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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FWS SIGNS CONTRACTS TO EXPAND ALASKA SALMON RESEARCH

As a further step in the Department's vigorous program for the restoration of depleted salmon runs in Alaskan waters, a second contract has been signed with the University of Washington for salmon research in the Territory, Acting Secretary of the Interior Clarence A. Davis announced today.

The new \$55,400 contract provides for expanded research under the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act on problems affecting the survival of salmon. It supplements an earlier \$64,000 contract as well as the extensive Government program.

Salmon is Alaska's economic mainstay. The catch declined disastrously in 1953 as the result of an unknown disaster at sea. Secretary Douglas McKay promptly ordered the institution of unprecedented conservation measures designed to maintain a healthy fishing industry for the Territory.

The salmon run improved in 1954 and is expected to increase further this year but more needs to be known about salmon before ultimate recovery of the fishery is assured. The two contracts, totalling \$119,400, with the University of Washington provide for much of the needed research.

The work will be conducted at the University's Fisheries Research Institute under the supervision of its Director, Dr. W. F. Thompson. For the past several years the Institute has been making limited studies of the Alaska salmon resources. The signing of the contracts permits activity in Alaska during the 1955 salmon runs.

The first contract provides for a tagging program to ascertain where Alaska salmon go when at sea and the rate at which they are caught. Work on the marine life of salmon has been largely neglected in the past because of the high cost of sea-going research.

Certain phases of the salmon's life in fresh water are likewise not too well known. This is particularly true of the numbers of young salmon passing downstream each year, and of the physical and chemical conditions which affect their survival in lakes and streams. The second contract covers the investigation of these problems. In addition it provides for the further development of relatively cheap photographic counting methods to replace the costly weirs and their attendants now employed to enumerate spawning escapements.

The tagging contract will be administered by Clinton E. Atkinson, Chief of the Service's Pacific Salmon Investigations, headquartered at Seattle, Wash. The fresh-water research program will be headed by Donald L. McKernan, newly appointed Administrator of Alaska Commercial Fisheries at Juneau.

Dr. W. F. Thompson, who will exercise university supervision over both programs, is a noted authority on the life history and conservation of salmon, halibut, tuna, and sardines. He was the Director of the initial research work of the International Halibut Commission and the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission. The rehabilitation of the halibut of the north Pacific and the sockeye salmon of the Fraser River are widely considered as outstanding examples of conservation.

The Saltonstall-Kennedy Act, which makes funds available for this work, is designed to strengthen the American commercial fishing industry as a whole. The legislation provides that an amount equal to 30 percent of duties collected under the customs laws on fishery products shall be transferred annually for three years from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of the Interior. Expenditures for any one year may not exceed \$3,000,000.

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