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U.S. FISHERIES IN THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN PACIFIC

by

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There are two types of U.S. fisheries for yellowfin tuna in the central and western Pacific, the distant-water large-purse seine fishery that targets skipjack and yellowfin tuna and local, small-scale or artisanal fisheries that target various species of tunas and tuna-like fishes. The distant-water fishery operates in a large area of the southwestern Pacific (Figure 1) and is conducted with vessels greater than 1000 mt carrying capacity. The small-scale or artisanal fisheries operate within the EEZ's of Hawaii, Guam and the Northern Marianas and consist of small vessels using mainly longline, handline and troll fishing gears.

The distant water purse seine fishery started in 1976-78 when as many as 3 vessels conducted exploratory fishing expeditions to the western Pacific and landed an average of 200 mt of yellowfin tuna per year. Since then, the fishery grew rapidly to a high of 62 vessels in 1983 before dropping to 41 vessels in 1990 (Table 1). Yellowfin tuna landings reached a high of 66,400 mt in 1987, decreased to 25,200 mt in the next year and increased to 57,000 mt in 1990 (Table 1). The average yellowfin tuna landings for the 1980-90 period is 35,100 mt. Skipjack tuna, the other major species in the landings, reached a high of 124,300 mt in 1984, decreased to 87,600 mt the following year before increasing to 107,400 mt in 1990. Yellowfin tuna landings from preliminary statistics for 1991 indicate a decrease to approximately 35,000 mt. However, the number of vessels participating in the fishery increased to 42 in 1991 and is expected to increase even higher in the near future.

(55)

The majority of the small-scale or artisanal fishery landings are made in the coastal waters of Hawaii. Hawaii's fishery probably started in the 1930's, but landings were first recorded in 1954. Landings increased from 140 mt in 1956 to a high of 1,800 mt in 1988 before decreasing slightly to 1,700 mt in 1990 (Table 2). Landings of yellowfin tuna for the artisanal fishery in American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Marianas have been as high 80 mt between 1979 and 1989 (Table 2). The average artisanal fishery landings for the 1980-90 period is 1,400 mt. Yellowfin tuna artisanal fishery landings are expected to remain relatively constant with moderate increases by the Hawaiian fishery.

Table 1: Total number of U.S. distant-water purse seiners and landings of tropical tunas in the central and western Pacific.

YEAR	VESSELS	LANDINGS (MT)			
		YELLOWFIN	SKIPJACK	BIGEYE	TOTAL
1976	3	200	500	-	700
1977	1	200	700	-	900
1978	2	200	800	-	1,000
1979	8	559	8,031	16	8,606
1980	14	1,059	9,918	-	10,977
1981	14	12,973	17,394	173	30,540
1982	24	22,011	37,984	1	59,996
1983	62	49,599	104,057	-	153,656
1984	61	45,090	124,322	55	169,467
1985	40	29,012	87,649	-	116,661
1986	36	36,608	93,477	-	130,085
1987	35	66,359	79,822	-	146,181
1988	32	25,211	99,454	-	124,665
1989	34	41,241(47,017)	90,084	-	131,325
1990	41	57,132(57,961)	107,358	-	164,490

Remarks:

- landings in each calendar year may contain some catches from the previous year.

- Yellowfin figures in () for 1989 and 1990 are catches.

Table 2. Yellowfin tuna landings (metric tons) from U.S. artisanal fisheries in the central and western Pacific.

YEAR	HAWAII					AMERICAN SAMOA	NORTHERN MARIANA	GUAM
	TOTAL	LL	BB	HL	OT			
1954	240	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1955	200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1956	140	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1957	170	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1958	180	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1959	256	175	60	14	7	-	-	-
1960	161	137	5	14	5	-	-	-
1961	209	152	26	28	3	-	-	-
1962	180	110	48	20	2	-	-	-
1963	175	118	29	18	10	-	-	-
1964	226	133	58	27	8	-	-	-
1965	226	153	44	23	6	-	-	-
1966	228	159	22	35	12	-	-	-
1967	228	141	36	38	13	-	-	-
1968	188	99	46	35	8	-	-	-
1969	191	106	38	31	16	-	-	-
1970	320	251	18	27	24	-	-	-
1971	388	191	22	147	28	-	-	-
1972	374	160	25	146	43	-	-	-
1973	350	98	14	172	66	-	-	-
1974	523	130	23	244	126	-	-	-
1975	779	102	25	319	333	-	-	-
1976	839	111	43	370	315	-	-	-
1977	932	176	21	455	280	-	-	-
1978	963	172	62	393	336	-	-	-
1979	980	84	49	481	366	-	2	13
1980	1,196	72	90	674	360	-	0.4	22
1981	1,278	59	89	844	286	-	3	49
1982	821	35	106	477	203	3	4	62
1983	919	66	55	451	347	9	8	30
1984	911	77	54	210	570	26	7	32
1985	1,084	51	103	124	806	16	4	56
1986	1,715	92	114	3	1,506	22	6	21
1987	1,542	272	-	-	1,270	14	4	19
1988	1,815	590	-	-	1,225	18	6	35
1989	1,515	998	-	-	517	16	4	16
1990	1,696	1,134	-	-	562	-	-	-

Remarks:

Landings for American Samoa, Northern Marianas and Guam are mainly troll fishing gear.

