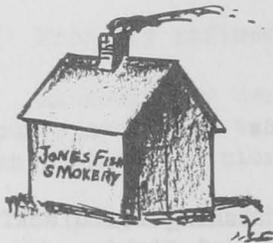


SECTIONAL REVIEWS

Middle Atlantic

NEW JERSEY: Fresh fish landings at ports in New Jersey during March were about normal for this season, according to a report received from the Service's Fishery Marketing Specialist in that area.

In Pennsylvania, wholesale dealers in the vicinity of Philadelphia handled satisfactory amounts of good quality seafood, with the possible exception of fresh-shucked oysters from New Jersey waters. Since these oysters were somewhat smaller this year than in previous years, they were not as enthusiastically received by consumers.



Fish smoking firms in this area are gradually returning to normal operations, as they are receiving a larger quantity of good quality raw material. However, it is general speculation that prewar production will not be resumed for a year or two.

While labor disagreements are less disturbing than they were during 1945, they still represent a problem to fish processing plants throughout New Jersey.



Chesapeake

VIRGINIA: The close of the Virginia crab-dredging season on March 31 found the prices for crabs low in comparison with those at the beginning of dredging operations, according to the Service's Fishery Marketing Specialists in that State. This decline in prices was caused by incoming trot-line and crab-pot catches. No scarcity of crabs has been reported, and it is anticipated that past records of production may be broken this season. The crab-dredge season in Virginia extends from December 1 to March 31. Complete catch reports are not available for December, but trade reports indicate that the catch was higher in December than in the other three months of the winter crab season. The trend was downward from December on. Although the total crab landings in March do not seem to have declined greatly, this was mainly due to catch by pots and lines during the latter part of March which offset a lessened dredge catch.

During March, the pound nets and fykes began to contribute a small amount to the receipts of fish. In another month, these will be the main gears in operation, as the New England vessels will be returning shortly to their home ports, followed within a few weeks by many of the Chesapeake Bay druggers. Large ocean trawlers began leaving Virginia waters the latter part of March, when pound-net fishermen

started to take large quantities of croakers as well as some shad and alewives. Prices declined considerably because of an over-supply from the two sources. Porgies reached a low of four cents a pound. However, within two weeks, the situation changed completely. The few trawlers still operating had to assume almost the entire burden of supply, as the pound-net catches had greatly declined.

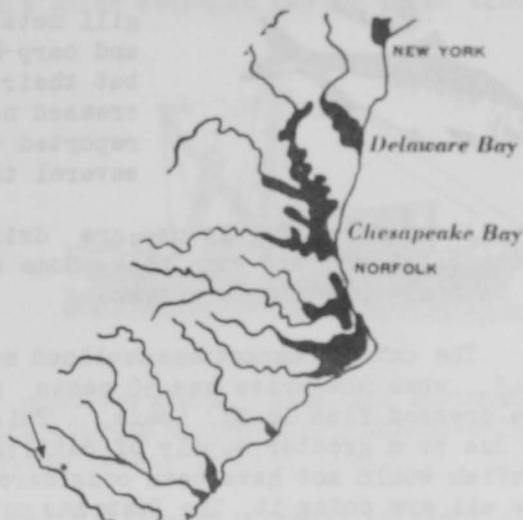
The landings of fish during January and February were made almost entirely by fishing vessels using otter trawls. The local fleet of around 34 vessels was augmented by 40 vessels from New England. During January, 120 trips by draggers were reported for the Hampton Roads area. For February, the trips increased to 160 while March had the greatest number with 169. During March, besides the dragger landings, there were four trips of mackerel, totaling 94,000 pounds, by two Gloucester purse-seine vessels. Usually, the first mackerel landings of the season are made at Cape May, New Jersey.

According to some producers, during the first quarter of 1946 the production of seafood in Chesapeake Bay was affected by the industrial strikes of February and March. January was a month of heavy production as compared with February or March. During the quarter, higher grades of seafood continued to sell at something like a normal rate while lower grades refused to move. In oyster sales, "selects" and "counts" reportedly sold fairly well, while "standards" dropped to new lows in price but refused to move in any large quantities.

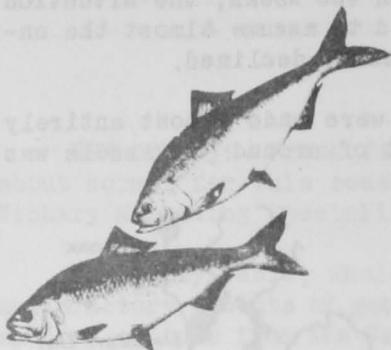
The berthing of Government ships in Virginia waters has begun and will increase. Oystermen have expressed some apprehension as to the effect on oyster production in these areas, because they feel that the already-existing polluted area would be extended; however, they are mindful of the fact that repairs to the ships would bring employment to local yards, and the community as a whole would profit. Even the oystermen would profit, if they cared to collect the oysters scraped off the hulls in drydock and sell or plant them. One ship is said to have yielded 500 bushels of seed.

