

"That concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman, but I would like to add two remarks: I am not pointing an accusing finger at the winter dredge fishery of Virginia. I simply do not know enough about crabs and neither does anyone else to say authoritatively that the winter crab fishery has no effect and I think it is high time we began finding out if it does."

A statement of the Virginia position in these discussions recently was made by the Director of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science as follows:

"The exact cause of this present short supply is unknown. However, we do not believe that it is the result of fishing pressure of the last few years. We do not believe it is due to any lack of numbers of fertile males or spawning female crabs. Statistical data have consistently failed to support the contention that the violent fluctuations of the catch in the 90-year history of the fishery have been due to either fishing pressure or the lack of spawners.

"We are led to the conclusion that the principal factors influencing the crab stocks are environmental. For example, currents, temperatures, salinity, predators, and disease, some of these things about which we know very little, are believed to be among the most important factors controlling the survival of eggs, larvae, and young crabs. . . .

"The indications are that the fishery as it is now operated in Maryland and Virginia has no influence on recruitment in succeeding years. These indications are based upon an analysis of data going back as far as reliable records are available. For this reason, if this is a correct estimate of the situation, then the logical conclusion when we are asked about restrictions is—do not add any more because it will not accomplish anything.

"In other words, at the present time, according to our best data and estimates, the fishery is not influencing recruitment—that is, the numbers of young that come in in the 2 years following the fishery. And therefore the only thing that would be accomplished if the fishery is restricted under these circumstances is to eliminate money from the crabbers' pockets."

The State of Maryland calls upon the Commonwealth of Virginia for a concerted research study, with the assistance of Federal agencies, to determine once and for all the effects of an overfishing of the female egg-bearing crab.

Pending the obtaining of scientific data, the General Assembly of Maryland calls upon the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia to provide at least a partial cessation in the present overfishing of the pregnant crab supply. To this date, officials and legislators of the Commonwealth of Virginia have adopted only a negative approach that in the absence of proof they were harming the adult crab fisheries, they would continue overfishing the female crab supply. Maryland's call is for a positive approach and for recognition of the universal truism that a depletion in the reproducing crab must of logical necessity reduce the supply of adult crabs in the following two seasons; now therefore, be it