

SPECIAL REPORT

THE FEDERAL REORGANIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON FISHERIES

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Your chairman has asked me to speak today about that new national entity, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency, and in particular about one of its component parts, the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The idea of a NOAA-like organization is far from new, having its genesis at least as early as the 1940's. Over the years, criticism of the existing establishment grew, and during the mid-60's, the Congress considered various bills designed to provide an administration better able to cope with oceanic problems, essentially by placing these activities under one umbrella.

Most significantly in 1966 the Congress established the Commission on Marine Science, Engineering and Resources and the National Council on Marine Resources and Engineering Development (PL 98-454).

The Commission was charged with, among other things, making a "... comprehensive investigation and study of all aspects of marine science in order to recommend an overall plan for an adequate national oceanographic program that will meet present and future needs," and recommending "a governmental organizational plan with estimated cost." The Commission, chaired by Dr. Julius A. Stratton, Chairman of the Ford Foundation, published the result of its efforts in the so-called Stratton Report, "Our Nation and the Sea", which appeared in January 1969. One of its recommendations called for the establishment of a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency. This recommendation formed the basis for President Nixon's Reorganization Plan Number 4 of 1970, creating the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the Department of Commerce. The reorganization plan which required Congressional approval was submitted to the Congress on July 9, 1970. It received a generally favorable reception, and NOAA became an entity on October 3, 1970.

The major opposition to the formation of NOAA came from conservation groups. They simply didn't think that changing the name of BCF to NMFS would in any way change the leopard's spots, nor did they think that the Department of Commerce was the proper home for a conservation-oriented organization. Secretary of Commerce Maurice Stans played a very strong role in coping with this problem. He met with many conservation leaders and I believe allayed their fears to a significant degree. On November 12, 1970, the Commerce Department announced that John Gottschalk, former Director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, had joined the NMFS as a

special assistant to the Director. John is very highly respected in conservation circles, and I believe that his addition to our staff made a great deal of difference in the attitudes and beliefs of the conservation groups. We are working very closely with them trying to develop better rapport and communication so that they have a better appreciation of our role and we in turn have a better understanding of what they regard as significant problems.

NOAA's formation brought together the functions of the Commerce Department's Environmental Science Services Administration; the Interior Department's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Marine Game Fish Research Program, and Marine Minerals Technology Center; the Navy's National Oceanographic Data Center and National Oceanic Instrumentation Center; the Coast Guard's National Data Buoy Development Project; the National Science Foundation's National Sea Grant Program; and elements of the Army Corps of Engineers' U.S. Lake Survey.

This structure departs from the recommendation of the Stratton Report in two significant respects:

1. The report recommended that the entire Coast Guard organization be placed under the NOAA and,
2. It recommended that NOAA be an independent agency reporting directly to the President.

The President described NOAA in these terms in his message of transmittal to the Congress:

"[NOAA] would make possible a balanced Federal program to improve our understanding of the resources of the sea, and permit their development and use, while guarding against the sort of thoughtless exploitation that, in the past, laid waste to so many of our precious natural assets. It would make possible a consolidated program for achieving a more comprehensive understanding of oceanic and atmospheric phenomena, which so greatly affect our lives and activities. It would facilitate the cooperation between public and private interests that can best serve the interests of all."

"I expect that NOAA would exercise leadership in developing a national oceanic and atmospheric program of research and development. It would coordinate its own scientific and technical resources with the technical and operational capabilities of other government agencies and private institutions. As important, NOAA would continue to provide those services to other agencies of government, in-

dustry, and to private individuals which have become essential to the efficient operation of our transportation systems, our agriculture, and our national security.”

The Administrator of NOAA is at the Under Secretary level, reporting to the Secretary of Commerce. His deputy is at the Assistant Secretary level. So even though NOAA is not an independent agency, its leadership is at a very high governmental level.

The largest component of NOAA is the former ESSA organization, the major units of which were the Weather Bureau, the Coast and Geodetic Survey, Environmental Satellite Center, and Research Laboratories, these latter functioning in the area of the physical sciences. Some 10,000 of the nearly 13,000 NOAA employees were in ESSA. The next largest unit, The National Marine Fisheries Service, is what was essentially the old Bureau of Commercial Fisheries to which was added the Marine Game Fish Research Program of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Administratively, the BCF simply ceased to exist on October 2. On October 3 the new organization appeared on the scene full grown with many of the same players and much the same programs, with the addition of marine sport fish responsibility.

