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1980 U.S. RESEARCH SURVEYS AND RESEARCH PLANS
FOR 1981 IN THE BERING SEA

by

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1980 U.S. Research Surveys and Research Plans
for 1981 in the Bering Sea and Northeast Pacific

by T. Sample*

1. Research activities in the Eastern Bering Sea during 1980.

Two major surveys were conducted in the Bering Sea--

(a) Eastern Bering Sea Survey

The Bering Sea crab/groundfish survey was conducted during May-August 1980.

The primary purpose of this survey was to assess the distribution and abundance of commercially important fish and shellfish stocks. This was a continuation of the annual series of eastern Bering Sea crab/groundfish assessment surveys. The area examined extended from approximately 60°N and 175°W, south along the 100 fathom contour, and east to the mainland.

Two vessels, the NOAA research vessel Oregon and the chartered fishing vessel Ocean Harvester, successfully completed 326 scheduled demersal trawl stations. The Ocean Harvester completed an additional 26 comparative trawl hauls with the Japanese research vessel Wakatake Maru. The ATA (Alternate Tail Attack) trawling method was used in this experiment as a means of determining relative catchability coefficients.

The catch at each survey station was sorted, weighed by species, and counted. Length frequencies by sex, age structures, and other biological data were collected from fish species of interest. Length/width measurements, shell condition, clutch size, and egg condition were recorded for selected crab species.

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(b) Aleutian Island Area and Bowers Bank Groundfish Survey

This was the first comprehensive survey to examine groundfish and shellfish resources off the Aleutian Island region. This was a joint U.S.-Japan research program.

The survey region extended from approximately 170°E, east along both sides of the Aleutian Chain to 165°W and through Bowers Bank at depths of 10 to 500 fathoms. This survey was conducted aboard the U.S. charter vessels Half Moon Bay and Ocean Harvester, and the Japanese charter vessel Hatsue Maru No. 62. Catch information recorded from each trawl haul included weights and numbers by species, size composition, and other biological information taken on selected species.

2. Research activities planned in the Bering Sea during 1981.

Two demersal assessment surveys are scheduled for 1981. However, at this time, survey plans and vessel assignments have not been finalized--

(a) Winter Halibut Survey

A trawl survey to examine Pacific halibut distribution and abundance will be conducted in conjunction with the International Pacific Halibut Commission during January-February. Biological data on other groundfish species will also be collected. Generally, the survey area will encompass the region south and east of the Pribilof Islands. One vessel will be involved.

(b) Summer Crab/Groundfish Survey

The annual series of eastern Bering Sea crab/groundfish surveys will continue during May-August. It is anticipated that two U.S. vessels will be involved to adequately cover the survey area extending south of approximately 60°N at

at water depths of 20 to 100 fathoms on the continental shelf. Biological information will be collected on selected species of fish and crab.