In its biennial session, terminated in February, the Virginia General Assembly placed a daily maximum limit of 25 pounds on the taking of rock (striped bass) by sport fishermen. Also, it passed a bill of great importance to both sports and commercial fishermen: "To provide for the control, prevention, and abatement of pollution in the waters of the State." In brief, this bill sets up a State Water Control Board which is empowered to effect a gradual clean-up of State waters. There are a number of sources of pollution in Virginia. These include factories discharging waste, and towns, situated on waterways, without sewage purification facilities. To date, only a few of the offenders have taken voluntary measures to remedy conditions.

One of the largest districts under the jurisdiction of the Commission of Fisheries covers about 1,200 square miles, from Virginia's fall line to the beginning of salinity in the James and York Rivers. Two State-operated shad hatcheries, as



well as the Fish and Wildlife Service's Lake Harrison hatchery, are located in this district. Shad from the State hatcheries are released each spring in the Chickahominy, Pamunkey, and Mattaponi Rivers. Last year, approximately 2,000,000 fry were released. Fishermen in the area of the hatcheries' operations are very favorable toward them.



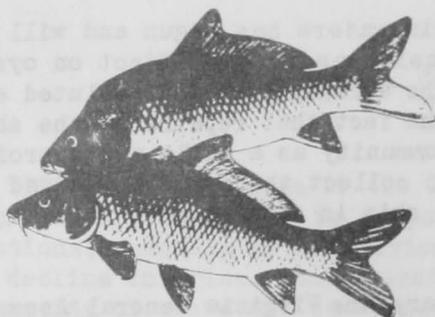
Principal gears in use in this district are, in order of abundance: Dip-nets, catfish pots, drift-gill nets, fyke nets, haul-seines, stake-gill nets, and carp-hedging. Dip-nets do not figure commercially, but their popularity among casual fishermen has increased noticeably in the last two years. It has been reported that one fisherman using this net captured several thousand alewives in a season.

Also increasing in use are drift-gill nets. These catch shad and some rock. Some with a smaller mesh are used for alewives.

The catfish market has declined somewhat since 1945, when the price was 50 cents per pound for the dressed fish in St. Louis. This decline may be due to a greater supply of catfish. Dressing catfish would not have been considered by Virginia fishermen a few years ago, but now all are doing it. The State has not yet protected catfish by law, consequently, some of them sent to market are rather small.



Carp are taken in largest numbers in Virginia waters with carp-hedging, which is a stop-net of one-inch mesh set up along shore at high tide. It is hung on light stakes which are put down and taken up with the net. It ranges from 500 to 1,000 feet in length and is about four feet high. Corn is often thrown in the water to attract the fish, and sometimes a haul-seine is used in conjunction with hedging.



At least one operator buys carp alive and places them in his own ponds to cleanse their flesh.

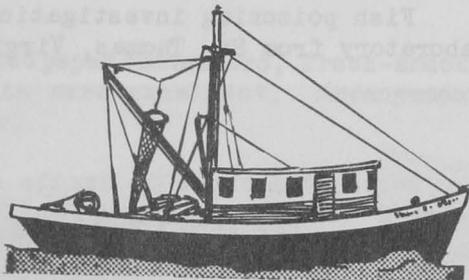
Carp production in the James River area in 1945 is estimated at a million pounds.



South Atlantic

The period from March 15 through April 15 is usually the lowest productive season for fish and shellfish along the South Atlantic Coast, according to the Service's Fishery Marketing Specialist making the commercial fishery survey in that area.

If the shrimp fleet depended wholly upon shrimping during this season of the year, it would be tied up at the docks. Vessels which averaged two or three thousand pounds per week during the height of the shrimp season, were bringing in only a few hundred pounds. Fish production is low in proportion, so the fishermen and dealers have turned to crabbing, which, until the past few years, was shunned by the shrimping fleet. As soon as the shrimp production increases, crabbing operations will again be abandoned by the fleet. Dealers who previously refused to allow their fleet to indulge in crab fishing have been taking all the vessels bring in. Crab trawling is hard on shrimp nets, but eventually shrimpers will learn how to be good crabbers. With the shrimping fleet turning temporarily to crab production, the 1945-46 survey will, undoubtedly, show an increase in crab production over previous years.



The catfish has recently become of interest to the fishery trade in Georgia. So popular has this species become that some orders have been shipped by air express, and a few dealers are enthusiastic about finding greater sources of supply.



While shad production in Georgia was high this season due to the return of many fishermen from the military service, maximum production was not attained because of the difficulty in getting shad nets and the unusually wet season that kept the rivers too fresh. Roe shad averaged $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds in size in St. Mary's River and $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds in the Altamaha and Ogeechee Rivers. Prices to fishermen were one dollar per roe shad at the beginning of the season and 70 cents at its close. This appears to be one item that has not been accorded the price increase of other seafoods of recent years.

