



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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Close to actual military operations, the Alaska salmon industry this month begins a season which is expected to provide the Nation with 5,500,000 cases of choice, high-protein food, and the industry with an estimated \$54,000,000, more than seven times as much as it cost the United States to buy the Territory from Russia in 1867, Harold L. Ickes, Coordinator of Fisheries said today.

Despite the nearness of combat operations, the Alaska salmon pack--the most important item in the Territory's economy--is expected to be at least 10 per cent greater than last year, Coordinator Ickes declared.

Exploitation of the great fishery resources of Alaska did not really begin until 1878, with the establishment of salmon-canning operations. With the exception of an intensive whale fishery conducted by Americans in Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean between 1840 and 1900, and limited salting of salmon and cod commercially, the fishery resources were virtually untouched.

In the economic development of Alaska the fisheries industry now far exceeds any other in importance. From the date of purchase for \$7,200,000 to and including 1942, the value of fishery products, exclusive of aquatic furs, has amounted to \$1,405,317,650. The fisheries of Alaska yield products of an average annual manufactured value of 40 million dollars, employment is given to about 27,000 persons, and the investment in the industry is upwards of 60 million dollars. Of the persons employed, about one-half are local residents and the others are seasonal employees brought in from the States. Among the persons engaged, approximately 15,000 are whites, 7,000 resident Indians and Aleuts, 3,000 Filipinos, and the remainder Chinese, Mexicans, and others.

From a pack of 12,530 cases of salmon worth \$65,000 in 1879 to packs averaging more than 6,000,000 cases with an average value of about \$30,000,000 for the past ten years is a great step due not only to an increased number of plants and the development of new fields, but also by reason of improvements in apparatus and equipment and refinements in processing. The canning of salmon is the outstanding feature, as it accounts for more than 90 per cent of the total of all fishery items.

The herring industry with its byproducts of oil and meal, used chiefly in poultry and stock feeding, is second in volume, usually amounting to about 5 per

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cent of the total of fishery production. Halibut and miscellaneous items, including whales, clams, shrimps, crabs, sablefish, rockfishes, trout, and others, make up the remainder.

Aside from greatly improved techniques developed over the years, the outstanding fact with regard to the fisheries of Alaska at present is that the resource, particularly salmon, has now reached a point of stabilized yield. Conservation principles wisely administered under the White Act of 1924, with its amendments, have made this possible, and today, under trying war conditions, the program carried on over a period of 20 years is resulting in a sustained yield of protein food essential for military, lend-lease, and civilian needs.

Prior to 1924, the salmon fisheries of Alaska were in a declining state, due chiefly to excessive drains on the runs by intensive commercial operations. Under pressure of demands in the last war, the production of canned salmon in 1918 reached a high level more than 6,500,000 cases, but normally a pack of 5,000,000 cases was considered the maximum obtainable. It was thought that the runs could not safely yield more than 4,500,000 cases annually if an undiminished supply was to be maintained.

As a result, however, of the effective regulatory authority initiated in 1924, the downward trend was checked, depletion in most areas was halted, and the salmon runs have been built up gradually, in some places to new high levels of productivity. The annual pack has not dropped below 5,000,000 cases since 1927, and in 1936 reached a high point of 8,438,000 cases.

The Territorial legislature of Alaska has no jurisdiction over the management of the fisheries of Alaska. Its powers are limited to the taxing of the fisheries, which usually yield about two-thirds of the total revenue of the Territory.

Existing laws authorize the Secretary of the Interior to promulgate regulations limiting the time, place, and method of fishing and to establish areas in which fishing may be limited or prohibited. Under the broad authority thus lodged in the Secretary of the Interior and exercised through the Fish and Wildlife Service, the future of the fisheries of Alaska is bright. There is no other place where such complete control on so extensive a scale exists. Regulatory action is based upon biological research and practical experience extending over a period of many years, and thus the results are the application of true principles of conservation, which is maximum use of the natural resource without impairment of the future supply.