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Management of world fisheries : implications of extended coastal state jurisdiction by EL Miles: Book review

Peter Saenger
Southern Cross University

Publication details

Post-print of Saenger, P 1992, 'Management of world fisheries : implications of extended coastal state jurisdiction by EL Miles: Book review', , *The Great Circle*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 70-71.

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Review of 'Management of World Fisheries - Implications of Extended Coastal State Jurisdiction'

Edited by E.L. Miles, ISBN 0-295-96854-0,
University of Washington Press, 1990, 342 pages.

When Chile, Peru and Ecuador declared 200 nm maritime zones to protect their inshore fisheries by the Santiago Declaration in 1952, other maritime nations were outraged. Not long afterwards, however, the wisdom of that decision dawned on numerous coastal states, and Iceland declared its 200 nm zone in 1975, followed in 1977 by the USA, Canada, Denmark (Greenland) and France. The Icelandic 'cod war' erupted in 1975-76 while France, with its outlying provinces such as Michel et St. Pierre off Labrador, soon created a similar conflict situation.

Given that wars have been fought over fisheries, the question as to whether or not fisheries management has improved since the generalised acceptance of 200 nm fisheries zones is one worth pondering. Over the past decade, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982 has changed the distribution of authority to control and regulate fisheries in that it has vested property rights in the coastal state. This book, the proceedings of a workshop organised by the World Fisheries Project at the University of Washington, Seattle in 1985, assesses the impacts of these changes on the major fisheries of the World. It attempts to provide a systematic and comprehensive assessment of the opportunities and pitfalls created by extended jurisdiction and to facilitate improved performance in management by evaluating actual experience to date in the most productive regions of the world ocean.

Fisheries management has long been an 'art' rather than a 'science' - it pretends to be precise, even mathematical; it claims to be predictive; it lays claim to being data-based; it even appears on occasions to be logical. Yet despite its 'science' mantle, it is the political 'art' of the possible. How else does the EEC government in Brussels direct the Spanish Captain of a Portuguese trawler to refrain from catching squid in Namibian waters? In fact, in one of the most thought provoking chapters, J. Troadec of IFREMER in France, argues that a failure to recognize the political nature of fisheries management in the past, has rendered most management programs ineffective.

So, how does the 'art' of extended jurisdiction differ from that previously more narrowly defined? Is it merely the same techniques spread over a larger canvas? Or has there been a change of brush-strokes, or in the composition of the paint? A range of experts summarise various geographical case studies and list the achievements, benefits and costs, impacts and improvements gained to date. Virtually all of the 15 main fishing areas as defined by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation are covered, with the notable exceptions of the eastern and western Indian Ocean.

Several common themes can be identified and these have been woven into two summary chapters by J.A. Gulland and R. Kearney. First, there has been a

worldwide increase in national fishing fleets to displace foreign fishing vessels; coastal states have benefitted by increasing their authority over what was previously common property and this appears to have resulted in generally improved management regimes; to this should be added the increased effectiveness of surveillance and enforcement.

Of most signifcance, however, is the fact that the rate of decline of many important fish stocks has been arrested - often due to a decrease in fishing pressure resulting from the removal of foreign vessels without a similar increase in the size or efficiency of the national fleet. This potential improvement, unfortunately, may be short-term if coastal states allow their fishing effort to rise to that before regulation became effective through extended jurisdiction.

Overall, the book makes a valuable contribution to fisheries management in the new framework resulting from recent Conventions of the Law of the Sea. It provides useful data and ideas for a range of disciplines including fisheries managers, maritime lawyers and policy-makers, fisheries economists and anyone with a general interest in ocean resource regulation. At $US 30 plus handling, it is extremely good value and highly recommended.

P. Saenger
Director
Centre for Coastal Management
UNE - Northern Rivers
Lismore NSW 2480