
Guide to the Records of the California Marine Research Committee, 1935-1977

Processed by Deborah Cozort Day.

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Collection number: AC49

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Records of the California Marine Research Committee,

Date (inclusive): 1935-1977

Collection number: AC49

Creator: California. Marine Research Committee

Extent: 1.5 cubic feet

Repository: Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library.

University of California, San Diego

La Jolla, California 92093

Shelf location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the library's online catalog.

Abstract: The collection consists of one and one half cubic feet of records collected and generated by Julian G. Burnette, Chair of the Marine Research Committee, documenting the history and work of the committee. The committee was appointed by California Governor Earl Warren in 1948 to investigate the causes of the depletion of the sardine in California waters. The records include minutes of meetings, correspondence, reports and other committee files dated 1935-1977. The bulk of the collection consists of material dated 1947-1964. The collection includes correspondence exchanged by Burnette and other committee members with scientists and fisheries industry experts including Wilbert MacLeod Chapman, Oscar E. Sette, and Harald Ulrik Sverdrup.

Language: English.

Provenance

Julian G. Burnette stored these records in Long Beach, California with the National Marine Fisheries Service. When the Marine Region South at Long Beach ceased to operate in 2000, Rick Klingbeil, Project Manager, sent these files to Deborah Losey, Librarian at National Marine Fisheries Service in La Jolla, California. Losey offered the files to Scripps Institution of Oceanography Archives on August 22, 2000, and the collection was accepted on that date.

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Restrictions

Student and personnel records are restricted in accordance with law and university policy.

Preferred Citation

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Administrative History

The sudden depletion of sardines (*Sardinops sagax*) from California waters in 1946-1947 alarmed the California fishing industry. The California Legislature approved a special tax on commercial sardine landings at the request of fishing industry leaders and scientists to fund scientific research into the problem. The tax funds were administered by a committee called the Marine Research Committee. It was composed of nine members appointed by California Governor Earl Warren, five representing the industry, one representing the public, one from California Fish and Game Commission, and two from California Division of Fish and Game. Fishing industry expert Julian G. Burnette chaired the Marine Research Committee from its establishment in 1948 until February 28, 1967. Administrators from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, notably Harald Ulrik Sverdrup and Roger Revelle, participated in the early discussions that led to the formation of the Marine Research Committee and subsequently played an important role in the scientific program.

The Marine Research Committee established a Special Technical Committee composed of scientists in 1948 to oversee the work at sea. The Technical Committee was chaired by Robert C. Miller. The Technical Committee devised a program which became known as the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations (CalCOFI). CalCOFI continues in operation today. CalCOFI took a broad multidisciplinary ecological approach to the study of the depletion of the sardine in California waters. This included investigations of physical and chemical conditions in the sea and studies of organic productivity of the sea and its utilization assigned to the Scripps Institution of Oceanography; studies of spawning, survival, and recruitment of sardine, undertaken at the U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries; and studies of stock availability, abundance, distribution, migration and behavior, and fishing methods undertaken by California Fish and Game. Stanford's Hopkins Marine Station and the California Academy of Sciences were also participants in CalCOFI studies. All the participating agencies cooperated to study dynamics of the sardine population and fishery.

CalCOFI used a fleet of ships including R/V E.W. Scripps and other vessels of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and converted federal vessels including M/S Black Douglas, M/S N.B. Scofield, and M/S Yellowfin. These ships collect oceanographic data at one hundred and twenty-two stations over a large area of the ocean off the coast of California known as the California Current research area. Data was collected on a monthly basis for the first decade, and continues today on quarterly cruises.

CalCOFI sought to determine if variations in stock sizes of sardine and other fish were due to overharvesting, or simply a natural variability. During its first two decades, CalCOFI was successful in documenting the life cycle of the sardine, identifying its position on the food chain, describing its spawning habits and grounds, its schooling habits and developing methods to estimate the numbers of the population including age composition of juveniles and adults. CalCOFI's investigation of fishing grounds contributed new knowledge to other fisheries, including anchovy, jack mackerel, and hake. CalCOFI is also credited with some significant discoveries in geology and physical oceanography, most notably the discovery of a pattern of ocean warming called El Niño which significantly impacts the climate of the west coast. These accomplishments were overshadowed by continued disagreements and uncertainty about the causes of the depletion of the sardine, which had virtually disappeared from California waters by the early 1960's. The Marine Research Committee was often the focus of debate between groups advocating applied research which specifically addressed sardine depletion, and others which championed pure research with broad ecological goals.

Baxter, J.L. "The Role of the Marine Research Committee and CalCOFI." California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations Report 23 (1982): 35-38.

