

SH323
.P118r
1954

INTERNATIONAL
NORTH PACIFIC
FISHERIES COMMISSION

REPORT OF FIRST MEETING

February 1 to 12, 1954

LIBRARY JAN 4 1993
National Marine Mammal Laboratory
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 4
Seattle, Washington 98115-0070

Washington, D. C.

APPENDIX 7

UNITED STATES REQUEST FOR STUDY OF KING CRAB IN BERING SEA AND
BACKGROUND STATEMENTS THEREON

February 6, 1954

My dear Mr. Chairman:

The Government of the United States refers to the International Convention for the High Seas Fisheries of the North Pacific Ocean, and in particular to Article III, Section 1 (c) (i) of that Convention.

The United States Government, in accordance with the provisions of the Article referred to, makes request of the Commission that it study the stock of king crab in eastern Bering Sea for the purpose of determining need for joint conservation measures of the Contracting Parties conducting substantial exploitation of that stock.

The stock is under substantial exploitation by the nationals and vessels of the United States and is not covered by a conservation agreement between any of the Contracting Parties to the International Convention for the High Seas Fisheries of the North Pacific Ocean.

Sincerely yours,



Wm. C. Herrington
Special Assistant for
Fisheries and Wildlife to the
Under Secretary

The Honorable
Stewart Bates, Chairman,
North Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Statement by Dr. L. A. Walford of the United States

At the Fifth Plenary Session of the Commission on February 10, 1954, Commissioner M. E. Brooding of the United States Delegation made the following statement concerning the United States request for a study of the King crab stocks in the Bering Sea:

"In requesting that the Commission study the King crab stock of the Eastern Bering Sea for the purpose of determining the need for joint conservation methods, the United States section is motivated by the fact that this stock is under substantial exploitation and indications that the present yield may be near the maximum sustained level of production."

Mr. Brooding then introduced Dr. L. A. Walford of the United States Delegation who presented the following memorandum:

"There are some indications of an historic personal-use native fishery for King crabs, and there are records of sporadic attempts by American fishermen dating back as far as 1913, and some small scale canning operations in Western Alaska during the 1920's. For all practical purposes, however, operations of continuing commercial significance began with the entry of Japanese floating canneries into the fishery in 1932.

"In their first three years of operation (i. e. 1932-1934) according to published reports these floaters took from 1.2 million to 2.8 million crabs. In the ensuing five years, 1935 through 1939, the level of fishing intensity was reduced, and the yield ranged, according to published reports, from 241,000 to 779,000 crabs. In 1940 an exceptionally extensive fishing

effort yielded 8,600,000 crabs. All of the preceding operations, except for a small scale American expedition in 1938, were Japanese.

"In 1948 commercial operations were resumed, this time by American fishermen, whose take for the years 1948 through 1952 ranged from 200,000 to 500,000 crabs.

"Japanese operations were resumed in this area in 1953 when the combined Japanese-United States catch was 1,600,000 crabs, of which the United States fishermen took approximately 400,000.

"While the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has conducted extensive exploratory fishing surveys and biological research during 1940, 1941, 1948, 1949 and 1953, we do not feel that sufficient data are yet available to permit forming a definitive opinion on the magnitude and productivity of crab populations. On the other hand, there are indications which tend to support the deep apprehension expressed by American operators and fishermen concerning the current level of exploitation.

"In order to establish a scientific basis for designing effective conservation measures, it would be desirable to begin a thorough study as soon as practicable to determine the identity of crab stocks, their total abundance, their rates of growth, mortality and recruitment; and the effects which fishing and environmental characteristics have on the productivity of the stocks.

"Meanwhile, despite the comparatively modest scope of United States exploitation, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has in effect regulations designed to afford the King crab stocks reasonable protection.

"These regulations include a prohibition against taking soft-shelled crabs; a prohibition against the taking of any female crabs; a minimum size limit of 6 1/2" carapace width and the various gear limitations such as a minimum mesh size of 12 inches in the bag size of trawls.

"The past level of United States fishing effort has already been outlined. It is planned that the same level of fishing intensity will be maintained in 1954.

"Research plans for this year are not yet completed. However, two United States agencies, the Alaska Department of Fisheries and the Fish and Wildlife Service each have a biologist currently assigned to a study of crab problems."

At the Ninth Plenary Session, the United States Delegation asked that, with regard to Dr. Walford's statement regarding king crab stocks made in the Fifth Plenary Session, the following statement appear in these minutes:

"Members of the Japanese Delegation have informed me that in my remarks on king crab made on February 10, figures were quoted which are at variance with the Japanese records. With this information in mind, the passage relating to statistics should correctly read 'In their first five years of operation (1930-1934) their floaters took from 1 million to 2.1 million crabs. In the ensuing five years (1935-1939) the level of fishing intensity was reduced, and the yield ranged, according to published reports, from 242,000 to 476,000 crabs. There was no fishing in 1940.'"