

REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL NORTH PACIFIC  
FISHERIES COMMISSION ANNUAL MEETINGS

Vancouver, B.C., Canada

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by

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A climax in American fisheries problems is likely to be reached during the 1958 session in Congress. The failure of the National Administration and the international agencies in which the United States participates to provide improvements in economic conditions for American fisheries leaves the dying industry no other "avenue of hope" except Congress for relief.

United States representatives who attended the two-weeks-long Conferences of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission at Vancouver, B.C., Canada (October 28-November 9, 1957), are still in a state of shock over the actions taken by the Canadian and Japanese delegations in refusing to recognize the findings of three-years' research conducted by the United States regarding the intermingling of Asian and North American stocks of salmon in the North Pacific high seas area.

At the Convention, both the Japanese and Canadian delegations recognized the fact (borne out by research) that a substantial number of North American red salmon are being caught by Japanese fishermen in the Aleutian area as far west as 170° east longitude.

The Japanese declined to discuss the United States proposal for abstention from salmon fishing (as provided in the Treaty) in the intermingling zone. The reason given being that it was not a proper subject to be brought before the meeting, and they indicated U.S research findings were not sufficient to

warrant restricting their fishermen from the area.

A spokesman for the Canadian delegation stated, "they had no evidence Canadian fish were being harvested at sea, therefore, the matter raised by the United States was a subject that might be dealt with by Japan and the United States."

It was not expected that the Japanese delegation would agree to **abstain** from the very profitably newly developed salmon fishery (to which they make no contribution in maintaining the existence of the runs) without considerable maneuvering on their part. The Japanese Commissioners and their advisors did, however, appear to appreciate the gravity of the situation and listened attentively to the appeal made by U. S. Commissioner Milton E. Brooding in his presentation of the problems of the United States-Alaska salmon fisheries resulting from the expansion of Japanese fishing operations in the Aleutian area.

The Canadian delegation, in an unexpected move, refused to recognize or to consider the findings of three years' research on salmon presented in support of the United States' proposal to establish a conservation zone in the area where a large concentration of Asian and American stocks of salmon are found. In doing so, the Canadian delegation indicated they were not interested for the reason that the problem appeared to involve only Alaska salmon, stating that they had no evidence their own stocks were being affected.

In addition to efforts advanced at these Meetings (and otherwise) to secure protection of American stocks of salmon grazing on the high seas, we should not lose sight of the need to better our management practices. Salmon runs in many streams the past few years have dwindled for reasons that can be controlled.

The meetings have shown that this phase of operation should also be given the fullest attention to avert the serious situation presently confronting the salmon fisheries of the Pacific coast and Alaska.

The future outlook for salmon predicted by the Pacific coast and Alaska fisheries agencies offers no encouragement to the industry. In face of Japan's refusal to consider curtailment of their high seas fishing operations in the Aleutian area, it is anticipated that almost full curtailment of the U.S. Bristol Bay red salmon fishery will be necessary to reseed the spawning streams. An alternate proposal would be to allow U.S. fishermen seven days' fishing on the same basis as the Japanese operations. This would eventually destroy the runs.

A mystery of equal importance not reported upon by the scientists is the serious decline of the chum and pink salmon runs the past two years in Canadian and Washington state streams. The absence of a logical explanation for the sudden falling off of these runs has both industry and management wondering if a considerable portion of these species are being taken at sea.

It was reported at the conclusion of the 1955 North Pacific Fisheries Commission meeting in Tokyo that there would be a reduction in fishing effort by the Japanese for the 1956 season and that the Japanese Commissioners would recommend that such reductions be carried out. About two months' later, after returning home the American commissioners were surprised to read a Japanese newspaper account of plans for tripling their 1956 operations.

THE JAPANESE SALMON CATCH IN THE ALEUTIAN AREA  
(in numbers of fish)

Year	Red	Chum	Pink	Silvers & Kings	Total
1952	738,505	617,072	698,009	25,545	2,079,131
1953	1,564,430	2,721,680	3,155,353	347,829	7,789,292
1954	3,725,991	8,924,688	5,693,029	1,436,886	19,780,594
1955	12,132,239	18,548,232	16,507,559	3,254,644	50,443,074

Year	Red	Chum	Pink	Silvers & Kings	Total
1956	8,520,914	13,604,813	10,665,514	3,792,790	36,584,049
1957*	12,588,429	7,247,016	4,980,876	5,073*	24,821,394

\*Total to June 20 only.

Mesh-size nets used: 4-1/4" - 4-3/4"

Average weight of fish:

Comparative U.S. weights (Bristol Bay):

reds 4.7 lbs.

reds 6.7 lbs.

chums 4.4 lbs.

chums 10 lbs.

pink 2.9 lbs.

pink 4.5 lbs.

### Conclusion

It appears there is little chance that negotiations will be successful in getting the Japanese fishermen to refrain from taking American salmon from the high seas without arousing their fear of losing other valuable trade concessions with the United States.

Congress will be asked to consider the passage of legislation to prohibit imports of fish or fish products caught or taken under conditions forbidden to United States' fishermen, and to further restrict fish imports handled under marketing arrangements, terms, and conditions declared unlawful for domestic fishermen and canners.

Without the fullest support of the Federal Government in the adjustments of these gross inequalities that have forced our fisheries industry to the brink of destruction, our own industries cannot survive. Important stocks of fish will disappear with American funds being used to finance the unregulated efforts of foreign fishermen to supply the American market while our fishing fleets will remain tied to the docks.