

Exploratory Fishing Now Underway

MOREHEAD CITY—A sleek fishing-research vessel bearing the name of Gov. Dan Moore steamed recently from its home port at Morehead City and began a career of exploratory fishing along coastal North Carolina. The Dan Moore is believed to be the first vessel ever designed from scratch to be used by a state for exploratory fishing.

Primary purpose of the vessel and crew is to help North Carolina commercial fishermen increase their catch.

The first cruise was the start of a rigorous schedule that will take the vessel along the entire North Carolina coast from the South Carolina border north to Virginia. Within the next few months the crew aboard the Dan Moore will search for surf clams, calico scallops and shrimp over the continental shelf, use ocean gill nets for mackerel, and do exploratory longline fishing along the edge of the Gulf Stream for tuna and swordfish.

During the first cruise the Dan Moore was used to fish offshore in the Cape Hatteras to Oregon Inlet area of North Carolina's outer banks in search of schooling rockfish, commonly known as jumbo

stripers. Striped bass weighing from 10 to 30 pounds were located and many taken aboard with trawl nets to see how well they survived the ordeal of being caught and hoisted from the water. Next winter when large rockfish schools are again found offshore along the outer banks before they migrate northward, the vessel will return and a tagging study will begin. Captured fish will be tagged and released to study migration patterns and other biological conditions of the offshore jumbo striper population.

The new pride of the N. C. Division of Commercial and Sports Fisheries is an ultra modern 85-foot vessel registered at 167 tons and carried a price tag of approximately \$400,000. The steel vessel was built by New Bern Shipyard, Inc.

Work with the rockfish is just a sample of the possible activities using the Dan Moore. The vessel has enough commercial fishing gear and electrical and mechanical equipment aboard to satisfy any nautical James Bond, and surely make any scientist or fishing crew wanting to get out there and find what is in the ocean somewhat jealous.

"Pilot house control of all motions and fine speed regulations over the full range allow for a versatility and flexibility in any fishing or research operation, which cannot be found on any other vessel this size," says C. J. van Dissel, vice president of Potter & M'Arthur, Inc., the Boston, Mass., naval architectural firm that designed the Dan Moore.

When asked about this versatility, Jim Sterling, chief biologist aboard, said, "We can go rapidly from one operation to another. For example, we can make the change over to fishing from dredging in half hour. The same change made on a conventional fishing vessel usually takes from three days to a week."

The Dan Moore is equipped and rigged for bottom trawling, mid water trawling, gill netting, seining, longline fishing, dredging and a few modifications would add purse seining to the list of possible fishing methods. "With this vessel we can do any of the commercial fishing that takes place along the North Carolina coast; in fact, we can do more," said Captain David Beveridge, skipper of the Dan Moore.

What were the feelings about the vessel after her first cruise? "As in any operation involving such a complex piece of equipment, expected difficulties were encountered on the first cruise and are being worked out. In almost all areas, performance of the vessel exceeded the expectations of the operators," Sterling said.

Basic ocean research takes a backseat as the exploratory fishing crew aboard the Dan Moore gets down to the nitty gritty of the problems facing commercial fishermen along the North Carolina coast: "Where are there new areas to catch fish?" "Where do the fish go?" "Is there a better net to use?" "Is there a better and more profitable way to catch shrimp?" Many questions need answered. This is an enormous task, to say the least, and will not be completed overnight. But each cruise of the Dan Moore will shed a bit more light on our dim under-



"DAN MOORE" GOES TO SEA—The vessel idles down as nets are brought aboard after being dragged along the bottom. The rectangular pieces of wood hanging at the tips of the outriggers serve the purpose of keeping the mouths of the two nets open while they are dragged along the bottom.—Photo by Jim Tyler.

standing of marine life. The vessel has received considerable acclaim from representatives of the fishing industry.

Sterling said everything of commercial importance caught during fishing operations will be identified and recorded. Cruise records will be sent to the state's central data processing department in Raleigh and the information will be placed on automatic system," Sterling said.

"This will give us complete and rapid recall of anything we have done over a period of years. Then, say, if at some future date we decide we want information on a certain species gathered over the past years, machines can give us the answers in a matter of minutes. We hope to go back over data we accumulate and see patterns, see that our catching of one species can be associated with certain depths, or certain temperatures, or certain locations."

Powered by twin diesel engines developing 665 horsepower giving a cruising speed of 11 knots, the Dan Moore provides fishing facilities, laboratory and comfortable accommodations for 10 men. The vessel has three levels. Topside: the pilot house with its complement of electrical equipment—sonar, radar, loran, radios—and at the back of the pilot house facing the deck is a unique console of control levers where all deck gear is operated hydraulically.

The second level: the galley area, complete with refrigerator, deep fryer, toaster, and a small TV high in a corner. Forward of the galley are bunks for four of the crew. The captain's quarters sleep two and are off the galley. Behind the galley a hallway leads out onto the deck.

The third level or bottom level: the engine room is filled with the diesels, generator and other accessories. Forward of the engine room are four more bunks. To the rear of the engine room is the laboratory. It is roomy, lit by fluorescent lighting and equipped for work in marine biology. Proceeding toward the stern, a door opens from the laboratory into the fish hold. The hold is divided into three sections. The catch can be

lowered into the hold from a door on the deck above, and it can be iced, refrigerated or frozen. (Experiments are underway to find the best method to hold a catch (finfish or shellfish) until delivered dockside).

Behind the hold is the gear storage room. All interior spaces with the exception of the engine room are air conditioned.

Any vessel, however, no matter how many facilities, and how great the sophistication in equipment, is only as good as the men who operate it. Many years of experience speak for the crew. Captain David Beveridge of Beaufort; chief biologist, Jim Sterling of Morehead City; biologist, Mike McKenzie of Morehead City; first mate, Earl Fulcher of Morehead City; chief engineer, Donald

Fulcher of Williston; assistant engineer, Stacy Guthrie of Harkers Island; cook, Frederick Willis of Harkers Island; net and winch man, Frank Meadows of Beaufort. Nearly all of these men have been commercial fishermen and most have also had previous experience aboard a research vessel.

When in port the vessel will be docked behind the division's Morehead City quarters at Camp Glenn.

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