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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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COMMERCIAL FISHERIES CATCH DECLINES; VALUE REMAINS STEADY

Although the estimated catch of fishery products in the United States and Alaska during 1951 showed a moderate decline in volume, the value of the catch is expected to remain about the same, Albert M. Day, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, stated today in a preliminary report submitted to Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman.

Approximately 4.4 billion pounds of fishery products, estimated to have been valued at about $365 million to the fishermen, were caught during 1951. This was about 500 million pounds less than during the previous year when the catch amounted to 4.9 billion pounds.

The large decline in landings is due to decreased catches of California pilchard, Maine and Alaska herring, tuna, and Pacific and Jack mackerel. Fishermen have failed to find the schools of pilchard, herring, and mackerel as plentiful as during 1950. Landings of tuna have been very light during the last part of 1951 as the fishing fleet has been tied up most of that time because of lack of markets for their product. The industry reports that a considerable portion of the tuna market has been taken over by imported fish.

The only major fishery registering a large increase was salmon. Catches of this fish increased nearly 200 million pounds—due to a good run of pink salmon in southeastern Alaska and on Puget Sound. The other species of salmon were generally somewhat less plentiful than in 1950. Shrimp production is expected to set a new record of over 200 million pounds during 1951. The previous high for this crustacean was 192 million pounds in 1945. Menhaden landings may be slightly larger than the record year, 1948, when they totalled 1,081,000,000 pounds.

The 1951 pack of canned fish is estimated at 790 million pounds compared with a 1950 pack of 965 million pounds. Major declines were in Maine and California sardines, tuna, and mackerel.

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