

CALIFORNIA AND COMMERCIAL FISHERY PROBLEMS

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I appreciate the opportunity to speak at this Cal-COFI Conference and participate with you in discussions of California's commercial fishery problems.

In some respects my appearance here is like Jonah in the whale, I'm in strange territory. Our office has never professed to have technical expertise on the fishery problems of the state such as you represent. It is our job to point out fiscal and management problem areas and make recommendations to the Legislature that we feel are appropriate. We have merely raised certain criticisms of the Department of Fish and Game research efforts in our budget recommendations to the Legislature. We have also expressed the view that the Marine Research Committee has not been living up to its full responsibilities in resolving some of the problems of the state's commercial fisheries. Your understanding of the role of our office and the invitation to speak here today doesn't make us fisheries experts. As administrative people we are a little out of our usual territory.

We are heartily in accord with the efforts of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries in its attempt to provide a systematic approach to fishery problems and to create a mechanism whereby the representatives of federal and state agencies and the academicians can get together to determine the problems facing the industry and work out solutions. Two years ago, we recommended to the Legislature that the Department of Fish and Game should do somewhat the same for the state.

At that time we pointed out that the state had not defined and fixed its own responsibility for meeting commercial fisheries problems. The substantial funding that had been available over the years for commercial fisheries research or related work was largely devoted to technical and academically oriented work at academic institutions and within the Department of Fish and Game which emphasized continuing collection and analysis of data on food patterns, growth factors, fish populations and other matters of special interest to the fishery biologists. In fairness to the Department of Fish and Game, it should be pointed out that from our observations of the industry's actions before the Legislature and various state regulatory bodies, the commercial fishery industry, itself, did not know what the problems were or have much in the way of suggestions. There seemed to be no effort underway to develop definitions of the problems and to initiate programs to solve them.

The Legislature in 1968 adopted our recommendation that the department participate with the commercial fishing industry in developing clearly defined statements of the problems confronting the industry and take the leadership in reorienting the state's activities to solve the problems on a priority basis.

I would like now to turn to a brief discussion of events, as we see them, that have occurred since the adoption of that recommendation by the Legislature in 1968. The department representatives met several times—I believe about six times—with representatives of commercial fishing interests. Representatives of our office did not participate in those discussions, but as we understand the results of the meetings the department presented descriptions of its programs that would be helpful to the industry. Apparently the industry representatives have been satisfied with the programs and current activities of the Department of Fish and Game. During these meetings, the department also provided data to the industry representatives which indicated that the department is spending almost \$1,500,000 more annually on commercial fishing programs than it is receiving in revenue from this source. The evidence presented by the department must have been substantial because it is astounding that during the last session of the Legislature, at a time when so much emphasis was being placed on reductions in the cost of government and reductions in taxes, a bill increasing commercial fishing license fees and fish taxes by about \$800,000 passed the Legislature with comparative ease.

In a report issued by the Department of Fish and Game last January responding to our recommendation for defining problems and priorities, the department indicated some problem areas confronting the commercial industry. These were:

- A. Detection and capture of resource
- B. Assurance or maintenance of a constant supply
- C. Processing of fishery products
- D. Marketing (economics)
- E. Unduly restrictive laws
- F. Conflict among user groups

The department identified its own role in relation to some of these problems but suggested little concerning how other governmental agencies or the industry could help. It was agreed by the department and the Legislature, however, that the department would continue its efforts to define the responsible agencies. Your efforts at this conference can help in dividing up responsibilities for a coordinated effort towards solution of commercial fishery problems.

At the last legislative session, the Governor presented a reorganization plan changing the name of the Department of Harbors and Watercraft to the Department of Navigation and Ocean Development with its primary emphasis shifted to ocean oriented activities. Simultaneously with this proposed reorganization, the Governor requested an internal reorganization within the Department of Fish and Game to permit that department to work closely with the new

department in developing the Comprehensive Ocean Area Plan.

The Department of Fish and Game has commenced reorganizing to provide emphasis and separate status for its ocean activities. The department has created a separate marine region, coequal to each of the five land regions, to regulate and manage the ocean resources. The patrol, research and management activities previously divided among three of the existing land regions and marine resources operations at Terminal Island will be consolidated in this new region. In addition, the department created a new marine research branch to act as advisor and consultant on the department's marine research programs. Finally, the department has established a marine advisory committee consisting of representatives of federal, private and academic agencies interested in marine resources. These events reflect the increased emphasis the department is placing on its marine programs and the state's desire to assist in solving some of these pressing industry problems.

A word of caution. The results which can be obtained by reorganization alone are limited. Problems which we cannot identify will not disappear merely because of the establishment of a new organization or reorganization of an old department. Our commercial fishery problem remains just as much unsolved as before the reorganization. Perhaps our machinery is improved, but the problems are still with us.

I would like to turn now to a discussion of federal-state relations and some comments about the efforts of both levels of government to solve commercial fishery problems. From my comments thus far, you can see that we believe both the federal government through the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and the state through the Department of Fish and Game are only beginning to zero in on the problems of the San Pedro Wetfish Fishery as well as other commercial fisheries problems common to each agency's interests. We hope that through the discussions and meetings held here the bureau's planning objectives will be realized and that there will be some real progress in defining the responsibilities of each agency in terms of the capability of each level of government.

