



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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LOW ALASKA SALMON RUNS CAUSE UNPRECEDENTED MID-SEASON FISHING CURB

Unusually poor salmon runs in Southeastern Alaska this season prompted the Fish and Wildlife Service to prohibit practically all commercial fishing in that region during the week of August 16 - 23, Albert M. Day, the Service's director, explained today. This was the first time in the history of the Southeastern Alaska salmon industry that fishing activities were curbed in the middle of the scheduled season.

Mr. Day, who returned to Washington on August 25 after a five-week stay in Alaska, declared that an insufficient number of salmon have reached their natural spawning grounds in inland streams.

The salmon runs in Southeastern Alaska (the chief pink salmon-producing area in the Territory) have become lower during each of the past six years. To protect them, the Service opened the 1948 season on August 9. The legal season ordinarily opens as early as June. This year's season is scheduled to close on September 3. If a late salmon run develops, however, the season may be extended a few days beyond the deadline to make up for the one week's fishing restriction.

Despite this protective measure, the salmon have appeared in too small numbers to provide either a satisfactory commercial catch or a sufficient seeding in the streams for reproduction of a new and heavy salmon cycle.

By the end of the third week of August, only 80,000 cases of pink salmon had been packed this year. In 1947, at a comparable time, 340,000 cases had been packed.

The production of pink salmon in Southeastern Alaska in the years 1935 - 1939 averaged 2,126,100 cases. An average pack of only 1,795,883 cases was recorded in the next six years. Production dwindled to 991,713 cases in 1946, and to 682,261 cases in 1947. This year's total production will be even lower.

Heavy overfishing during the past decade is blamed by the Fish and Wildlife Service for the present crisis in the Southeastern Alaska salmon fishery. In addition, many streams in which the salmon spawn are virtually dry this season because of the exceptionally dry weather.

Alaska's economy will be seriously affected if salmon fishing conditions do not improve. The fisheries are the most valuable of Alaska's resources, providing up to 80 percent of the Territory's income.