

Department of Aviation (*Direccion Nacional de Aviacion Civil* or DAC) took part in the illegal action. Inspectors of the Galapagos National Park observed that boxes and suitcases were being unloaded from a car belonging to the DAC and taken to a plane of the Air Force that was going to leave for Guayaquil.

Investigations began and it was shown that the cargo did not have the pre-checking seal, nor did it have an addressee indicated. The driver of the vehicle was Sargeant Braulio Bravo, of the DAC.

The Minister stated that, before the 1st of April, sea cucumber fishing was prohibited and that the confiscated sea cucumbers were already processed. She acknowledged that the Ministry authorized the opening of the sea cucumber fishery in Galapagos for two months, beginning the 1st of April. The objective: to evaluate the impact that the exploitation of this species could cause.

Soon new regulations would be announced, along with the names of the three sites in which it will be possible to undertake fishing activities. The Charles Darwin Research Station and the National Institute of Fisheries (*Instituto Nacional de Pesca*)

will be in charge of the analysis of data. In addition, sea cucumber fishermen will be trained with regard to permitted size and quotas.

Fishing for sea cucumbers was officially closed in 1995, but the National Department of Fisheries (*Direccion Nacional de Pesca*) in Guayaquil continued to receive denunciations. The arguments given by the infractors: the activity took place before the moratorium.

The uncontrolled harvesting began in 1991 in the waters around Isabela Island, in the Bolivar Channel by Fernandina Island and in the zone of exclusion within the 40-mile limit.

A report by Traffic International, the program that monitors trade in wildlife, stated that, between 1992 and 1996, 80 metric tons of sea cucumbers, that is, more than four million individuals, were exported.

In addition, the trade structure had problems: a sea cucumber shipment left Galapagos and went to Piura (Peru), then entered Guayaquil to travel to Mexico or the United States and thence to Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Holothurian fishery in Washington (USA)

by Alex Bradbury¹

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Landings of sea cucumbers in the Washington State, from 1995 onward, have been:

- 1995: 529 metric tonnes
- 1996: 237 metric tonnes
- 1997: 227 metric tonnes
- 1998: 208 metric tonnes

The reason for the big drop in landings beginning in 1996 is simple: that is the year that treaty Indian tribes began receiving (legally) 50 per cent of the total statewide quota. But the Indian tribes are still not set up for diving, very few boats participate in the Indian fishery, so the 50 per cent of the quota assigned to Indian tribes is not taken, except for a few pounds. It is not legal for non-Indians to take the Indian 50 per cent, even if the Indians are unable to take their share. This may change in the fu-

ture, as the Indians learn the fishery and buy diving equipment. Quotas themselves have remained relatively stable for 1996 and 1997 at 480 metric tonnes annually. But in 1998 we arbitrarily reduced the annual quota to 408 metric tonnes, a 15 per cent reduction simply because we are not doing any stock assessment and therefore do not know what is happening to the stocks.

Catch per unit effort (CPUE) trends in recent years (as kg per diver hour, from logbook data, non-Indian divers only) are as follows:

- 1995: 63 kg/hr
- 1996: 56 kg/hr
- 1997: 65 kg/hr
- 1998: 80 kg/hr

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