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# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.

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### ALASKA COMMERCIAL FISHERY REGULATIONS REVISED FOR 1949

Secretary of the Interior J. A. Krug today issued changes in the regulations for the protection of the commercial fisheries of Alaska for 1949.

The new regulations are based upon investigations and recommendations of Fish and Wildlife Service personnel, testimony presented at public hearings conducted by the Service at eight places in Alaska and at Seattle, Washington, and upon written briefs submitted by those interested in the Alaska fishing industry.

The gradual elimination of fish traps, proposed by Territorial referendum approved by 8 to 1 majority of Alaskan voters, is beyond the scope of these regulations. An Act of Congress would be necessary to authorize such elimination, and proposed legislation for this purpose was introduced in the Congress on January 17, 1949, by Delegate Bartlett. Action to give effect to the proposal approved at the referendum is thus presently beyond the authority of the Department of the Interior. These new regulations, however, do require the closure, for local conservation reasons, of nine traps along the mainland in the Eastern District where the salmon runs have been most seriously depleted. All other types of fishing in these same waters, except trolling, are prohibited also in order that the runs may be rebuilt.

The new regulations make no change in the prohibition of the use of power in gill-net boats in Bristol Bay. It was made known at public hearings last fall, and previously, that the Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to limit the over-all length of gillnet boats in Bristol Bay to 32 feet, and eliminate the restriction on use of power in such boats. Action on this, however, has been deferred this year in view of the possibility that the Congress may consider in the near future legislation that would authorize the Department to control and limit the number of boats and units of fishing gear in each area of Alaska. Such control authority would basically alter the whole approach to the problem of conserving the salmon runs of Bristol Bay.

Several major changes have been incorporated into the regulations for Southeastern Alaska. The general trap and seine seasons have been set for August 22 - September 3 in the Icy Strait, Western and Eastern Districts, and for August 15 - September 3 in the Sumner Strait, Clarence Strait, Southern and South Prince of Wales Districts. Drastically short though these seasons appear when compared to past years, they are nevertheless necessary to conserve and rebuild the severely depleted pink salmon resource in the Southeastern Alaska area. Progress of the runs will be closely watched both before and after the prescribed seasons by Fish and Wildlife Service officials, and additional fishing time will be granted whenever an abundance of pink salmon occurs in excess of spawning requirements.

As an alternative to the short fishing seasons in Southeastern Alaska, it was proposed that certain extensive trap and seine areas be closed in 1949 and that other areas be set aside as preserves. This proposal was discussed widely with fishermen and packers, both in Alaska and in Seattle, and was finally rejected because it appeared that disapproval was almost universal.

General regulations applying in all fishing districts include revision of the requirements for dealer reporting and boat registration. Except for boats fishing exclusively for halibut, all Alaskan fishing boats must be registered with the Fish and Wildlife Service before each season and decked, power boats must display their name or number on top for identification by airplanes. Both explosives and poisons are now prohibited in the taking of fish, which definitely outlaws the "blue-stoning" of salmon streams for halibut bait. The taking of fish both for bait and as food for fur-bearing animals is specifically defined as commercial fishing and, therefore, subject to all of the regulations. The section specifying the method of opening the heart walls of traps to the free passage of salmon during closed periods has been amended to require that the webbing be lifted clear of the water. (It has been the practice to drop this section of the trap wall previously.)

Herring quotas have not yet been determined but will probably be announced in early March. The 1949 regulations do provide, however, for the protection of herring spawning grounds by prohibiting the use of pounds on or within one mile of them and by prohibiting all commercial herring fishing in Silver Bay near Sitka and in the waters adjacent to Fish Egg Island near Craig. These spawning ground closures are initial measures to protect the herring populations of Southeastern Alaska, and further studies will be made this year to determine what other similar regulations may be necessary. A quota of 10,000 barrels of herring is permitted in a newly opened portion of Kachemak Bay in Cook Inlet to determine the present size of the herring population in those waters.

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Area has been expanded to include more northerly waters of Nome and Kotzebue and apply regulations to the newly developing fisheries in that region.

Bristol Bay regulations are unchanged except to more clearly describe the boundaries of the Naknek Section and to eliminate the midweek closure during the fall season.

