

Office file
10/2/53



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release to PM's, OCTOBER 1, 1953

ALASKA SALMON PACK TOTALS REPORTED

The Alaska salmon catch declined this year from 3,574,000 cases in 1952 to a total of 2,792,547 for 1953, the Fish and Wildlife Service reported to Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay today. The catch in 1951 was 3,484,000.

Despite the over-all poor season, the yield of red salmon in southeastern Alaska was 75% greater this year than in recent years.

Final pack figures for 1953 will be increased by the returns from Alaska's fall fishing season which has just started, the Fish and Wildlife Service noted. Early indications, said the Service, are that the fall catch will be a good one.

The decline in 1953 was due primarily to the failure of the pink salmon runs in southeastern Alaska and to below-average red salmon runs in parts of the Bristol Bay area of western Alaska.

Offsetting the relatively poor runs of pinks and chums in southeastern Alaska was the good run of red salmon in this area which yielded a 75 percent greater pack than in recent years. The earnings of gill-net fishermen in the Lynn Canal, Taku, and Stikine sections were materially enhanced as a result.

Although the central Alaska pack was 5 percent smaller than last year it showed an increase of 25 percent over 1951. The 5 percent decline this year was due chiefly to an average pack of red salmon in the Copper River area as compared with an abnormally large output last year. Although production in the Prince William Sound area was about 15 percent lower than last year, it showed an increase of 30 percent over 1951. In Cook Inlet, 1953 production was down about 25 percent but was normal for the odd year (when pink salmon runs are small). In the Kodiak area this year's pack was roughly 15 percent lower than last year but 40 percent higher than 1951. In the Chignik area production was about 30 percent above last year and 90 percent above 1951. This year's Alaska Peninsula pack exceeded that of other recent years, being 67 percent higher than the average for 1952, 1951, and 1950.

In western Alaska, the production of salmon in the Bristol Bay area was about 30 percent under last year but 45 percent above 1951. An estimated 100,000 cases of frozen salmon from the Bristol Bay and Kodiak area were taken outside to the States to be canned. Good runs and catches were reported for two of the four districts of Bristol Bay, Ugashik, and Egegik, but were far below normal in the other two. In one of these latter districts, Nushagak, comparatively few fishermen operated, however, and individual catches were relatively good in spite of expected small runs.

While approximately 7,000 commercial fishermen were operating in Alaska in 1946, the number this year totaled nearly 11,000.

x x x