RECOMMENDED PROGRAM OF CONSERVATION
FOR
FLORIDA MARINE RESOURCES

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The Marine Laboratory
University of Miami

SUMMARY

1. In value, the salt water crop in Florida is close to second among all the East Coast and Gulf states. A total of over 250,00,OOO pounds and over $35,000,000 value was landed in 1947. Nevertheless in regard to scientific salt water fisheries research, Florida is the most backward.

2. As a result of this, the oyster industry and sponge industry are declining and are in immediate need of investigation. The oyster beds require an extended program of management and rehabilitation involving shell and oyster planting. The sponge industry is in a serious condition and requires scientific management in order to insure maximum continued production. At present it is losing a potential annual income of $15,000,000, based on the drop in landings since 1936. Due to lack of scientific management, a previous $150,00000 appropriation to the oyster industry completely lost. During 1947, 500,000,000 fish were killed on the West Coast of Florida. This caused enormous financial loss to the citizens of this state.

3. The mullet industry should be comprehensively investigated. It is one of Florida's largest fisheries, but the biology and nature of fish populations are virtually unknown, thus making it impossible to provide wise regulation or to predict future trends. Severe losses have occurred during the last year.

4. The mackerel, kingfish and other pelagic fish require a long term investigation to disclose causes of fluctuation whereby adequate regulations may be brought into being and the greatest continued return be made available to both sport and commercial fishermen.

4. Life histories, migrations and feeding habits of the game fish are virtually unknown and should be made the objective of a special study.

5. The decline of the oyster industry is serious enough to warrant a comprehensive research program.

6. The turtle industry has been virtually wiped out. Experiments on the artificial cultivation of turtles, lobsters, crabs and other valuable products should be started,

7. Special studies of widely disastrous natural occurrences such as the "red tide" should be carried out with a view to preventing their recurrence or minimizing the damage caused by them.

8. Similar investigations are needed as a basis for the protection and development of other game fish which form the raw material of a great industry in Florida, worth as much as $50,000,000 per year.

9. Prior to and alongside with special investigations of the nature outlined above, a scientific and economic appraisal should be made of the entire salt water resources, including both sports and commercial fishing.

10. Adequate monthly catch landing returns should be instituted as the minimum statistical basis for proper scientific management of the fisheries. Together with the points outlined above, these should lead to the prediction of fluctuations and trends which may result in great savings to the industries concerned and to an overall increased production.

11. The above investigations cannot, of course, all be carried out simultaneously, but will need to be brought into the program in order of their urgency. At the same time, attention should be given to investigations leading to the development of new resources and to the development of sports fishing.

12. A program of basic oceanographic and biological studies should be carried out as a necessary background to all the previously mentioned work.

13. A program of education is needed to insure that the citizens of the State will support conservation measures. This should take the form of popular and semi-scientific bulletins, moving picture material and portable conservation exhibits.

The Board of Conservation should be empowered to arrange for training of its agents in the basic facts of conservation in relation to marine fisheries. Such courses should be planned as short or part-time vocational courses, embodying a brief amount of non technical scientific background, conservation principles and practice, modern methods of fishing and the care and maintenance of boats, engines and gear.

14. The scientific research and investigations and the preparation of technical and educational bulletins should be carried out by a laboratory adequately staffed with trained marine biologists and fishery technicians, preferably in a university where immediate access is provided for consultation with chemists, physicists, oceanographers, economists and others not necessarily on the fisheries staff.

15. A minimum of $75,000 per annum should be appropriated for this work. This is less than that of any other state with an equivalent volume of salt water fisheries,

16. It is proposed that for the purpose of Paragraph 14, a salt water fisheries research program be set up under the Board of Conservation and that the scientific research of this program be carried out by a properly staffed and equipped Marine Laboratory.

17. It is recommended that the Board of Conservation be empowered to issue, amend and introduce rules, regulations and orders governing the salt water resources. These regulations should be based upon recommendations and facts obtained by the salt water fisheries research.

18. It is recommended that funds for the purposes outlined above be obtained by a poundage tax on the entire catch of fish, shell fish and other marine resources landed. It is further recommended that funds for the State Conservation Department be raised by a poundage tax, and that boat license fees be abolished. This will free agents from collecting fees and make it possible for them to carry out enforcement, which should be their principal function.

19. The total amount of money necessary for financing both the Board of Conservation and its subsidiary, the proposed salt water fisheries research bureau, could be raised by a poundage tax of 1/10 cent per pound on the basis of the 19" catch returns. The fisheries research alone could be supported by 1/25 cent tax.

20. Should the poundage tax be declared unconstitutional the funds for the salt water fisheries research bureau should be by direct appropriation to the Board of Conservation with specific statement of purpose.