

Fisheries Institute Achieves Notable Record

Director W. A. Ellison Reviews First Two Years

The Institute of Fisheries Research, a part of the University of North Carolina, was established in 1947 by action of the Board of Trustees of the university, and is located at the former Naval section base at Morehead City.

During the two short years of its active existence it has made a record of which it can be proud.

It has contributed heavily to the knowledge of the fisheries in this area, and in the results obtained in each of its major projects it has produced information that is already being used to advantage by the fishermen and the Department of Conservation and Development. Its work has gained attention and acknowledgement by laboratories of similar nature, by the fishing periodicals of the Atlantic coast and by other scientific organizations.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has seen fit to publish in full two articles by members of the staff. On innumerable occasions the fishing periodicals have commented on the Institute and related its activities.

W.A. Ellison, jr., the Institute's director, a dynamo of energy and possessor of keen intelligence, declares:

"The accomplishments of the Institute could not have been made except with the wholehearted cooperation of the fishing industry itself. The members of the fishing industry have given unstintingly of their time. The fishermen themselves have become collectors of data which the Institute could not have obtained in any other way, and on all occasions when called the busy leaders of the industry have assembled at the Institute to help in programming the work. In the field we have met with the greatest cooperation and help.

"Scientific organizations and business groups have contributed heavily. Expensive equipment has often been lent to the Institute for special jobs, and trained personnel has been supplied by outside agencies to do special work. Such support and cooperation by the fishermen, business leaders and other scientific organizations is a constant challenge to the Institute of Fisheries Research to carry on the program which it has undertaken."

Mr. Ellison, in the following paragraphs relates the work of the Institute during the past two years, explaining its organization and achievements:

The staff of the Institute are members of the staff of the University at Chapel Hill. The direction of the Institute is invested in the local directorship, while the

policies and program of the Institute are determined by an Executive Committee which is appointed by the Chancellor of the University. Two members of this Executive Committee are recommended for appointment by the Director of the Department of Conservation and Development of North Carolina.

A body of twenty-five members, comprised of scientists, businessmen and representatives of the fishing industry, serves as an Advisory Council to assist in determining the Institute's activities and advising on special problems which may arise.

The Institute is partially financed by the State and partially by a large grant from the Knapp Foundation of New York attesting to "Joseph P. Knapp's lifelong interest in the betterment of mankind." Mr. Knapp's interest in the people of North Carolina has been long well-known by the leaders in education, social work and industry.

Institute's Function

The function of the Institute is to make a practical application of scientific findings to the problems of the fisheries of North Carolina. These problems are of both a biological and an economic nature, and the latter in more normal periods are severe deterrents to a stable industry. The first investigations of the Institute have dealt almost entirely with the biological factors affecting the industry; but now that the scientific staff for this sort of activity is well organized and familiar with the ills of the industry, the next step will be to organize the economic and marketing division. For this purpose a full-time economist will be added to the staff in 1951.

Although the Institute was created in the fall of 1947, its active research program was not started until early 1948, and its full staff of specialists was not obtained until the late spring and summer of 1948. During its two years of active existence the Institute has attacked the problems of the fishing industry on a wide front and has been successful in

making substantial contributions to the knowledge of our fisheries—knowledge which has already been put to work for the benefit of the industry. While most of its projects are long range in nature, each of them is planned and conducted in such a manner that current results are regularly utilizable by the industry.

Briefly, some of the more significant work of the Institute is summarized below:

Finfish

During the past few years the fish landings of North Carolina have shown a decrease. This decrease in the fish population of the state has been popularly ascribed to the extensive trawling for shrimp in our sounds. The Institute inaugurated in the summer of 1949 a series of studies to determine the type of fish destroyed and the extent of destruction.

The 1938 - 1940 catch of eighteen principal food fish species compared with the 1946 - 1948 catch of the same species showed a decline of some 26,500,000 pounds or nearly 50 per cent. The figures, however, examined species-wise showed that 50 per cent of this decrease was due to a failure of the herring species alone. These fish are rarely taken in shrimp trawls.

Sea trout, croaker and flounder-species which are taken in large numbers in shrimp trawls - showed a decline of some 7,500,000 pounds while seven species of fish rarely ever taken by the shrimpers showed a decrease of 19,000,000 pounds. The spot, which is taken by shrimp trawling in number second only to croakers, showed an increase. While it is recognized that considerable destruction of edible species of fish does take place as a result of shrimp trawling and offshore fish trawling, the fact that other species of fish rarely taken by shrimp trawlers also show a heavy decline leads to the inescapable conclusion that the shrimp and fish trawlers are not solely to blame.

Shrimp trawling can be considered only as a contributory factor in the decreased landings, destruc-

tive as it may appear to be.

These studies on fish population have been continued through this year. The results have not been finally tabulated, but superficial examination of the data confirm the findings made last summer. The results of the Institute's invest-

tigation have been considered of sufficient importance by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be published in their publication, Commercial Fisheries Review. (Readers who are interested in the results obtained may get this publication by writing to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D. C.) See FISHERIES, Page 10

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