



Department of Justice

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The Department of Justice today filed a civil antitrust suit--and a consent decree--alleging that four Seattle-based seafood processing companies and a fishermen's marketing association conspired to fix the price of live crab caught in the Bering Sea near the Alaska Peninsula.

Attorney General William French Smith said the complaint, which alleged a violation of Section 1 of the Sherman Act, was filed in the U.S. District Court in Seattle, Washington. Named as defendants were Pan-Alaska Fisheries, Inc., Sea-Alaska Products, Inc., Universal Seafoods, Inc., Whitney-Fidalgo Seafood, Inc., and the Alaska Marketing Association--the principal representative of crab fishermen in the area.

At the same time that it filed the complaint, the Department filed a proposed consent decree that would, if approved by the court, terminate the suit.

William F. Baxter, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Antitrust Division, said the proposed consent decree would enjoin the four processor defendants from fixing prices and exchanging price information. They would also be enjoined from meeting as a group with the marketing association to negotiate prices for live Bering Sea crab.

The complaint alleged that beginning in 1977 the five defendants conducted group bargaining sessions in which they discussed and agreed upon the price to be paid Bering Sea fishermen for deliveries of live king and tanner crab.

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In 1980 the four defendant firms bought about \$40 million worth of Bering Sea crab from the fishermen.

In accordance with the Antitrust Procedures and Penalties Act of 1974, a competitive impact statement regarding the decree has been filed with the court. Copies of this statement and of the proposed decree are available upon request in the Legal Procedure Unit, Room 7416, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20530. They are also available for inspection in the Office of the Clerk, United States District Court, Seattle, Washington.

Comments to the Department and to the court regarding the decree are invited from members of the public within the statutory 60-day time period. They should be addressed to Charles S. Stark, Chief, Foreign Commerce Section, Room 7115, Antitrust Division, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20530.

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