McElvoy, Arthur. The Fisherman's Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fisheries, 1850-1980. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

McEvoy, Arthur and Harry N. Scheiber. "Scientists, Entrepreneurs, and the Policy Process: A Study of the Post-1945 Sardine Depletion." Journal of Economic History 44 (1984): 393-413.

Scheiber, Harry N. "California Marine Research and the Founding of Modern Fisheries Oceanography: CalCOFI's Early Years, 1947-1964. California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations Reports 31 (1990): 63-873.

Scheiber, Harry N. "Pacific Ocean Resources, Science, and Law of the Sea: Wilbert M. Chapman and Pacific Fisheries, 1945-1970." Ecology Law Quarterly 13 (1986): 381-534.

Scheiber, Harry N. "Wilbert Chapman and the Revolution in U.S. Pacific Ocean Science and Policy, 1945-1951," in: Nature in its Greatest Extent: Western Science in the Pacific, edited by P. Rehbock and R. MacLeod. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988.

Shor, Elizabeth N. Scripps Institution of Oceanography: Probing the Oceans, 1936-1976. San Diego: Tofua Press, 1978.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in original order. Legal sized items were removed from original letter sized folders, flattened and placed in legal sized folders. The collection included several oversize commissions, maps and drawings. Separation sheets were prepared and placed in the folders to indicate where these items were removed. The oversized items were then flattened and moved to oversize storage in a folder identified as AC 49 which is housed in the oversize map cases at the Archives of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of one and a half cubic feet of records collected and created by Julian G. Burnette, first chair of the Marine Research Committee from April 28, 1948 until his resignation on February 28, 1967. The records are dated 1935 to 1977, although the bulk of the material is dated 1947-1964. These records include Burnette's notes, correspondence and industry reports on the depletion of the sardine and efforts by fishing industry experts to persuade the California Legislature to address the problem. Some files in this collection predate the establishment of the Marine Research Committee. For instance, the collection includes correspondence exchanged by Burnette and Oscar O. Sette which discussed what kind of scientific studies might be undertaken to address the problem, and the cost of such studies.

Burnette was one of the industry representatives who formed an ad hoc Sardine Advisory Committee which first met on January 6, 1948 to discuss the problem. Burnette, who was representing the San Francisco Sardine Association at that meeting, proposed legislative action. He suggested that the group approach the California Legislature for regulation of the fishery and for funds to establish a commercial fisheries commission. Assembly Bill 1468 was introduced, and the Sardine Advisory Committee lobbied the legislature on behalf of the bill. The collection includes Burnette's files on the Sardine Advisory Committee. These files include correspondence between Burnette and Richard S. Croker, chief of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, and other scientists.

Between 1946 and 1947, fishing industry representatives reached out to scientists in California to form a coalition to address the problem of the depletion of the sardine and to reach a consensus on action. At the same time, Burnette corresponded with colleagues in the fishing industry, with legislators in Washington, D.C. and western states and with national scientific organizations and fisheries groups to discuss fisheries issues in general and the sardine depletion problem specifically. The collection includes correspondence documenting these interactions. This material includes correspondence exchanged with Wilbert MacLeod Chapman, California Governor Earl Warren, and other high ranking public officials and industry experts.

The collection includes documentation of the work of the Marine Research Committee's Technical Committee. This committee was organized in 1948 to undertake the scientific work necessary to study the sardine depletion problem. The Technical Committee was chaired by ichthyologist Robert C. Miller of the California Academy of Sciences. Members included Oscar E. Sette of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Harald Ulrik Sverdrup, oceanographer and director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and Richard S. Croker of the California Division of Fish and Game. The work of the technical committee during its first decade is documented in the correspondence and MRC minutes and reports. There are also several files specifically related to the Technical Committee which document its work in 1957.

While this collection includes documentation of the scientific program which became known as the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations (CalCOFI), the collection is stronger in the area of program policy and administration than the actual conduct of scientific research. However, the collection does document differences between CalCOFI scientists who favored an applied research program focused specifically on the sardine and scientists who favored a broader multidisciplinary ecological approach.

This collection offers significant material documenting the fisheries industry in California in general and specifically the sardine fishery. The collection documents relationships between the industry and government in California specifically, but also in other west coast states and nationally. The collection will be useful to scholars interested in the history of oceanography, ichthyology and fisheries, to those interested in the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and other California scientific organizations, and to those interested in the relationship of science and government.

