

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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EIGHT INDIAN TRIBES TO HAVE EXTRA DAY OF SALMON FISHING
EACH WEEK UNDER LONG STANDING TREATY RIGHTS, INTERIOR SAYS

Members of eight Washington State Indian tribes will be provided an extra day each week, under long standing treaty rights, to fish for sockeye and pink salmon this season which begins June 26, the Department of the Interior reported.

Regulations defining the plan in detail are being published in the Federal Register for Tuesday, June 21. The extra day per week for Indians of the eight specified tribes was deemed necessary by several U.S. Government agencies acting in concert to help satisfy the Indian's treaty rights with the United States dating back to 1854 and 1855. The regulations provide a different arrangement for fishing during the first week of the season.

The area affected is in and around the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which separates the southern end of Vancouver Island, Canada, from the north edge of the Olympic Peninsula in the United States. These are the waters where Puget Sound meets the Pacific Ocean, and where major runs of these salmon species are expected to seek their native streams in the Fraser River system for spawning this summer.

Non-Indian fishermen will be allowed a basic two days per week of sockeye and pink salmon fishing this season under regulations adopted May 25 by the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission (IPSFC), a joint U.S.-Canadian body established by a U.S.-Canadian Treaty. The State Department approved the IPSFC regulations except as to U.S. Indians, which cleared the way for the Interior regulations giving Indians an extra day of fishing. Canadian Indian subsistence fishing is not regulated under this treaty.

The new Interior regulations are grounded in numerous court tests, culminating in a landmark decision by U.S. District Judge George H. Boldt in 1974 (affirmed the following year) which held that the 1854 and 1855 treaties give the Indian groups the opportunity to catch one-half the total U.S. catch in the Indians accustomed fishing places.

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Despite their treaty entitlement, the Indian fishermen--greatly outnumbered by their non-Indian counterparts--last year took an estimated 6 percent of the U.S. catch on the Fraser River run. The additional day per week, giving Indians three days a week to fish for these salmon, may increase the Indians' share to as much as 15 percent.

The terms of the U.S.-Canadian Treaty require an equal split of the fish between the two countries and adequate escapement to perpetuate the runs in future years. The Departments of Commerce and the Interior will perform a continuing monitoring service to carry out needed adjustments in the fishery throughout the season depending on the size of the salmon runs and the number of fish caught each day to be sure terms of the Canadian Treaty are met. Fishermen are kept advised of these changes by hot-line telephone service.

Covered by the extra-day regulations are the Makah Tribe, two bands of the Clallam Tribe (Lower Elwha and Port Gamble), the Suquamish Tribe, Lummi Tribe, Nooksack Tribe, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, and Tulalip Tribe. Enforcement of the regulations will be carried out by personnel of various Federal agencies.

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