The Alaska Peninsula Area has suffered severe depletion in its pink salmon runs; to achieve a larger escapement, the season in 1949 will end on August 5 instead of August 12 as heretofore and there will be no fall season. In the Port Moller district, however, the fall season will open on August 10 instead of the previous August 20. No purse seines may be used on the south side of the Alaska Peninsula Area between Castle Cape and Cape Pankof that are less than 100 fathoms or more than 200 fathoms in length.

The Chignik season has been shortened to extend only from June 10 to September 15 because the run is expected to be light this year and the additional period of escapement is thus required. It is hoped that sufficient seeding of red salmon can be accomplished by operation of the counting weir, but extension of the closed area in Chignik Lagoon will be required if this cannot be installed.

The Kodiak regulations show little change. The season in the Karluk and Red River districts will open on June 6 instead of June 10 as last year, and the escapement to Karluk River is fixed at a minimum of 350,000 red salmon prior to July 15 and the same minimum number after that date.

Cook Inlet reverts to the same general opening and closing dates established for the odd years, when the runs of pink salmon are characteristically smaller. Port Dick, however, will not open until July 25. The weekend closed period over the entire Area is increased to 48 hours, extending from 6:00 a.m. Saturday to 6:00 a.m. Monday, with the possibility of even more closure during the season if escapements to major spawning streams are insufficient. The greater portion of Kamishak Bay is closed to all salmon fishing to rebuild the severely depleted sock-eye runs there, in accordance with recommendations of local fishermen and packers.

Resurrection Bay Area has two fishing seasons in 1949: June 1 to August 6 and August 15 to September 15. During the fall season, fishing boats in the Area must report to the local Fish and Wildlife Service representative all deliveries of salmon. These regulations are for the purpose of reconciling Resurrection Bay operations during the closed season in nearby Prince William Sound.

Prince William Sound regulations remain unchanged from last season except that the use of beach seines is prohibited throughout the Area.

Fishing seasons on the Copper River are from May 1 to June 15 and from August 10 to September 18, the spring season thus opening two weeks earlier and closing three weeks earlier than usual to rebuild the depleted latter part of the red salmon run.

In the Bering River-Icy Bay Area the closing date of the red salmon season is moved up to June 15 to conform with the Copper River season.

A new method is inaugurated this year for utilizing the fall chum salmon runs that occur in October in several bays in Southeastern Alaska. Instead of opening the entire Area from October 15 to November 15 as was done last year, a special fall season of October 5 to October 15 is created in the following bays only: Excursion Inlet, Hood Bay, Chaik Bay, Port Camden, Security Bay, and Cholmondeley Sound. Patrol boats will be stationed in each of these bays during and immediately preceding the fall seasons; all boats are required to register before fishing with the Fish and Wildlife Service representatives aboard and thereafter report all deliveries of salmon. It will be possible to open other localities to fall fishing by special field announcement if heavy chum runs should develop in them.

Another amendment of significance throughout Southeastern Alaska prohibits the use of gillnets except in the Yakutat District, the northern section of the Western District, Taku Inlet, Port Snettisham and the Stikine District. Legitimate use of gillnets is not feasible except in these localities under the present seasonal restrictions. The gillnet areas listed all have special open seasons much longer than those in the general trap and seine districts; in the interests of enforcement, therefore, a system of registration and reporting by gillnetters to local Fish and Wildlife Service representatives is prescribed.

Special, open, seining seasons, as allowed last year in Tenakee Inlet and in outside waters off Prince of Wales Island, are not authorized this coming season. Operations in 1948 demonstrated that such seasons were not warranted.

The closed area at the mouth of the Taku River has been extended and fishing during all seasons is prohibited east of the 134th meridian of west longitude.

The inner portion of Behm Canal from Rudyerd Bay to Bell Island is closed throughout the year to all salmon fishing.

Beach seining in the Yakutat District is prohibited, except in Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays prior to September 2.

Duncan Canal is reopened to shrimp fishing after being closed for two years to determine whether the size of the shrimp would increase.

Because all of the Alaska Fishery regulations have been recently subjected to the legal process of recodification, numerous additional changes have been effected in designation, structure and wording without affecting the meaning. However, it will be necessary to refer to the Federal Register of December 29, 1948, for purposes of comparison rather than to Regulatory Announcement 22. A number of sections which pertained equally throughout Alaska but which were stated under individual districts have now been consolidated as single sections under Part 102 - General Provisions. Examples are the prohibition against the trailing of gillnet web in closed waters, the requirement for removing set nets from the water during closed periods, and several herring and shellfish regulations of general application.

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