Related Collections

Material documenting the participation of Scripps Institution of Oceanography administrators in the formation of the Marine Research Committee (MRC) and in the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations (CalCOFI) can be found among the records of the Office of the Director, Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Records generated by the Office of the Director during the administration of Harald Ulrik Sverdrup, Archival Collection 34, and Roger Revelle, Archival Collection 16 include material on MRC and CalCOFI.

Scripps Institution of Oceanography established the Marine Life Research Program in 1948 to undertake those parts of the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations assigned to the institution. In 1951, the Marine Life Research Program became part of the University of California Institute for Marine Resources (IMR), a state wide institute with headquarters at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Consequently, records of the Marine Life Research Program and the Institute for Marine Resources include documentation of the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations. A Guide to the Records of the University of California Institute of Marine Resources, Office of the Director, 1951-1970, Archival Collection 3, describes this record group.

The records of a number of individual scientists at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography also include documentation of MRC and CalCOFI. Ichthyologist Carl Leavitt Hubbs and oceanographer John Dove Isaacs were actively involved in CalCOFI, and their papers at the Archives of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography Archives include documentation on MRC and CalCOFI.

Box 1, Folder 1	Sardine Advisory Committee, n.d.
Box 1, Folder 2	1935
Box 1, Folder 3	1947
Box 4, Folder 1L	1948
Box 1, Folder 4	January-February 1948
Box 1, Folder 5	March-April 1948
Box 1, Folder 6	May 1948
Box 1, Folder 7	June 1948
Box 1, Folder 8	July-August 1948
Box 4, Folder 2L	Sardine Control and Research, Prior to Marine Research Committee, n.d.
Box 1, Folder 9	1946
Box 1, Folder 10	January-March 1947
Box 1, Folder 11	April 1947-1948
Box 4, Folder 3L	Sardines, Marine Research Committee, 1948-1949
Box 1, Folder 12	March-April 1948
Box 1, Folder 13	May-November 1948
Box 1, Folder 14	January-March 1949
Box 1, Folder 15	April-July 1949
Box 1, Folder 16	August-December 1949
Box 1, Folder 17	Marine Research Committee, Commissions, 1955-1963
Box 1, Folder 18	Marine Research Committee, Budget Data, 1959-1960
Box 1, Folder 19	1960-1961
Box 1, Folder 20	Marine Research Committee, Correspondence, 1950
Box 1, Folder 21	1954
Box 1, Folder 22	January-March 1955
Box 1, Folder 23	April-June 1955
Box 1, Folder 24	July-December 1955
Box 1, Folder 25	January-May 1956
Box 1, Folder 26	June-December 1956
Box 2, Folder 1	January-April 1957
Box 2, Folder 2	May-August 1957
Box 2, Folder 3	September-December 1957
Box 4, Folder 4L	October 1957
Box 2, Folder 4	1958
Box 2, Folder 5	1959
Box 2, Folder 6	January-April 1960
Box 2, Folder 7	May-August 1960
Box 2, Folder 8	September-December 1960
Box 2, Folder 9	January-March 1961
Box 2, Folder 10	April-December 1961
Box 2, Folder 11	January-May 1962
Box 2, Folder 12	June 1962
Box 2, Folder 13	July-December 1962
Box 2, Folder 14	January-March 1963
Box 2, Folder 15	April-May 1963
Box 2, Folder 16	June 1963
Box 2, Folder 17	July 1963
Box 2, Folder 18	August 1963
Box 3, Folder 1	September 1963
Box 3, Folder 2	October 1963
Box 3, Folder 3	November-December 1963

Box 3, Folder 4	1964
Box 3, Folder 5	Marine Research Committee Minutes, 1948-1949
Box 3, Folder 6	1950
Box 3, Folder 7	1951
Box 3, Folder 8	1952-1953
Box 3, Folder 9	1954-1955
Box 3, Folder 10	December 18, 1957, Data for Meeting
Box 3, Folder 11	July 15, 1977, Reporter's Transcript re Proceedings re Minutes of Meeting of the Marine Research Committee, taken at Department of Fish and Game
Box 3, Folder 12	Marine Research Committee, Photos, n.d.
Box 3, Folder 13	Marine Research Committee, Special Technical Committee, January-May 1957
Box 3, Folder 14	June-August 1957
Box 3, Folder 15	September-December 1957
Box 3, Folder 16	Marine Research Committee, Wilbert Chapman's letter of introduction and answers to it, with other pertinent papers, August-September 1960
Box 3, Folder 17	October-December 1960
Box 3, Folder 18	1961
Box 3, Folder 19	Replacement of M/V Yellowfin, June-July 1956
Box 3, Folder 20	August-September 1956
Box 3, Folder 21	October-December 1956
Box 3, Folder 22	1957