LL = longline, BB = baitboat, HL = handline, OT = other, usually a combination of troll and handline gears.

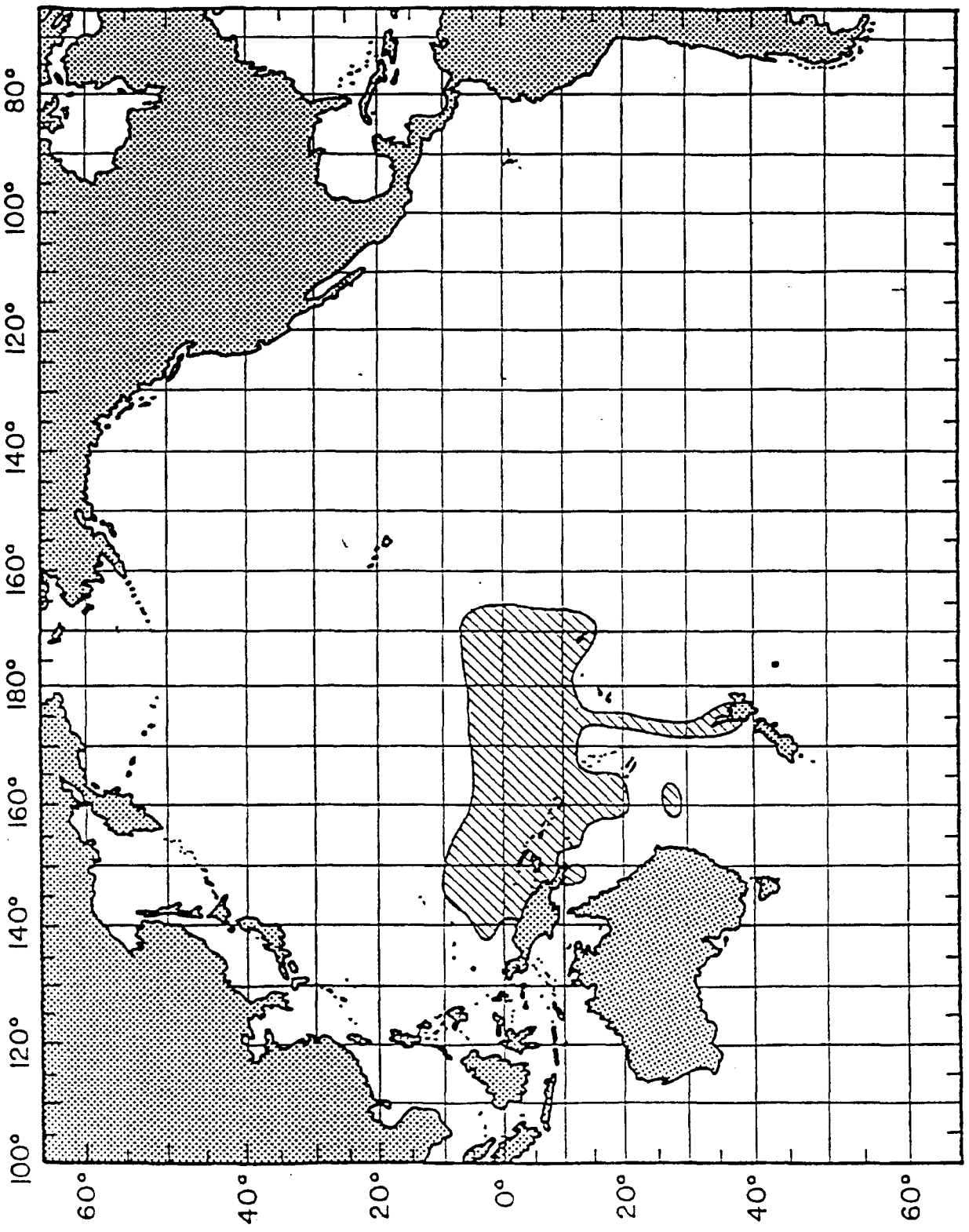

Figure 1. General area fished by the U.S. central and western Pacific distant-water purse seine fishery, 1988-90.