



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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INTERIOR RECOMMENDS CHANGES IN BASIC FISHERY ACT OF ALASKA

The management of the salmon fisheries of Alaska would be strengthened by the enactment of legislation proposed by the Department of the Interior, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross L. Leffler said today.

The new bill contains minor amendments to the White Act of June 6, 1924, the basic fishery law for the conservation of the commercial fisheries of Alaska.

Of the four items recommended for change, two would give the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior greater flexibility of control in managing the salmon resource in the Territory, one would increase restrictions to prevent unwarranted damage to the fishery, and the fourth would facilitate the enforcement of the laws and regulations.

The White Act stipulates that in all waters of Alaska in which salmon run "there shall be an escapement of not less than 50 percent thereof." The Service has found this provision to be extremely inflexible. If the runs are large, a 50 percent escapement can be excessive and wasteful; in some cases when the runs are small, the 50 percent escapement can be wholly inadequate. With the repeal of this provision, Service officials could determine adequate escapements based upon biological needs.

The provision requiring a 36-hour closed period extending from 6 p.m. Saturday to 6 a.m. Monday has also been found to be too inflexible. If revised, the exact time each week when the 36-hour closure would be effective would be left to regulation by the Service.

The third change would provide a penalty for the possession and disposal of commercial fish taken in violation of the law, and would apply to both seller and buyer. This penalty would be a fine of "not to exceed \$5,000 or imprisonment for a term of not more than 90 days in jail, or by both such fine and imprisonment."

The fourth change recommended would prohibit fishing inside the mouths of salmon streams by means of hand rod, spear, or gaff for commercial purposes. This limitation would not apply to the Karluk, Ugashik, Yukon, and Kuskokwin Rivers. While of no consequence in 1924 when the price paid for fish was low, these methods frequently are employed today with serious damage to the runs in particular streams adjacent to fast-growing centers of population.

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