At the present time both the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and the Department of Fish and Game are engaged in planning efforts involving the same fisheries. In 1964, the Department of Fish and Game completed the California Fish and Wildlife Plan which provides a framework of programs, policies and actions recommended by the Department of Fish and Game to maintain or improve California's Fish and Wildlife resources. This plan includes data and comments on the pelagic wetfish fishery.

In addition to the California Fish and Wildlife Plan, the department has been directed by AB 564 of the 1969 session to prepare a comprehensive master inventory and preliminary master plan for utilizing all ocean fish resources based on existing scientific information, including but not limited to the biology, history, statistics, and economics of the fisheries. The purpose of this effort is to formulate programs for the management of all ocean fishery resources including

the harvesting of latent stocks of fish and coordinating the efforts of state, federal and academic institutions to more effectively resolve problems involving these resources. This master inventory and plan is to be submitted to the Legislature in the 1971 session. The same bill directs the department to prepare a comprehensive inventory, from all available studies, specifically of the pelagic wetfish and related species including anchovy, hake, jack mackerel, Pacific mackerel, sardines, saury, and squid. The department is to present the first phase of this inventory to the Legislature during the 1970 session. The state is firmly committed to a planning effort.

The federal government through the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries is also developing master plans for commercial fisheries. The objective of the bureau's efforts is to create a mechanism whereby the various representatives of the federal and state agencies and the academic institutions can divide up the problems and solutions among themselves. It seems apparent that both the bureau and the department are engaged in similar, if not identical, tasks. Each organization, of course, should have its own objectives and goals and a clear delineation of responsibilities in managing and solving the problems of ocean fisheries. The industry problems, the technical activity and the geographical area covered are so large that no one agency or group can accomplish all the work to be performed. We would suggest, therefore, that the state and bureau can provide for an allocation of responsibilities and exchange of data and information required in the development of these plans to make sure that each agency does not have to cover the same ground (or I should say the same waters) or otherwise perform overlapping, duplicating or low-priority work.

At this point I would like to chide our federal friends on a matter concerning which we all could do better. You have, it seems to us, placed the cart before the horse in some of the commercial fisheries research programs. The federal government, through the Commercial Fisheries Research and Development Act of 1964 (the Bartlett Act), provides financial aid to the states for research and development of their commercial fisheries. We welcome the federal monies. But four years after the statute was enacted and after some money had been allocated to the states for commercial fisheries research and development, the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries introduced the development of its own master plans for commercial fisheries in order to solve some of the problems. It seems to us that logically the federal government should have defined its programs and objectives prior to providing the financing for the achievement of unknown objectives and goals. This same lack of defined programs and objectives has contributed to confusion at the state level and among the academic institutions. This is why we have recommended that our department of Fish and Game seek to define our commercial fishery problems.

In the development of commercial fishery programs and the delineation of responsibilities for the various agencies, we should point out that the Department of

Fish and Game is only a state agency. California certainly has a strong interest in the ocean and the department has represented that interest in the ocean fisheries in the past. But the state should leave the foreign negotiations on fishing problems to the federal government, and we hope that the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries will carry out that representation fully to represent the industries of California in relations with foreign governments.

Another frequent complaint of the industry is the presence of foreign fishing vessels off the coast of California. The presence of these vessels must indeed be painful to the fishermen who gain their livelihood from the resources off our coast. Does not the same situation hold true, however, for the American fishing vessels which appear off the coasts of Peru or even off the coast of Mexico and for the far flung tuna vessels which land their catch at San Pedro?

Finally, I would like to offer some suggestions to the commercial fishing industry and the marine sportsmen of the state concerning their role in defining and resolving problems pertaining to the marine resources. We sometimes receive suggestions from industry representatives that the state should assist in developing markets for under-utilized species. At the present time the Department of Fish and Game is not set up to carry on market development, and we suggest that the industry is wasting its time by turning to the department's fishery biologists for help in this respect. It seems to us that the development of

markets is a job for private enterprise. At least it's not a job for the state even though the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries may have some capabilities in this respect. If the consumers will not buy a particular species of fish because the fish tastes bad, then it is the responsibility of industry to improve the processing and canning and preparation of the fish to meet consumer acceptance rather than involve the Department of Fish and Game in this activity. The University may be able to offer some contract assistance through its research activities.

In conclusion, some comments about the continual wrangling over the appropriate level of harvesting anchovies. In the controversy surrounding the commercial use of the anchovy, those opposed to such use point out the disappearance of the sardine and suggest an identical fate for the anchovy. We would point out that the anchovy is not the sardine and that largely as a result of the disappearance of the sardine considerable research and effort has gone into studying the anchovy and the amount of the supply safely available for use. If research and monitoring efforts do not lead to resource management decisions, then these efforts are pointless, and I am not certain of the need for much additional research and study.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in your deliberations about the commercial fisheries of California and wish you much success in your efforts to develop a systematic approach to fishery problems.