

DOMESTIC FISHERY REPORT

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

SEPTEMBER, 1989

PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF THE 1989 ALASKA COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHERY

The 1989 salmon return is estimated to have produced a commercial harvest of 150.7 million fish weighing a total of over 633.7 million pounds.

This harvest exceeds the previous record of 146.7 million salmon taken in Alaska during the 1985 season. The preliminary ex-vessel value is estimated at over \$491 million. This is the second highest value in history, second only to the 1988 ex-vessel value of \$742 million. The 1989 salmon prices were one-half to one-third lower than those of 1988. The factors which contributed to these low prices were, the reduced buying power of the Japanese yen, surplus salmon inventories and increased sales of farmed salmon on the open market.

The 1989 salmon harvest was considerably larger than the preseason forecast of 127 million fish. This was due in large part to the near record return of pink salmon to Southeast Alaska where approximately 58.9 million pink salmon were caught. This pink harvest is second only to the 1941 Southeast record catch of approximately 60 million fish.

The fourth largest sockeye return in the history of the Bristol Bay fishery provided the fishermen in this area a catch of 28.7 million fish, their second largest harvest ever.

For the third year in a row the Cook Inlet overall sockeye returns were above the anticipated level. Hatchery contributions of pink salmon to Prince William Sound, Lower Cook Inlet, and Kodiak area fisheries made up large portions of the total pink harvests in those areas. Kodiak's Kitoi Bay hatchery accounted for over 80 percent of the Kodiak area harvest. This occurred because most common property fisheries in the Kodiak area remained closed for the season due to oil contamination from the Exxon Valdez.

PRELIMINARY 1989 CHINOOK SALMON CATCHES BY SOUTHEAST ALASKA FISHERIES

The preliminary 1989 all-gear harvest by Southeast Alaska fisheries was 284,000 chinook salmon. This included a base catch of 266,000 and an Alaska hatchery add-on of 18,000 chinook. The 1989 base catch exceeded the 263,000 base ceiling established by the Pacific Salmon Commission by 3,000 chinook or about 1 percent. However, deviations from catch ceilings since 1987 total 3,500 chinook less than established ceilings. This is within the cumulative management range of +/- 7 1/2% (+/- 20,000 chinook) established by the Commission.

Chinook salmon catches by gear in 1989 were: troll - 234,600 (83%); net - 22,100 (8%); sport - 27,000 (9%). Approximately 34,100 chinook were taken during the winter troll season (October 1, 1988 through April 14, 1989). About 33,200 chinook were harvested during hatchery access troll openings in June, and 164,300 during the general summer troll chinook season July 1-13.

### OIL SPILL IMPACTS

Ever since the March 24 oil spill from the Exxon Valdez, numerous adjustments to commercial salmon, herring, shellfish and groundfish fisheries have been made to prevent oil contamination of Alaskan fishery products. The effects of fishery closures include the loss of harvestable resources and significant reallocations of fish among user groups.

Many fisheries were impacted in the Prince William Sound, Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas. The most dramatic impacts were as follows:

- \* The complete closure of the Prince William Sound roe herring fisheries.
- \* The closure of the entire Kodiak Management Area salmon net fishery with the exception of set gillnetting within the confines of Olga and Moser Bays.
- \* The closure of the Upper Cook Inlet salmon drift gillnet fishery for the season.
- \* The closure for the season of the Eshamy, Southwestern and Montague districts in Prince William Sound to salmon net fishing.
- \* The numerous other fishery impacts are summarized for the season up until August 15 in an attachment.
- \* The magnitude of harvests foregone during the 1989 season and an evaluation of allocative impacts will occur be undertaken. Studies to evaluate long term impacts of the oil spill on fishery resources are ongoing.

### KING CRAB FISHERIES

#### Norton Sound Red King Crab Fishery:

The Norton Sound section commercial red king crab season opened by regulation at noon, August 1. Ten vessels were present on the scheduled tank inspection and registration day, July 31. The 1989 commercial crab fleet consisted of seven catcher-processors and three fishing vessels. The ten vessels brought a total of 2,555 pots to fish in Norton Sound.

Prior to the season, a guideline harvest of 200,000 pounds of legal male king crab was set. This conservative quota was set using preliminary data from the fall 1988 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) trawl survey, which placed the current population at less than 1/3 of the historic population level.