NOAA is organized on an interim basis along a typical line and staff pattern. The major line components include:

The Environmental Research Laboratories, from ESSA.

The National Weather Service, from ESSA.

The Environmental Data Service, made up of components of ESSA and the National Oceanographic Data Center.

The National Ocean Survey, formed from the Coast and Geodetic Survey of ESSA and the Army Engineers' Great Lake Survey.

The National Environmental Satellite Service, another component from ESSA, and

The National Marine Fisheries Service.

The staff components currently include an Assistant Administrator for Environmental Systems under whose control are the National Data Buoy Project (from Coast Guard), the National Oceanographic Instrumentation Center (from Navy), and the Marine Minerals Technology Center (from the Bureau of Mines, Department of the Interior). The office of Sea Grant forms another staff section, one which is of particular importance to fisheries interests.

Now, just what is in the Fisheries Service and what is it supposed to do? I mentioned that it was derived largely from BCF. The significant exceptions are the Great Lakes Biological Laboratory at Ann Arbor, Michigan, the Lamprey Control Program in the Great Lakes, and the Reservoir Program in South Dakota, all of which stayed with the Department of the Interior, and the Gulf Breeze Biological Laboratory which became part of the Environmental Protection Agency.¹ NMFS thus consists of the remaining components of BCF, which is the great bulk of the organi-

zation, plus the Marine Game Fish Laboratories comprising the migratory marine game fish program of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. These are located at Narragansett, Rhode Island; Sandy Hook, New Jersey; Panama City, Florida; and Tiburon, California. An additional facility is scheduled to be built at Port Aransas, Texas. The net result is that NMFS's strength is about the same and its budget about the same as the old BCF—namely, some 2,000 people and a budget for 1971 of about \$47 million. What NMFS picked up in terms of sport fish personnel and funds was roughly offset by what was lost from BCF.

I would like to turn to the implications of this reorganization as I see them. Abolishing the BCF and adding the Marine Game Fish Program obviously gives the new organization a different role and responsibility. The old BCF was essentially devoted to solving problems that concerned the commercial fishing industry, and it did not take into particular account other user groups. The new organization is resource-oriented with consideration of the resources coming first, then the legitimate demands of all user groups.

I have said before and reiterate again that I believe NOAA's creation marks the beginning of a new era for marine fisheries in the United States. To quote from a talk I gave before a joint meeting of the Gulf States and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission:

“Within NOAA, there exists expert knowledge in many fields of ocean science. Research by the various components of NOAA can be planned and coordinated to make readily available to us a great deal more information regarding the mechanisms of the ocean than has heretofore been available. Thus, we anticipate the ability better to carry out our responsibilities.

How do we look at ourselves? Very early in the game, before the Reorganization Plan was approved but after we knew its content, Secretary Stans asked some of us who were scheduled to join NOAA to brief him on our respective organizations' responsibilities as we saw them. My opening remarks at that session held on August 18, 1970, follow:

“The primary role of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries is to obtain, through scientific studies, sufficient knowledge about the magnitude, distribution, basic properties and susceptibility to capture of fish stocks to answer these questions: what are the stocks, where are they in terms of time and space, what is their magnitude, what is their susceptibility to capture, what are the options available for their use, and, most importantly, why do they fluctuate and what is the maximum sustainable biological yield of each of them.

“This scientific base is prerequisite to our contributing to programs designed to manage domestic and international fisheries for conservation purposes in such a way as to assure that the resources will be maintained in a healthy condition and will be wisely used.

¹ Formed by Reorganization Plan No. 3, submitted to the Congress with Plan No. 4, but not implemented until December 2, 1970.

“Corollary to this is the need to obtain sufficient information to understand the interaction of the aquatic environment on the fish and to ensure protection of this environment.

“A second role now in an early developmental stage is, in cooperation with other entities, to develop adequate management techniques at the international, national and state levels that will permit rational allocations of stocks among nations and among user groups within the U.S. which will permit maximum economic return to investors within the framework of maximum sustainable yield.

“Thirdly, the Bureau provides assistance to industry in those areas where institutional restraints, the common property nature of the resource or both make it impractical for industry to do the job itself. It has as well a responsibility to help in assuring the consumer that he is adequately informed as to the product he is buying.

