries policies and plans at the national level.

In the past decade, as we are all well aware, ocean affairs have been acquiring greater visibility and consideration as we address national problems. This resulted in a declaration of national policy for the oceans in the Marine Resources and Engineering Act of 1965, followed by the Stratton Commission report with its plan for national action, and more recently by such important legislation addressing critical national problems as the Coastal Zone Management Act and the Marine Research, Protection and Sanctuaries Act. Now, new situations are arising and new opportunities and problems are presenting themselves. Among the major areas which require reexamination is fisheries.

The National Ocean Policy Study, authorized by Senate Resolution 222, is the U.S. Senate initiative to focus high level legislative and executive attention on ocean affairs. It was sponsored by Senator Magnuson from the State of Washington and co-sponsored by the chairmen of all the Senate standing committees.

Its unanimous adoption by the Senate in February of this year surely demonstrates the strong intent of the Congress to address the ocean issues facing our nation today.

The chairman of the study is Senator Ernest F. Hollings of South Carolina, who has long been a leading advocate of a strong national ocean effort. A small staff from the Senate Commerce Committee staff supports the study of its activities. They provide direction to the study and utilize the specialized services and talents of other areas of the Congress, such as the General Accounting Office, the Library of Congress and the new Office of Technology Assessment. They also request assistance from the National Advisory Committee for the Oceans and Atmosphere (NACOA) and from the executive branch, through the Interagency Committee on Marine Science and Engineering (ICMSE) for broad issues, as well as through the federal agencies directly. To perform this broad response function ICMSE has in turn established a Select Committee for the Ocean Policy Study (SCOPS), on which I am the Department of Commerce member. In this way, the combined capabilities of the legislative and executive branches are being brought to bear on the important ocean issues.

Among the principal areas of interest of the National Ocean Policy Study to date have been the coastal zone, and its proper management with emphasis on the environmental effects of offshore oil and gas development, and the federal governmental organization and programs in ocean affairs.

The study has been especially active in the first of these. It has asked the Library of Congress to compile a summary of scientific information on marine pollution. It also has held a number of hearings on the issue raised by the development of oil and gas extraction from the continental shelf. These hearings have been held in Washington, in New England, and in California. A group representing the study visited the North Sea oil producing areas to learn of problems being experienced from such offshore development and how they are being addressed. More activity is planned on this general topic. Closely associated problems under consideration involve the onshore impact of outer continental shelf resource development, the building of deep water ports and the siting and building of nuclear power plants. Studies relating to these matters are being conducted by the Office of Technology Assessment, particularly for the area off New York and New Jersey.

As for government organization, one only has to attend a meeting in Washington these days on a major marine problem to realize that marine affairs encompass a wide variety of activities and agencies in the federal establishment. It is only fitting then that the National Ocean Policy Study has as one of its principal goals the development of recommendations of alternative government organizations to improve efficiency of operations. To this end, it has asked the General Accounting Office to study the federal agency structure and budgets in marine affairs.

Responding to statements by collectors and users of oceanographic data that the amount, accuracy, and compatibility of such data are questionable, the chairman of the study has turned to ICMES to conduct studies on ocean data resources and ocean instrumentation. Both of these studies were conducted by NOAA

with assistance from other agencies; the first has been delivered to the Senate and the second has been completed and is undergoing review.

The National Ocean Policy Study also has announced plans to hold hearings on fisheries problems, including the proposed 200-mile zone of extended jurisdiction and management of the ocean's living resources. The Library of Congress is conducting a study on the economic value of ocean resources including fisheries, and the General Accounting Office is considering the questions of availability and markets for under-utilized fish stocks. Studies on other matters are under way, or are planned: science and technology, recreation, education, transportation, ocean mining, and pollution.

A concerted effort is going to be required by both the legislative and executive branches if we are to formulate the issues and programs required to develop and implement a meaningful national ocean policy in these areas. However, the development of such policy will not be limited to the efforts of the National Ocean Policy Study alone. There are also other activities in ocean affairs which are helping to move ocean affairs forward rapidly. Of special relevance to this meeting is the National Fisheries Plan, which is to be the subject of the remainder of your session.

A comprehensive National Fisheries Plan has been a dream of many people for decades, as many of you here are aware. Since the formation of NOAA, attempts to begin a national plan developed from several sources at about the same time.

About 3 years ago, NOAA developed a national fisheries policy which enunciated a statement of principles and laid out the skeleton of a program we felt should be the responsibility of the federal government—especially NOAA—in relation to fisheries. These goals and objectives were discussed and modified by the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) and were approved by the Secretary of Commerce.