The season was only open for three days. It was closed by emergency order at noon ADT, Friday August 4, when it was anticipated a harvest of 200,000 pounds of legal male king crab would be reached. A harvest of 246,487 (preliminary) pounds of was taken.

#### ST. MATTHEW BLUE KING CRAB FISHERY

St. Matthew blue king crab season opened to fishing at 12:00 Noon, September 1, 1989 and closed at 11:59 PM, September 4, 1989. The pre-season harvest guideline was 1.7 million pounds. The actual season's harvest was 1.2 million pounds taken by 69 vessels, 15 of which were catcher processors. This effort represented a 48 percent increase over that of the 1988 season. The harvest was .5 million pounds short of the pre-season projection. This shortfall resulted from using catcher processor catch rates (catcher processors are the only fishing vessels carrying observers) to project fleet catches. Catcher processors were found to have considerably higher than expected catch rates over those of the catcher vessels. Also, sharp declines in overall catch rates near the end of the season could not be detected prior to the closing announcement due to the intensity of the fishery and the extremely short season.

#### BRISTOL BAY (AREA T) RED KING CRAB FISHERY

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced on August 15 that the 1989 red king crab harvest level is set at 16.5 million pounds. Although this harvest level is well above the 7.5 million pound level set for 1988, the Bristol Bay red king crab stock is still considered depressed. Effort in this fishery is expected to increase sharply. A total of \_\_\_ vessels are registered for this fishery which opens at 12:00 Noon, September 25. This compares to 200 vessels that registered for the 1988 season.

On September 15, 1989 an emergency regulation was enacted that prohibited fishermen, who planned to participate in the Bristol Bay red king crab fishery, from fishing any type of pot gear in Area T for five days prior to the opening date of the season (noon September 25). This action was necessary to preserve the fair start provisions established by the Board of Fisheries. These provisions were in danger of being negated by the existence of an open federal groundfish pot fishery in the Bering Sea.

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

### DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

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## OILSPILL IMPACTS

This report lists commercial and subsistence fisheries impacted through August 15, 1989.

While thought to be comprehensive, it is not intended to represent a complete or final listing of all adjustments to commercial fisheries to date.

There have been several closures, cancellations, and postponements to commercial and subsistence fisheries in Alaska as a result of oil spilled from the "Exxon Valdez" on March 24. These include:

## COMMERCIAL

### *Prince William Sound*

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Herring. The gillnet and purse seine sac roe and pound and wild roe-on-kelp fisheries were canceled April 3 prior to opening.

Pot Shrimp. This fishery was closed while in progress because of the high potential for direct contact of gear and catch with oil on noon, April 3. This closure was anticipated to run until the fishery was scheduled to reopen by regulation, August 15. However, aerial surveys from August 3 through 8 indicated the presence of oil in waters of the Traditional Harvest Area. That area will therefore not open. The Department will continue to monitor the area and announce the potential for a reopening at a later date. The Eastern Harvest Area will open as previously announced.

Trawl Shrimp. Closed 12:00 noon, April 9. This fishery was scheduled to reopen August 15, but aerial surveys indicated the presence of oil in the areas where the fishery was scheduled to occur. The Department will continue to assess developments in the area and announce the potential for a reopening at a later date.

Sablefish (black cod). Did not open as scheduled April 1 because of the oil spill. This fishery reopened in inside waters only, in conjunction with the halibut opening at noon on June 12. Sablefish was not reopened in outside waters because the Gulf of Alaska sablefish quota had been filled.

Northern Area Dungeness crab. Was closed April 30, 12:00 noon until it is determined that the oil danger is past and that fishing is justified.

*Prince William Sound continued*

Groundfish. This fishery was closed at noon on April 30. It reopened with the June 12 halibut opener. Incidental catches indicated no contamination, and this fishery remains open at this time.

Miscellaneous shellfish. On April 24, 1989, it was announced that no miscellaneous shellfish permits would be issued to harvest these species in Prince William Sound until the danger of oil contamination had passed. To date no requests have been received for permits to harvest miscellaneous shellfish in the Sound.

Salmon

Eshamy District commercial drift and set net salmon fishery (100,000 chum surplus to hatchery needs, plus harvests of other species) did not open for the 1989 season, as was announced May 19. This District will not open for the 1989 season.

