

NOAA Report

NE1000 (A-List/353)
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July 16, 1990

COMING UP

International TOGA Scientific Conference in
Honolulu, Hawaii, July 16-20.

NWS Transition Management meeting in Easton, Md.,
July 17-19.

Alaska Wind Profiler meeting in Silver Spring, Md.,
July 26.

U.S. Fish, Shellfish Inspection Service Planned:--A seafood inspection program aimed at assuring consumers has been unveiled by NOAA and the federal Food and Drug Administration.

The joint program, a voluntary, fee-for-service inspection program for fish and shellfish, will enhance current inspections by the agencies, and guarantee that fish and fish products are safe, wholesome, and properly labeled. The approved products - imports and domestic products, including those for export - would receive an official seal.

The new program would use industry controls and government inspections at various key points - from netting to the grocer's display case - depending on the participating firms.

The plan is based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles, which are used to identify critical points at which health risks, such as spoilage and bacterial growth, can be controlled. The agencies also plan to extend these principles to cover points of possible economic fraud, such as over-breeding or short-weighting. Seafood companies would monitor these critical points. Company records of the process would be checked and verified by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and FDA during facility inspections.

NOAA's NMFS currently operates a voluntary, fee-for-service seafood inspection program with a government inspection mark, and will continue to provide grading and related services. NOAA and FDA said that continuation of other aspects of the current NMFS program will depend, in part, on how many companies switch to the new program.

FDA also conducts a comprehensive seafood safety program that includes mandatory inspections of processors, shippers, packers and

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repackers, labelers, warehouses, and importers of fish and fish products. Some of this work is carried out by the states under contract with the FDA. This mandatory inspection program would continue, separate from the new program.

The agencies said they believe that consumer confidence should be reinforced by this new voluntary fee-for-service inspection program. U.S. fish consumption reached a record of 15.9 pounds per person last year.

NOAA and FDA are using industry volunteers for a two-month pilot study of the program scheduled to begin on Oct. 1. The study is intended to identify and assess any problems industry and government might have implementing and overseeing such a system.

Driftnetting Takes Substantial Toll, Report Says--Open-sea driftnet fishing is killing substantial numbers of tuna, sharks, marine mammals, and sea birds in incidental catches in the North Pacific, a NOAA report reveals.

William Fox, NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, said early United Nations action might become necessary to halt the deaths.

"The by-catch from high-seas driftnetting continues to be of great concern to the United States," Fox said. "I believe we need the statistically reliable sampling that a program to be conducted this year will give us, but I also believe that if the trend shown in last year's pilot program continues, the United Nations must insist on an immediate moratorium of this practice."

NOAA released a preliminary report summarizing catch and by-catch rates observed by nine U.S., five Canadian and 32 Japanese observers aboard high-seas driftnet vessels from June to December 1989 in a U.S.-backed pilot program. It was the first multi-national observer program in the history of this technique. The U.S.-initiated agreement with Japan and Canada to collect data with observers from the three nations required that the results be provided in a jointly prepared summary report. A six-month time limit was placed on the report's preparation and release.

NOAA reported 59,060 albacore tuna, 58,100 blue sharks, 9,173 sea birds and 914 dolphins captured incidental to fishing operations.

The 1989 observer program was a pilot effort covering only 4 per cent of the Japanese commercial squid driftnet fishing. It did not include vessels from the Republic of Korea or Taiwan--two of the three nations involved--and therefore cannot be considered conclusive. Considerably more data will be acquired when the U.S.-negotiated observer program expands as scheduled this year to cover the Korean and Taiwanese driftnet fleets, along with additional

observers on the Japanese fleet. The 1990 monitoring program will have three times as many observers scheduled to serve on commercial driftnet vessels as in 1989.

The observer-data collection programs are the result of three bilateral agreements the U.S. successfully negotiated during the summer of 1989.

Data from this observer program will allow the U.S. to produce statistically reliable estimates of other species killed incidental to fishing, in preparation for a mid-1991 United Nations-sponsored review of the effects of driftnet fishing. The information will be vital to scientific evaluation of a UN-recommended ban on large-scale open-sea driftnet fishing, set for mid-1992. The United States was the major protagonist for the UN resolution in the fall of 1989, and fully supports the 1992 moratorium.

Driftnets up to 30 miles long have been used increasingly by Japan, Taiwan, and Korea for squid over the past decade. The incidental catch of other species in their driftnets, especially U.S.-origin salmon, however, generated deep concern in the United States, and in 1987 the Congress passed the Driftnet Impact, Monitoring and Control Act, requiring the Secretary of Commerce, in cooperation with the State Department, to negotiate monitoring and enforcement agreements with nations operating driftnet fishing in the North Pacific.

The U.S. accord with Japan was negotiated in June 1989, with Taiwan in August 1989, and with Korea in October 1989. The agreements allow a two-year phased monitoring program that would produce reliable scientific information about the effects of driftnetting in the Pacific. The enforcement portions of the agreements should prevent high-seas salmon catching headed to the U.S. for spawning.

Committee to Head NOAA's 20th Anniversary Celebrations:---NOAA Administrator Dr. John Knauss has announced the creation of Team 20, NOAA's 20th anniversary committee, which will involve NOAA offices across the country in the October celebrations.

Dr. Knauss named Barbara Van Cleve as team manager. Each line office is represented on the committee by a team member, who will be the link between headquarters and the line office.

Celebrations to highlight NOAA's past accomplishments will begin in October. They are meant to instill pride in NOAA employees and heighten public awareness of the agency and its mission. Team 20 will be located in 6055 HCHB, Washington. Beginning August 1, the telephone number is 377-NOAA (6622).

Nineteen Named To Fishery Management Councils:--Commerce Secretary Robert A. Mosbacher has announced the appointment of 19 people to the nation's eight Regional Fishery Management Councils.

The councils, established by the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, prepare management plans for fish stocks within their geographic areas. Council members are selected from nominees submitted by the governors of the states served by each council. The appointments become effective Aug. 11.

Nearly half of the council seats will be filled by new appointments. The councils' membership represents a balance between commercial and recreational interests.

The 1990 appointments include:

New England Council: Arthur J. Odlin, South Portland, Maine (reappointment); Louis J. Zglobicki, Cumberland, Maine (new appointment); Barry J. Gibson, Beverly, Mass. (reappointment); and Joseph M. Brancalone, Gloucester, Mass. (new appointment).

Mid-Atlantic Council: Albert F. Goetze, Easton, Md. (reappointment); Warren F. Hader, Montauk, N.Y. (reappointment); and Charles H. Johnson, Jr., Oakdale, N.Y. (reappointment).

South Atlantic Council: Curtis W. Bostick, Marco Island, Fla. (reappointment) and John F. Floyd, Spartanburg, S.C. (new appointment).

Gulf of Mexico Council: Thomas W. Wallin, Sarasota, Fla. (new appointment); Jane M. Black, Golden Meadow, La. (new appointment); and Julius Collins, Brownsville, Tex. (reappointment).

Caribbean Council: Carlos Cumpiano-Rivera, San Juan, P.R. (new appointment).

Pacific Council: Philip M. Anderson, Westport, Wash. (reappointment) and Scott L. Boley, Gold Beach, Oreg. (new appointment).

North Pacific Council: Henry V. Mitchell, Anchorage, Alaska (reappointment) and Walter T. Pereyra, Redmond, Wash. (new appointment).

Western Pacific Council: Edwin A. Ebisui, Jr., Haleiwa, Hawaii (reappointment) and Frank P. Nibley, Jr., Honolulu, Hawaii (new appointment).

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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