The National Fisheries Plan, now being prepared by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service was suggested by the President's National Committee on Ocean and Atmosphere in its reports to the President and Congress in 1972 and 1973. The Committee strongly recommended the development of a national fisheries plan by the Secretaries of Commerce and of the Interior and proposed a set of conditions for working out such a course of action. This included conservation of the fisheries resources by regulation and uniform national and international enforcement, economic regulation of the industry with due regard to historic rights and social consequences, and increased protection for our coastal and high seas fishermen.

The Secretary of Commerce responded positively to the Committee's recommendations and directed the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop a National Fisheries Plan. As many of you know, NMFS requested assistance in this undertaking from states, industry, and universities; in fact, all those who are concerned with fisheries. Jack Gehringer will discuss the status of the plan in his presentation.

In forwarding the NACOA report of June 1974, the Secretary of Commerce also informed the Congress that a cabinet-level committee of the Domestic Coun-

cil is being established under his chairmanship to consider a broad range of domestic ocean policy issues. The principal function of this committee will be to develop policy recommendations and also to work closely with the Senate Ocean Policy Study group as it develops legislative recommendations. This committee is still in its formative stages.

As you know, in December 1973, Congress, in a parallel effort passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 11, introduced by Senator James Eastland and 41 other U.S. Senators. It was designed to assist the nation's commercial and sport marine fishing industries. This resolution set up a mechanism to use the state fisheries compact commissions, working with all segments of these industries and state conservation agencies, to develop plans which are then to be reviewed, discussed, revised, and refined with NOAA. It pointed out that this approach should not take the form of patchwork programs or sectional one-shot solutions but must reach a broad spectrum of Americans engaged in fishing and related activities, to secure their advice and guidance. As a prelude to this activity the concurrent resolution set forth a strong statement of the Congress' intention to support U.S. fisheries and recognizes the key responsibilities of the states for conservation and management within U.S. territorial waters. The commissions have completed their plans to undertake the inquiries proposed by this resolution and many of you will undoubtedly be contacted as they proceed in the next phase of their work.

Some people have said that these two approaches to fishery plans are competitive and inevitably will be duplicatory. I do not share this view. It seems to me to be abundantly clear that it is the intent to the sponsors of this Resolution that the knowledge and experience of the commercial fishing industry, the states, and the federal government be brought to bear on the multi-faceted fisheries problems. Furthermore, the fisheries commissions are appropriate mechanisms to use in exploring with industry their concerns, problems, and needs. NMFS and the commissions have been actively pursuing means whereby the efforts of both can be utilized most effectively and be mutually supportive.

To assure a common approach to the basic issues, I would like to suggest, as I did shortly after passage of the Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 11, that the national fisheries policy developed by NOAA and approved by our Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee serve as the starting point for both plans. The general mission statement and goals for the NMFS national fisheries plan which evolved from discussions with many people, including regional staffs, representatives of conservation agencies, the fishing industry, universities, recreational fishing interests, and others, is consistent with the principles set forth in the National Fisheries Policy. Thus, I would hope that the three commissions consider this same approach.

Last spring when I addressed the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, some of you here heard me indicate my optimism about the future of fisheries in the United States. This optimism was not merely wishful thinking; it was based on important developments that had occurred and which continue to occur. I have already mentioned the Eastland Resolution and the National Ocean Policy Study which indicate the concern and support of the Congress. Early next year

the Law of the Sea Conference will again convene. From this conference we hope to see emerge a convention that will give coastal nations complete jurisdiction of their coastal fisheries resources out to 200-miles. This would give the federal government authority to regulate coastal fisheries beyond the territorial sea, to serve our national needs for food and recreation. Indeed, I look upon the opportunity available to us under extended fisheries jurisdiction as the most significant event that will have affected U.S. fisheries in the entire history of our nation.

My optimism also continues to be bolstered by increased high-level interest in fisheries by this administration as, for example, the establishment within the Domestic Council of a cabinet-level committee to consider domestic ocean policy issues, one of which must certainly be our U.S. fisheries under extended jurisdiction concepts. Such indications and commitments of high-level support are desperately needed if our U.S. fisheries are to reach their full potential. I am convinced that we will continue to get this kind of support. Thus, our U.S. fisheries are fast approaching an important crossroads. The direction we take and the plans we develop will truly set the course of events for many decades to come. This is, indeed, a time of challenge and opportunity for fisheries.