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Possible Conservation of Yellowtail Flounder in Subarea 5

The yellowtail flounder stock in Subarea 5 is not presently subject to regulation by the Commission. Preliminary examination of available information, however, indicates that the stock is fully exploited and that it is supported by only a limited number of year-classes. Thus it would be especially vulnerable to any increase in fishing pressure. Past experience has demonstrated the rapidity with which overexploitation can lead to resource depletion. Thus, it may be appropriate for the Commission, after review of the matter by the Research and Statistics Committee, to consider protective measures for the yellowtail flounder stock in Subarea 5.

The principal regulatory alternatives available to the Commission would be proposals to:

1. prescribe an overall catch limit for yellowtail flounder in Subarea 5*
2. establish a closed season for yellowtail flounder in Subarea 5*
3. prohibit the use of certain fishing gear and appliances in the fishery for yellowtail flounder in Subarea 5, including the establishment of a minimum mesh size.

The Committee on Research and Statistics is scheduled to review all available data on yellowtail flounder prior to the 1970 Annual Meeting. This review will provide guidance as to which of those alternatives might most appropriately be applied to yellowtail flounder stocks so as to avoid resource depletion if the Commission should consider a regulatory proposal to be necessary or desirable. The yellowtail flounder stock has traditionally yielded harvests of great importance to US fisheries. Thus, at the 1970 Annual Meeting, the United States expects a thorough review of the need for conservation measures for yellowtail flounder in Subarea 5.

*A proposal for a closed season could be combined with a proposal for an overall catch quota during the period when the fishery would be open.