

REPORT OF THE COMMERCIAL FISHERIES STUDY COMMISSION

## INTRODUCTION

Since colonial days, the commercial fishing industry has been a major source of employment for coastal North Carolinians. In recent years, increasing concern over the future of this industry has been voiced by numerous persons. This concern culminated in a resolution, introduced in the House of Representatives of the North Carolina General Assembly on May 23, 1963, calling for the appointment of a Commercial Fisheries Study Commission and a re-evaluation of the State's efforts in commercial fisheries. This resolution was subsequently passed by both the House and the Senate and became Resolution 72 of the 1963 General Assembly of North Carolina.

## MEMBERSHIP

The following members were appointed to the Commercial Fisheries Study Commission by Governor Sanford on December 9, 1963.

Mr. James T. Barnes, commercial fisherman, Southport, N. C.

Mr. David L. Beveridge, Captain of research vessel "Eastward"  
Beaufort, N. C.

Dr. A. F. Chestnut, Director, University of North Carolina  
Institute of Fisheries Research,  
Morehead City, N. C.

Rep. Moncie L. Daniels, Dare County, Manteo, N. C.

Sen. P. D. Midgett, Hyde County, Engelhard, N. C.

Mr. Ottis Purifoy, commercial and sports fishing operator,  
Morehead City, N. C.

Rep. Hugh A. Ragsdale, Chairman, Onslow County, Richlands, N. C.

Dr. Frank B. Thomas, Food Scientist, Department of Food Science,  
N. C. State of the University of North  
Carolina at Raleigh, Raleigh, N. C.

Dr. Karl M. Wilbur, Director, Duke University Marine Laboratory,  
Beaufort, N. C.

## OBJECTIVES

Objectives of this Commission, as specified in Resolution 72, are as follows:

1. To make a detailed, exhaustive, and analytical study of the Division of Commercial Fisheries of the Department of Conservation and Development.
2. To inquire into the feasibility of reorganizing the Division of Commercial Fisheries to the end that the commercial fishing economy of North Carolina can be expanded and improved into the area of seafood processing and marketing.
3. To make recommendations and appraisals concerning the laws and regulations relating to the commercial fishing industry.

## PROCEDURE

Among its first activities, the Study Commission held a group of open hearings in order to become better appraised of the commercial fishing situation in North Carolina. Representatives of the many types of commercial fishing, seafood dealers, seafood processors, marine scientists, personnel of the Department of Conservation and Development, and all others interested in North Carolina's coastal resources were invited to participate in the hearings and to present their personal observations and recommendations.

Following the directives of the Resolution, and guided by evidence presented at the above hearings, the Commission as a

whole studied the present organization of the Division of Commercial Fisheries of the Department of Conservation and Development and worked with Mr. L. Poindexter Watts, of the Institute of Government of the University of North Carolina, on a complete revision of commercial fisheries statutes.

Committees were appointed to conduct intensive investigations into the field of fisheries research and seafood processing and marketing. Members visited processing facilities in other Atlantic Coast states and contributed their observations to the findings of the Commission as a whole.

#### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 1. ORGANIZATION OF THE DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES.

FINDINGS. In November, 1963, the organization and objectives of the Division of Commercial Fisheries were modified to place greater emphasis on biological and processing research, public information and education, and more efficient law enforcement. The Division is currently divided into four sections: administration, law enforcement, research and development, and shellfish sanitation.

The Commissioner and clerical and maintenance personnel compose the administrative section. The Commissioner is responsible for all activities within the Division, and works closely with the Director of the Department of Conservation and Development and members of the Board of Conservation and Development in formulating basic commercial fisheries policy and in recommending fisheries regulations for the Board's consideration. He also maintains liaison with the Wildlife Resources Commission, the Department of Water Resources, the State

Board of Health, the Department of Administration, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U. S. Coast Guard, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other public and private agencies concerned with the use of North Carolina's estuarine and marine resources. Budgetary and personnel matters, records keeping, and equipment and facility maintenance are carried out by other personnel in this section.

The law enforcement section, under the supervision of the Assistant Commissioner, is responsible for collecting seafood taxes, licensing commercial fishing boats and enforcing all commercial fisheries laws within the commercial fishing waters of North Carolina. The activities of this section are divided geographically into three law enforcement districts, each under the supervision of a District Supervisor. All Commercial Fisheries Inspectors are provided state-owned transportation, and are equipped with outboard patrol boats, inboard patrol boats, or seaplanes, as their activities require.

The research and development section, created in August, 1964, is currently composed of a single fisheries biologist. One or more additional trained technical personnel will be added to this section during the 1965-67 biennium. Activities of this section include publishing the quarterly Commercial Fisheries Newsletter and distributing it to all licensed commercial fishermen, conducting studies of shrimp and oyster populations, planning and conducting the oyster rehabilitation program, and advising the Commissioner in matters concerning fisheries biology.

The shellfish sanitation section is composed of Division personnel who work with sanitarians of the State Board of Health in administering the Cooperative Shellfish Sanitation Program and the U. S.