Most waters of the Northern District surrounding Naked and Perry Islands will remain closed due to beach oiling.

Most waters of the Culross Island Subdistrict (224-30 & 40) will remain closed to salmon fishing during the 1989 season because of exposure to frequent oil sheen.

The Southwestern District will not open for the 1989 season due to oil.

The Montague District (227) will remain closed for the 1989 season. This area includes the inside shoreline of the Montague District, 227-10 and 227-20.

*Upper Cook Inlet*

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Salmon

With the exception of a very minor opening of a small portion of the Central District, the commercial drift gillnet season was cancelled because of oil. In addition, the Department closed setnets in that portion of the Upper Subdistrict south of the Kasilof River for the 12-hour regular fishing period on Friday July 7, 1989, because of presence of oil on the beaches. All other setnet fisheries and fishing periods were managed according to run strength.

*Lower Cook Inlet*

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Pot shrimp (Outer District). This fishery was closed at noon April 30 because of the presence of oil. It reopened at noon on July 7.

Lower Cook Inlet continued

Miscellaneous shellfish. On April 24, 1989, it was announced that no miscellaneous shellfish permits would be issued to harvest these species in the Outer and Eastern Districts until the danger of oil contamination had passed. To date no requests have been received for permits to harvest miscellaneous shellfish from these two districts. All shellfish fisheries in the remaining districts of Cook Inlet are managed according to abundance, effort, and existing regulations.

Groundfish (Outer and Eastern Districts). This fishery was closed at noon on April 30 because of oil. It reopened to all species except sablefish, June 12 in conjunction with the 24-hour halibut period. Sablefish was not reopened because the Gulf of Alaska sablefish quota had been filled.

Smelt Smelt was closed along with groundfish in the Outer and Eastern Districts at noon on April 30, 1989. When groundfish reopened, smelt fishing remained closed.

Herring Sac Roe (Outer and Eastern Districts). These fisheries did not open for the 1989 season because of the presence of oil. This was announced April 15, 1989, prior to the anticipated opening date of April 20.

Salmon. Kamishak District commercial salmon fishery. This seine fishery opened by regulation June 1 and was closed by emergency order on June 9 because of oil. Portions of the Kamishak District north of Contact Point were opened after July 20 based on run strength. The Tutka Bay Subdistrict north of the HEA powerlines was closed to seining at 6 a.m., July 10. It was reopened at noon the same day after further assessment showed the commercial fishery would not be impacted. The Department will continue to assess developments in this district. Some wild pink stocks returning to the Outer District may not be harvested because of the presence of oil in the area. Evaluation of the situation continues in this area.

Kodiak  
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Herring Sac Roe. Approximately 34 of 56 management units closed during the duration of the fishing season, because of oil impacts. The 1989 Kodiak sac roe GHJ was approximately 2415 short tons.

Salmon. The commercial season was scheduled to get underway June 9. The fisheries were postponed until June 19, when only the setnet fishery in the Moser-Olga Bay Section of the Alitak District opened. No additional areas have been opened at this time and an outer portion of the Moser Bay area has been closed because of oil presence. The Department will continue to assess oil impact for the Kodiak Management Area and manage the fishery accordingly.

*Chignik*

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Salmon The Chignik fishery opened on Monday June 12 at 11:00 a.m. However, portions of the Eastern District were closed due to the presence or close proximity of oil in the Kilokak Rocks area, and in Imuya and Wide Bays. The Department announced a 24-hour fishing period beginning at 9:00 a.m. June 26 within Chignik Lagoon. The area was limited to the lagoon due to the presence of oil in outside areas. The documented presence of mousse and sheen in Chignik Bay near Anguvik Island, coupled with a minimal monitoring effort, justified the closure of the commercial salmon fishery effective 10:00 p.m., Monday, June 26 for the remainder of the announced period. Because of the presence of oil contaminants within Chignik Lagoon in sufficient quantities to pose a risk of contaminating gear and/or product, the commercial salmon fishing period scheduled for Thursday, July 27 was cancelled. At this time commercial fishing opportunities remain restricted to Chignik Lagoon of the Chignik Bay District. Fisheries will be held when sockeye escapements into the system justify it.

