

GRAVEL MOVES TO PROTECT FISH RESOURCES

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Sen. Mike Gravel (Democrat-Alaska) told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently that “the overriding need to protect our living marine resources” outweighs possible adverse reaction by other nations to unilateral U.S. action on the 200-mile

fishing limit.

“As a mature nation, we must take the lead in protecting the resources of the sea,” said the senator, who offered his testimony at the invitation of the committee.

Senator Gravel is a co-sponsor of the 200-mile fishing zone bill

now being sponsored by the committee.

He told the panel, chaired by Sen. John Sparkman (D-Alabama), that “the situation facing Alaska’s commercial fisheries is grave” and cited the depleted stocks at Bristol Bay as an example of what to expect as a result of further delay.

“The inroads of foreign fleets on American coastal fisheries are destroying a valuable resource,” he said, arguing that “further delay is encouragement for these foreign fleets to take what they can get, as soon as possible.

Senator Gravel castigated the Japanese for their salmon harvesting practices and called for “immediate curtailment of the over exploitation” of Alaska fisheries.

Expressing his disappointment at the deadlock at the recent U.N. Law of the Sea Conference, he suggested that the only effective solution is to “support immediate passage of our legislative efforts to establish unilaterally a 200-mile statutory limit.”

Sen. Claiborne Pell (R-R.I.), a ranking member of the committee who attended the Caracas, Venezuela, Sea Law Conference, agreed with the Alaska legislator’s remarks, adding that he foresaw only further delay unless the U.S. acts unilaterally to protect its coastal waters beyond the current 12-mile limit.

Sen. Edmund Muskie (D-Me.) another Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, also endorsed the over-all concept, stating that he will support current legislative efforts to extend the zone.

Senator Gravel also reiterated his call for economic sanctions against the Japanese who, he charged, are guilty of “continued violations of international treaties.” Earlier, the Alaska Democrat had called for the banning of Japanese fish imports, citing two recent Japanese violations off the Western Aleutians.

The senator has introduced legislation in the Senate to aid Bristol Bay fishermen and to help restock the depleted fishery there.

The Senate Commerce Committee has already given its stamp of approval to the 200-mile bill. The Foreign Relations Committee is expected to wind up its consideration of the measure within the next two weeks.

When the committee concludes its deliberations, the bill will be submitted to the entire Senate for a vote later this month.