


MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 19, 1980

TO: Council Members, Scientific & Statistical Committee and
Advisory Panel

FROM: Jim H. Branson, Executive Director 

SUBJECT: National Park Service Ad Hoc Fisheries Task Force Report

ACTION REQUIRED

Comment (if appropriate) on the recommendations contained in the report.

BACKGROUND

The Ad Hoc Fisheries Task Force Report was prepared by a team assembled by Assistant Secretary of the Interior Robert Herbst. The focus of the report is a suggestion for future management policy and objectives for National Parks where aquatic resources are present. The matter was brought to our attention by Congressman Don Young in a March 11, 1980 letter, in which he said,

"among the more disturbing recommendations is one which suggests that commercial fishing not be allowed in National Park waters. Although the report does not deal specifically with Alaska, it is obvious that Alaskan Parks and Monuments may be included in the future. Even more disturbing are unanswered questions such as, 'what effect park service policy will have on fish stocks that spawn in National Parks but are harvested outside in park areas'."

The Notice of availability of this report appeared February 25, in the Federal Register and requests comments on the effectiveness of the Park Service Fishery Policy. The heart of the report, as it relates to the Council, can be found on page 44, where it states,

"the Task Force recommends that:

4. Where possible, commercial fishing be phased out of park system waters, except where it is an appropriate use based on historical or cultural significance."

The report on page 42 emphasizes the need to work with the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop Marine Fisheries Programs and contingency plans for environmental emergencies on coastal units of the system. Again, on page 48, commercial fishing appears to receive the lowest priority of any stated National Park Service Aquatic Resource Policy guideline.

In summary, the report is a very credible review and evaluation of the fisheries policies and practices of the National Park Service. However, in the face of Alaska's rapid expansion into parks and monuments, the low priorities given commercial fishing could at some future time create conflicting commercial fishing regulations among regulatory agencies. At one time, when the Bristol Bay National Wildlife Refuge was proposed to extend 6 miles seaward, such a controversy (or set of conflicting regulations) would have occurred. It is probably advisable to comment on that aspect of their recommended future policy guidelines.

Enclosure:

Ad Hoc Fisheries Task Force Report

5-19-80