**SUBSISTENCE/PERSONAL USE**

*Prince William Sound*

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Much of the Southwestern District and the western shoreline of Green Island was closed to subsistence fishing June 6, 1989. The only areas remaining open to subsistence fishing for those residents domiciled in the Southwest District are Eshamy Lagoon, Jackpot Bay, and inside Sawmill and Crab Bays.

*Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik*

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There have been no closures to subsistence fisheries because of oil. Subsistence fishermen have been cautioned to select fishing areas that show no signs of oil impact.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

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NEWS RELEASE  
J. Craig Hammond  
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September 19, 1989

For Immediate Release

KODIAK FISHERMAN CITED FOR MARINE MAMMAL HARASSMENT

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of General Counsel, has issued a Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) to a Kodiak, Alaska fisherman charging him with unlawfully taking (by harassment) a sea lion in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The NOVA assesses a penalty of \$2,700 against John F. Reinertson who resides in Kodiak, Alaska. Mr. Reinertson is employed aboard the F/V WINONA J, homeported in Kodiak.

The charges stem from an April 28, 1989, investigation conducted by Special Agents of the NOAA Fisheries, Office of Enforcement. Fisheries agents had received several complaints of sea lion harassment by individuals near the transient floats in the Kodiak channel. Surveillance of the area led to the citation of Mr. Reinertson for the unlawful taking of a marine mammal. Agents observed Reinertson repeatedly approach to the waters edge near a large bull sea lion, taunting the animal, which enticed the animal to chase him up a rock slope. Reinertson was further observed hurling fist sized rocks at the animal. Reinertson later told agents he was "defending" himself from the animal. Agents also noted that a second unidentified individual appeared to be encouraging Reinertson's actions and filmed the incident with a video camera.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) prohibits the taking of any marine mammal except in a few limited instances including Native subsistence, protection of life, and taking incidental to commercial fishing under a restricted certificate issued by NOAA. The MMPA broadly defines "take" to mean harass, hunt, capture, collect, or kill or any attempt to do so. "Take" also includes "any other negligent or intentional acts which result in the disturbing or molesting of a marine mammal".

Interactions between marine mammals and man are occurring more frequently within the port of Kodiak. Many local sea lions have come to associate man with an easy meal, through handouts from vessels and from canneries. These animals have thus become habituated to the presence of humans and their natural





fear of man has decreased. At least one potentially injurious encounter between man and sea lion has been reported in the Kodiak harbor in recent years. It is feared that intentional feeding of sea lions, negligently leaving catch and bait unattended on the decks of fishing vessels, and intentional harassment of the animals will lead to even more serious incidents with a potential for injury or loss of life. An adult male sea lion can reach 2,000 lbs. in weight and has jaw strength comparable to that of a brown bear. Fishermen, cannery workers, and harbor residents must not feed marine mammals or create attractive nuisances within or around the harbor areas.

Aside from the safety issue, interactions with marine mammals have another cost. Provisions of the MMPA carry stiff civil penalties for unlawful taking of a marine mammal. Serious violations can result in criminal sanctions. Questions regarding marine mammal regulations may be directed to NOAA Fisheries, Office of Enforcement, in Kodiak at (907) 486-3298 or in Juneau at (907) 486-7225.

# COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



## NEWS RELEASE

ALASKA DEPARTMENT  
OF FISH & GAME



SEP 18 1989

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 15, 1989

### Bristol Bay (Area T) King Crab Fishery

In order to ensure that a fair and orderly start of the Area T king crab fishery occurs on September 25, 1989, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has established the following regulations.

Persons or vessels that fish pot gear in the waters of the Area T registration area within the five day period before the opening of the king crab season, will be prohibited from participating in the fishery. Also fishermen who participate in the Area T king crab season will be prohibited from fishing commercial, subsistence and personal use pot gear in Area T for 14 days after the closure of the fishery.

Fishermen should be aware that in order to participate in the Bristol Bay king crab fishery, they will need to remove all commercial, subsistence and personal use pot gear from the Area T fishing area by 12:00 noon, September 20, 1989.

Normal pot storage regulations will be in effect before and after the Area T king crab season.

These regulations are being enacted in response to increased interest being shown in obtaining federal permits to operate groundfish pots in the Bering Sea by traditional crab fishermen.