



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### EXTENSION OF MESH-SIZE REGULATION PROPOSED

Conservation by regulation of the mesh-size in fishing nets, a principle which is already being tested in one area of the northwest Atlantic haddock and cod fishery, may be extended to other areas in that fishery, the Department of the Interior indicates. Notice of intention of such extension of regulations was printed in the Federal Register of September 19.

Interested persons have until October 19 to submit comments and suggestions to the Director, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Washington, D. C.

Under the present regulations the taking of haddock and cod in sub-area 5, which includes Georges Bank, with nets having a mesh size of less than four-and-a-half inches is prohibited. The proposed regulations would extend the four-and-a-half-inch minimum to sub-area 4, which includes the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and could decree a minimum mesh of four inches in sub-area 3 in which the famous Grand Banks off Newfoundland are located.

The original regulations requiring haddock fishermen operating in sub-area 5 to use nets with a mesh of not less than four and a half inches became effective in 1953. In 1957 the regulation was extended to the taking of cod fish in that area. These regulations, which were recommended by the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries, were based upon biological and gear research conducted by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, United States Fish and Wildlife service, in concert with Research Agencies of Canada and several European countries.

The purpose of this research was to devise ways to prevent the loss of young fish taken in the nets and to determine the optimum size of fish for the haddock harvest.

The research was based upon the known principle that fish living under proper conditions and having an abundant food supply grow rapidly for a period of time; then at maturity the growth rate slows down considerably. One objective of the project was to learn the age and size of the haddock when it reached the top of the maximum growth curve. Another aim was to determine the mesh size and the kind of net which would take the haddock at this optimum size and permit the smaller ones to escape and be available for harvest at a later date.

Upon the completion of the first phase of the study the Commission accepted the recommendations of its scientists and in turn recommended to member nations that the four-and-a-half-inch mesh be accepted for haddock. The restriction was to apply to sub-area 5 only with the understanding that additional research would be conducted to determine the validity of the proposal. Subsequent studies led to the recommendation that the principle of mesh size regulation be extended to the harvesting of haddock and cod in the two additional areas.

The United States, Canada and 10 European countries are parties to the North-west Atlantic Fisheries Convention. Recommendations of the International Commission are put into effect by each of the member nations with respect to their own nationals.

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