



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FWS VESSEL TO TAG PETRALE SOLE

The Fish and Wildlife Service's exploratory fishing vessel "John N. Cobb" left from Seattle, Wash., on March 21, on an expedition to tag petrale sole in the "Esteban Deep," a submarine canyon off the west coast of Vancouver Island, B. C., Director John L. Farley announced today.

The operation will be carried out in cooperation with the State of Washington, Department of Fisheries and the Fisheries Research Board of Canada.

Standard western otter trawls will be used to catch the petrale sole, and special techniques and gear will be employed in an attempt to reduce the high mortality rate experienced in previous tagging operations by the State in the "Esteban Deep". The high mortality was thought to have been the result of extreme pressure changes on the petrale sole as they were brought up from depths as great as 1,200 feet.

Catches of petrale sole—considered to be one of the best flounders on the Pacific Coast—have dwindled on both Canadian and United States grounds in recent years. The "Esteban Deep" petrale sole grounds, discovered accidentally in 1953 by American trawlers fishing for Pacific Ocean perch, has produced the largest catches of petrale sole ever taken in the history of the Washington trawl fishery. Fishermen and scientists alike believe that the petrale sole taken in "Esteban Deep" are a part of the same stocks which are fished in other areas during the summer months. This opinion is based on results of previous tagging by Washington State and Canada. The work carried out by the "John N. Cobb" will help to determine the necessity of giving the species regulatory protection by those agencies responsible for their management.

Technical operations will be handled by D. L. Alverson, State of Washington Department of Fisheries; B. M. Chatwin, Fisheries Research Board of Canada; and M. R. Greenwood and H. C. Johnson, of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Seattle laboratory.

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