

Activities of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
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The proper utilization and development of the fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico is the objective of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. In order for the Commission to accomplish its objectives, it depends upon the cooperation of the state and federal governments, industry and other sources to supply desired information. When sufficient information is available about a fishery the Commission is able to draw conclusions and make recommendations. Such recommendations are channeled through the proper state and federal authorities. If recommendations receive favorable action, avenues are opened which might well lead to better care and development of the fisheries concerned.

Since the Commission came into existence, approximately three years ago, a great many new fishery programs have been instituted and some of the few that were in existence at that time have been expanded. Essential data are now being accumulated and a foundation for many individual and badly needed studies is in sight.

All of the Gulf States are working toward the maintenance of high level oyster production through biological research and reef development. Briefly summarizing other valuable work being accomplished by the member states: Alabama is to start taxonomical work on the fin fishes in the near future and an oceanographic survey of Mobile Bay and Alabama's Mississippi Sound is in prospect. Florida has developed valuable data on the growth rates, spawning periods, sizes and other information concerning the mullet in the area from Apalachee Bay west to the Alabama line. Technological work involving refrigerated holding and transport of shrimp is another Florida project. In addition to its oyster program, Louisiana is expected to start investigations on a number of the fin fishes of commercial and sports interest. Mississippi has already undertaken a flounder program and work will soon start on the life history of the speckled trout. A survey of the water bottoms was undertaken last summer. Texas is compiling essential data on the speckled trout, redfish, drum and flounder.

The Fish and Wildlife Laboratory at Pensacola is progressing its study of the genetics of the oyster and continuing inquiry into the enemies of the oyster. In the Gulf proper, the Exploratory Commercial Fishing Section of the Fish and Wildlife Service is carrying forward programs in exploratory fishing, gear development, freezing shrimp at sea and a trash fish study. Gulf Investigations, another section of the Service, is covering the Gulf in a program of fishery biology and this in all of its ramifications, even including the chemical constituency of the waters. An oceanographic survey is being made of the Gulf by the Texas A&M Department of Oceanography, the U.S. Navy being the program's sponsor.

Work on the life history and habits of shrimp is indicated for the coming year. Data compiled over a period of years should soon be made available by the Fish and Wildlife Service and this information is expected to indicate

what further investigations are necessary. Such work will undoubtedly be a joint state and federal project.

The current statistical program is a vast improvement over that of three years ago. The Commission hopes in the coming year to have advantage of better state landing records, included in which would be a breakdown on shrimp production by areas of catch and by species. Full cooperation of the states in the matter of improving statistical records was the subject of a resolution adopted at the third annual meeting and addressed to the proper state officials.

A program designed to bring about better conservation of the marine fisheries through educational procedure is an aim of the Commission. Due to the lack of sufficient information the program cannot become effective in the immediate future.

Consideration was given last year to the making of an oceanographic survey of the inshore waters of the Gulf. Such a program, suggested to be a joint state and federal project, has been acted upon favorably by the Commission and the Fish and Wildlife Service, and doubtless will be undertaken when funds and personnel become available.

In the past year Louisiana passed a law which allows non-resident fishermen the same rights as resident fishermen, including of course the right to pay the same licenses and taxes. Texas already had such a statute in effect. At the 1952 session of the Mississippi legislature a similar bill got on the calendar but did not come up for vote. Mississippi has a fishing agreement with both Louisiana and Alabama, the latter agreement having been consummated during the year just ending. Florida and Alabama have a shrimp fishery agreement of several years standing.

Working from a digest of the fishery laws of the several states, the Commission's attorneys and biologists met at Pensacola in July of this year and two recommendations came out of the meeting. These recommendations, concerning the oyster and blue crab fisheries, were taken into consideration at the October Brownsville, Texas, meeting and will be given further study. A resolution concerning these fisheries was adopted which it is hoped will stimulate investigations in line with determining the causes for lower production where such is occurring.