

A Brief Review of the Work of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Since the report of this Commission delivered here last year, the work of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has proceeded along the lines previously established, namely, by Sections and Committees.

The North Atlantic Section at two meetings has been studying changes in minimum size of lobsters, minimum mesh sizes for haddock fishery on George's Bank, the findings of the clam and shad investigations, the results of experimental work on freezing in-the-round at sea and exploratory fishing for tuna in North Atlantic Waters with Japanese long line trawls and the development of the cooperative sardine promotion program in Maine. The Section has also considered the proposed Striped Bass Program, the need for better catch statistics, possibilities of a Fishery College in Massachusetts, problems related to the yellow tail flounder fishery and the need for renovating the Woods Hole Laboratory of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The Middle Atlantic Section has held two meetings and two of its states, New Jersey and Delaware, have met together on the problem of Delaware Bay. The Section has considered revision of the Shad Management Act for the Delaware River already adopted by Pennsylvania; the work of the new Delaware Fishery Laboratory, the need for the adaption of minimum sizes for clams by non-producing states like Pennsylvania; the new weakfish study initiated by New York; reports of the Shad Investigation with respect to determining age from scale readings and the actual fecundity of shad in terms of total spawning effort. The latter was found to be roughly 250,000 per roe shad per season instead of 25,000 as previously believed.

The Chesapeake Bay Section has had five meetings and continued its discussions looking toward joint action by Virginia and Maryland with respect to the oysters of Potomac River. Other topics considered by the Chesapeake Section have included catch statistics, the blue crab studies of the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory and the Virginia Fisheries Laboratory, their joint croaker study, the work of the Chesapeake Bay Institute, and the reports of the Shad Investigations in the Chesapeake. All five meetings during the past year have been devoted primarily to an effort to reach agreement on the Potomac River oyster fisheries.

The South Atlantic Section which met here Monday night has held three meetings in 1952 devoted to the study of license fees and severance taxes, the possibility of a model statute along these lines, the development of the cooperative Shrimp Program which is temporarily being held up pending the publication of the reports by the Fish and Wildlife Service on past shrimp studies, the joint Federal State Cooperative Program for which the Theodore N. Gill has been put into commission and on which Georgia and Florida have both made commitments with respect to man power. The Shad Program in the South Atlantic States was begun in 1952 and will be continued over the

next two years. Progress is being hampered by lack of adequate catch statistics in the past. One of the interesting developments considered by the Section has been the work of the University of Miami with respect to the carrying of shrimp in refrigerated sea water. North Carolina is interested in the striped bass problem but the other states, further south, do not appear so vitally concerned as the striped bass grow less important south of the Carolinas.

The Striped Bass Committee of the Commission brought forth an excellent report recommending a cooperative Federal State Research Program with respect to striped bass or rock fish and urged that Dingell-Johnson funds be utilized for the purpose of financing the State studies under the Joint Program. The Fish and Wildlife Service has offered to assign one or two competent men to the Federal part of the program as soon as enough states make firm commitments with respect to their portions of the programs.

A special Committee on Inland Waters has been working on the problem of devising a method for controlling fishing operations by out of state votes. In managing inland waters, the problem is to work out a method that will exercise adequate control in the interest of conservation without discrimination of the character which gave rise to the decision in *Toomer v Witsell*. The special committee has come with a proposal for an amendment to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Compact under which the several participating states would agree to respect the Inland Waters of the other states party to the agreement. At the Annual Meeting in Boston early in September this matter was discussed at length but the various states there represented deferred judgment pending further study of the proposal.

The Eleventh Annual Meeting in Boston was the largest and most important yet held by the Commission. The Executive Committee decided that the Commission is now so well established that it will no longer be necessary for the Secretary-Treasurer to make the long trek by car each year up and down the coast, but we shall try to have more frequent Section Meetings at which I can discuss problems with the commissioners collectively instead of on an individual basis.

The Pollution Project is now practically completed and wound up except for a few details involving the disposition of equipment. It has been a productive enterprise and the State reports which were filed with the Fishery and Health officials of each state contain a mass of information which should be valuable for future reference in connection with the pollution of marine waters.

These activities, none of which is spectacular by itself, in the aggregate illustrate the methods by which understandings are reached between states, and such understandings are the vital ingredient of effective interstate cooperation in this or any other field.