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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT
No. 558

FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONTROL OF SEA LAMPREYS OF THE GREAT LAKES AREA

JUNE 13, 1951.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. BOYKIN, from the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 2995]

The Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 2995) to amend the joint resolution of August 8, 1946, as amended, with respect to appropriations authorized for the conduct of investigations and studies thereunder, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the bill, as amended, do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 2, line 3, strike out "each of the five succeeding fiscal years." and insert in lieu thereof "the fiscal year ending June 30, 1952."

This bill, H. R. 2995, would further amend Public Law 672, Seventy-ninth Congress, approved August 8, 1946, as amended, by authorizing the continuation of the investigations and studies thereunder during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1952, with the authorized limit of cost of such investigations and studies being set at \$500,000.

The act of August 8, 1946, was amended by Public Law 249, Eighty-first Congress, approved August 18, 1949, to provide for authorizations to continue the studies which had been commenced on a somewhat limited scale. At that time extensive hearings were held wherein your committee was informed by Federal and State authorities that the existing program of investigations of the abundance and distribution of the sea lampreys in the Great Lakes had proven the problem to be vastly greater than originally supposed. It was shown that the predatory and parasitic habits of the sea lamprey endangered the very existence of the formerly extensive and highly valuable commercial fisheries of the Great Lakes with particular regard to the lake-trout fishery.

The importance of pursuing these studies further is self-evident. Prior to 1936 the normal production in the Lake Michigan trout fishery was from 5 to approximately 7 million pounds, and had a value of approximately \$3,000,000 per year calculated on the basis of 50 cents per pound to the fishermen. Since 1936, however, the catch has come down to such an extent that by 1949 it was worth only \$172,000 in value to the fishermen. This dramatic reduction in dollar value took place notwithstanding an increase in the fishermen's price to about 70 cents per pound. In Lake Huron in 1935 the lake-trout catch was worth approximately \$700,000 and in 1949 the annual value of the catch was only \$500. In other words, in Lake Huron the lake-trout population has been decimated to the point that it is below the practical commercial level.

Evidence before your committee disclosed that, while the sea lamprey has heretofore primarily preyed upon the lake trout in Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, it is now seriously extending its depredations into Lake Superior and is also found to be attacking other valuable food fish in areas where the trout has been depleted. A corollary effect of the sea lamprey's destruction of the lake-trout fishery in Lakes Huron and Michigan has been to greatly increase the intensity of fishing for other types as well as to increase fishing intensity for lake trout in the Lake Superior area, where the sea lamprey has not yet gained extensive foothold. Thus the increased intensity of fishing carries with it the additional threat of depletion through overfishing.

Your committee has recently concluded hearings on this bill (H. R. 2995) and is pleased to report that the expanded investigations conducted pursuant to Public Law 249 are showing encouraging progress in developing methods to control this predatory creature, which has nearly eliminated certain of the most valuable species of food fish in a multi-million-dollar fishery in a relatively few years' time.

Witnesses before your committee urged that the salvation of the important Great Lakes fisheries depended upon the development of methods of control or eradication of the sea lamprey within the shortest possible time. These witnesses freely conceded the difficulty and great magnitude of the problem and the consequent high cost of the research program. The Fish and Wildlife Service pointed out the difficulties of making an accurate estimate of cost for such a research program, it being estimated that to protect the program and assure positive results thereunder there should be an authorization of not to exceed \$500,000 for each of the succeeding five fiscal years. Your committee recognized the merit of the position taken by the Fish and Wildlife Service witnesses, but felt that a better control could be established without hampering the end result of the work if the authorization were limited at this time to the fiscal year ending June 30, 1952.

The committee hopes and requests that a full report be made to the Congress as early in 1952 as may be feasible, together with a detailed projection of plans, procedures, and estimates of cost needed for the future. At such time it is the sense of the committee that further authorization for the following year would be favorably considered to the extent justified by results reported and the needs recognized as essential at the time of the report.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 2a of rule 'XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, changes in existing law made by the bill, as introduced, are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter is printed in italics, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

Section 3 of Public Law 249, Eighty-first Congress (act of August 8, 1946 (60 Stat. 930) as amended), approved August 18, 1949:

That the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior is hereby authorized and directed to prosecute investigations of the abundance and distribution of sea lampreys and their effects on fishes, experiments to develop control measures, and a vigorous program for the elimination and eradication of sea lamprey populations of the Great Lakes; to survey the Great Lakes area to determine what localities would be most suitable for the establishment of additional fish hatcheries and rearing ponds if, and when, it becomes desirable for the Federal Government to operate such additional fish hatcheries and rearing ponds in the Great Lakes area; and is authorized and directed to report to the Congress not later than December 31, 1950, the results of such survey and to make recommendations with respect thereto. The cost of the investigations and studies authorized in this section shall not exceed \$359,000 for the first [year and the sum of \$216,000 per annum thereafter] *year, \$216,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1951, and \$500,000 for each of the five succeeding fiscal years.*



CHAPTER IV

The first of the two main parts of the work is a general survey of the history of the subject, from the earliest times to the present day. The second part is a detailed account of the various methods of control, and the results of their application. The third part is a summary of the results of the work, and a discussion of the various questions which arise in connection with it.