Public Health Service. By agreement of the State Board of Health and the Department of Conservation and Development, these personnel will be transferred to the Board of Health during 1965.

RECOMMENDATIONS. The current organization of the Division of Commercial Fisheries is essentially sound and is being administered efficiently. During (the) next biennium, the Research and Development Section must be expanded to include at least three trained biologists, supported by the necessary operating equipment and clerical assistance. An exploratory fishing vessel should be secured and used to locate unutilized populations of Commercial fish off the North Carolina coast and to develop more efficient means of taking such fish. Budgetary requests for these programs have been prepared by the Division and submitted to the Advisory Budget Commission. Following review by the Advisory Budget Commission, the Division of Commercial Fisheries requested the Joint Appropriations Committee of the General Assembly to reinstate \$25,000 per year research funds and \$15,380 equipment funds. This Commission believes that these additional funds are essential to the implementation of the Division's Research and Development program, and recommends their approval by the Appropriations Committee.

## 2. EXPANSION OF SEAFOOD PROCESSING AND MARKETING FACILITIES.

FINDINGS. North Carolina is losing much of the income which might be realized from her commercial fishing industry because of inadequate and outdated processing and marketing methods. Raw seafood has traditionally been shipped from North Carolina ports to other states where profits from processing, and frequently reshipping back into North Carolina, are realized. Although some small processing plants are operating along our coast (particularly in crabmeat processing),

few of our fishermen possess the capital necessary to support large-scale operations.

The Division of Commercial Fisheries is currently working with the Department of Food Science of North Carolina State of the University of North Carolina, the federal Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, members of the Division of Commerce and Industry, and independent seafood processors, in an attempt to stimulate greater seafood processing within North Carolina.

RECOMMENDATIONS. The expansion of seafood processing and marketing facilities poses a complex problem which involves biological, economic, sociological, and industrial engineering matters. It can best be solved by a unified effort among representatives of these diverse areas. This Commission, therefore, recommends that the Division of Commercial Fisheries and the Division of Commerce and Industry of the Department of Conservation and Development, the various departments of the University of North Carolina and North Carolina State of the University of North Carolina, and independent seafood producers and processors, coordinate and expand their efforts to secure for North Carolina its rightful place in the seafood processing industry.

### 3. COMMERCIAL FISHING LAWS.

FINDINGS. Commercial fishing is regulated through General Statutes, enacted by the General Assembly, and by Regulations, passed by the Board of Conservation and Development. Through the years, laws passed under pressure of minority groups interested only in their own particular field, inadequate money and personnel to conduct a forward-looking program, political appointments to positions which require trained men, and confusion in policy at the administrative levels are just a few of the factors which result in inefficiency,

loss of the taxpayer's money and frustration among those who are trying to do a good job with tools which are hopelessly outdated. In cooperation with the Institute of Government of the University of North Carolina, this Commission has re-worked all existing commercial fishing statutes and has prepared a complete revision of these laws for consideration by this General Assembly. In general, the new laws include modification of licensing and tax structure, clarification of oyster and clam bottom lease administration, amplification of the authority and responsibilities of the Board of Conservation and Development in matters of estuarine and marine conservation, abolishment of all local statutes concerning commercial fishing, registration of all grants, fishery rights, and other claims to submerged bottoms, prohibition of trash fishing, changing the name of the Division of Commercial Fisheries to the Division of Coastal Fisheries, establishment of a Coastal Fisheries Advisory Board, composed of two coastal sports fishermen, two commercial fishermen, two marine scientists, and three members of the General Assembly from coastal counties to work with the Commissioner and to advise him in matters of coastal fishery regulation and development, and clarification of the jurisdiction of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and the Division of Coastal Fisheries. This Commission recommends that regulatory matters requiring detailed investigation and administrative flexibility be handled by regulations passed by the Board of Conservation and Development, upon the recommendation of the Coastal Fisheries Advisory Board and the Commissioner of the Division of Coastal Fisheries.

RECOMMENDATIONS. That the General Assembly approve the revision of the General Statutes prepared and submitted by this Commission.

4. STATUS OF THE COMMERCIAL FISHERIES STUDY COMMISSION.

FINDINGS. The commercial fishing industry is complex, dynamic, and everchanging. Although considerable progress in stimulating increased growth and sound management has been made as a result of the work of this Commission, the problems besetting this segment of our population cannot be discovered, much less solved, in the short time we have been in existence.

RECOMMENDATIONS. That the mission of the Commercial Fisheries Study Commission be transferred to the Coastal Fisheries Advisory Board, and that that body diligently undertake a comprehensive and continuing evaluation of all factors effecting our coastal fishery resources and assist the Division of Coastal Fisheries in its attempts to govern the use of these resources in the best interests of all the citizens of North Carolina.

# # # # #

This Commission wishes to express its appreciation to the Menhadden Industry for controlling and policing itself, and encourage them to continue these activities.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Hugh A. Ragsdale

Hugh A. Ragsdale  
Chairman  
Commercial Fisheries  
Study Commission

Library  
State Legislative Building  
North Carolina