

APRIL 13, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary  
-----NOTICE TO THE PRESS

The President has signed H. R. 200 -- Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. This bill extends exclusive U.S. fisheries jurisdiction from 12 miles to 200 miles (and beyond for certain fisheries); restricts foreign fishing for fisheries covered under this extended U.S. jurisdiction; requires the renegotiation of existing international fisheries agreements; and establishes a national fishery management program. The primary purpose of H. R. 200 is to conserve and manage U.S. fishery resources by extending exclusive U.S. fisheries jurisdiction from the current statutory limit of 12 miles to 200 miles and by providing for the development and implementation of fisheries management plans applicable to all foreign and domestic fishing activities under such extended jurisdiction.

The bill establishes, effective March 1, 1977, the new 200 mile fishery conservation zone contiguous to the U.S. territorial sea. It also establishes restrictions on foreign fishing in fisheries subject to extended U.S. jurisdiction. After February 28, 1977, no foreign fishing would be authorized within the zone. In addition, fishing by vessels of any foreign nation would be allowed only if such nation accords reciprocal fishing privileges to U.S. fishing vessels.

The bill provides for the transition to extended U.S. fisheries jurisdiction by requiring the Secretary of State to initiate promptly the renegotiation of any treaty pertaining to fisheries covered under the bill in order to conform such treaty to the bill's provisions. After May 31, 1976, no existing agreement may be renegotiated or new agreement entered into unless it conforms to the provisions applicable to governing fishery agreements. The President is required to transmit the text of each governing fishery agreement to Congress. An agreement shall not become effective if Congress disapproves it by joint resolution within 60 calendar days of continuous session after Presidential transmittal.

The legislation requires the Secretary of the Treasury to embargo fishery imports from any foreign country when the Secretary of State determines that such country has failed to negotiate in good faith to allow U.S. fishermen equitable access to its fisheries, has improperly seized U.S. fishing vessels, or in certain other circumstances.

It provides for the creation of eight Regional Fishery Management Councils. Membership of the Councils is composed of the principal State fishery officials from each constituent State, appropriate federal officials, and members appointed by the Secretary of Commerce.

The Council's responsibilities include the preparation of management plans for each of the fisheries within their geographical jurisdictions.

Finally, Title III establishes certain prohibited acts, provides for civil and criminal penalties and civil forfeitures for violations, and authorizes enforcement of the bill's provisions including seizure of any fishing vessel used in violation of the bill. These provisions are to be effective March 1, 1977.

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