“A final role played by the Bureau is in cooperation with other Federal agencies and international organizations to assist in the development of emerging nations and to help meet world food needs through fisheries.

“The basic goal of the Bureau is conservation: the wise use of living aquatic resources. This requires fundamentally a strong and sound biological base. It requires further for its proper realization input from a wide variety of other scientific disciplines of which physical oceanography is the most important constituent. Finally to insure conservation in its broadest sense, it requires a sound understanding of the economic, legal, and social factors affecting resource use.”

While the statement does not make specific reference to recreational problems (remember I was still representing BCF), I believe its applicability to all interests is evident.

Now, what does all this mean in terms of the CalCOFI group? I think you will see little change in the basic CalCOFI program with one significant exception. We are developing and preparing to implement a program known as MARMAP, the Marine Resources Monitoring, Assessment and Prediction Program. MARMAP is in many ways simply an extension of CalCOFI in that it is designed to provide a systematic approach to resource assessment, in this case, implemented and coordinated on a nationwide scale.

Its genesis lay in the fact that BCF research tended to be highly decentralized with too little attention paid to nationwide goals, let alone national programs. The Stratton Commission recognized this, and in Section F of the Marine Resources Panel we read:

“Simple answers are rarely found for issues as complex as those besetting the U.S. fisheries. . . . The Federal Government has never done justice to its functions in promoting rational use of the living resources of the sea because its fishery agency has never been given broad enough direction by the Congress to permit it to carry out a unified program to suit the needs of the country as a whole. . . . It is clear that the current program and organiza-

tion of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries does not reflect an integrated plan geared to an unequivocal set of objectives. . . . A closely related aspect of Bureau operations that has inhibited its effectiveness has been the project orientation stemming from its organizational structure (which is disciplinary in nature) and the dominant position of administrators with narrow scientific or technical backgrounds. The emphasis has been placed on individual projects of merit rather than on programs oriented to the achievement of broader missions that cut across both disciplinary and geographic boundaries. . . . There is a natural tendency to focus attention on problems of regional interest and even more narrowly on those problems for which the region's own personnel are best equipped or in which they are most interested.”

Before the development of the MARMAP concept our research coverage was indeed fragmentary, nearly void of coordinated time and space observation and lacking in standardization of sampling techniques.

What really had happened is that we had drifted into a problem-solution mode of a local or regional nature, without a significant national overview.

MARMAP, then, is our national program. It not only ties our resource work together but establishes a common interface with economic and social research programs. It is a coordinated program designed to monitor, assess and predict the type and amount of living marine resources, at the required level of accuracy (which will obviously vary from area to area) and at the least cost. The basic program consists of initiating and conducting three surveys: 1) ichthyoplankton, 2) groundfish, and 3) pelagic fish. The ultimate intent is to define the principal factors that affect changes in populations. Obviously CalCOFI is already deeply involved in surveys of the first and third types.

How rapidly we will be able to implement these surveys depends quite simply on funding. We hope to mount the first ichthyoplankton survey in 1971, with other surveys following in succeeding years.

Another topic about which you will hear far more in the future deals with resource allocation problems at the international, national and state levels. It is becoming increasingly evident that the existing system, if it can be called that, fails to cope effectively with the social and economic facts of life. We believe we must have a better mechanism for control of international fisheries and that a means must be found through which domestic fisheries can be managed with full regard for economic and social factors as well as biological. The present system under which a given stock may be variously under the control of an international body, the jurisdiction of two or more states, or under nobody's control is patently ineffective. The whole subject of a state-federal partnership in fisheries aimed at effective management is one to which we are devoting great attention.

Looking ahead, those of us who have been working closely with the people in Commerce for the past several months are optimistic indeed about what the future holds. We feel that the opportunities in this

new organization are going to be very great. We both hope and plan to capitalize upon them. If you think back upon the units that were brought together to form NOAA, you will recall that they encompass about every discipline concerned with the ocean in which those of us involved in fisheries have a particular interest. Here are all the groups with whom we

would have liked to have had a close relationship in the past and with whom we have not been able to work too effectively simply because of the governmental structure. Further, the attitude of the leaders in the Department of Commerce is extremely positive. With this set of circumstances, our optimism seems warranted.