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Sea Frontier Significance Grows

A FRONTIER that has defied man for centuries is taking on new significance. Its development probably will reach far inland to touch even cowmen on remote Oklahoma ranches.

This frontier consists of the oceans that cover twice as much of our planet as land areas occupy, and prospects are that efforts to control the waters will be no less vigorous than those that have determined which nations rule the lands.

Right now, accusations of fish rustling are being made on the ocean range and as submarine mining gets going, we may expect claim jumping, similar to what happened in the Old West.

Growing populations have caused many nations to increase their dependence upon the world's 30,000 species of fish as sources of food. For a long time, oceans were regarded as virtually inexhaustible sources of food, but not any more.

Instead of imaginative scien-

tists and food specialists suggest ing ways to fence off the oceans electronically to raise fish and foliage for food, fears are now being expressed that resources of the seas may become critically depleted.

These apprehensions were intensified when Japan, Russia and other nations began harvesting the seas on a mechanized scale, processing their catches immediately in factory ships anchored nearby. Fishermen protested the competition.

The original 3-mile limit claimed by nations along their coasts, was extended, first to 12 miles and then further. Last year, the United States became one of nearly 50 nations which claim fishery management rights within 200 miles of their shores.

This has generated some tensions where overlapping claims have developed. Meanwhile, ecologists are campaigning to "save the whale" and protesting pollution, natural and man-made.

Fish and food are not the only resources at stake in the race to claim the oceans, which formerly were regarded as belonging to everybody. Offshore production of oil and gas are important, especially our Outer Continental Shelf.

The possibility of obtaining energy by harnessing tides and currents or by utilizing temperature differences also is attracting interest. Greater utilization of sea water is now foreseen as new desalinization processes are developed.

Another huge potential is mining manganese nodules from the ocean floor. A consortium is reported to be ready to start work on a claim 1,200 miles southwest of San Diego, Calif., using a hydraulic lift to scoop minerals from 15,000 feet.

United Nations delegates have been debating questions related to the 200-mile economic zone, but rules that prevailed when Columbus discovered America still hold — finders are keepers.