



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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#### GENERAL USE OF FISH TRAPS BARRED IN ALASKA SALMON FISHERY

General use of the fish trap, for years a controversial type of salmon fishing equipment in Alaska, is prohibited by the 1959 Alaska commercial fishing regulations issued today by the Department of the Interior. The regulations were approved by the Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton on March 7.

Despite the elimination of most fish traps, little or no relaxation of restrictions is proposed in other forms of fishing gear because of the generally weak salmon runs expected by the Department in most areas of Alaska in 1959. In fact, more severe restrictions on other forms of gear would have been necessary if the fish trap action had not been taken, it was said.

Pink and red salmon account for about 80 percent of the annual Alaska salmon catch and predictions are for poor runs in both of these species. Pink salmon, which has a two-year cycle, had a poor escapement in 1957; hence the prediction of small runs in 1959. Red salmon, with a four to six-year cycle had a poor escapement in both 1954 and 1955.

The general ban on fish traps does not apply to those traps owned and operated by Indian villages. There are 21 such sites in Alaska, some of which have been owned and operated by the Indians since 1891. Eleven of these sites will be allowed to operate this year. This assures the Indians the same number of traps allowed in 1958, and is in accordance with the intent of Alaska Statehood legislation which requires recognition of the rights of the natives.

The fish trap issue, which had been a point of controversy for many years, was brought to a head last autumn when Secretary Seaton announced on November 9, that the Department would recommend a prohibition on the use of that type of equipment on the salmon runs. Numerous public hearings followed the Secretary's pronouncement. Well advertised public hearings were held in nine cities, beginning with a session in Seattle, Washington, December 3, 4 and 5. The Seattle meeting was followed by three-day public hearings in Juneau and Anchorage, Alaska. In January, one-day hearings were held in Kodiak, Dillingham, Cordova, Sitka, Wrangell and Ketchikan. A one-day hearing also was held on January 19, in Washington, D. C. In all hearings there was opportunity for full discussion of the proposed fish trap regulation as well as other proposed regulations for 1959.

The fish trap is a corral-type structure operated in an appropriate place along a salmon migration route. There were 243 such traps operated along Alaska's coastline in 1958.

The total "take" of the traps was limited by the number of days they were permitted to operate each week. In recent years traps have taken 25 to 40 percent of the total Alaska salmon catch.

On two recent occasions Alaskans have voted overwhelmingly in favor of eliminating salmon traps. With the advent of statehood, Secretary Seaton announced that the Department would, as rapidly as possible, adjust its actions to reflect the wishes of Alaskans in the disposition of their natural resources.

Under the terms of the Alaska Statehood Act, jurisdiction over the fish and wildlife resources of the new State remains in the Federal Government until the State legislature makes adequate provision for administration of these resources.

The regulations are silent about a second question, the red salmon fishery in Bristol Bay during the coming season. The Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, recommended delay in drafting regulations to cover that situation to permit clarification of Japanese intentions in its high seas fishery which intercepts runs destined for Bristol Bay. The Department of State is negotiating with the Japanese Government to limit the 1959 Japanese fishery harvest to 1958 levels which would permit a limited fishery in Bristol Bay.

Prince William Sound, where poor pink salmon runs and escapement in the 1957 cycle year portend a weak run in 1959, will be closed to fishing this year in an effort to build up the run for 1961.

The taking of salmon for "personal use" has been severely restricted in the Cook Inlet area. The very significant population increase in the Anchorage area and the increased accessibility to the salmon streams through road construction have resulted in a tremendous increase in the individuals fishing for sport and home use. The 1959 regulations place a bag limit on fish taken by hook and line; a number of stream areas will be closed entirely; and personal use fishing with nets will be drastically curtailed.

The regulations retain the "status quo" in regard to several issues debated at length by the various segments of the industry. No change is provided in the 50-foot limit on salmon purse seine vessels long in effect in most areas of Alaska.

The use of drum seines and power blocks to facilitate the operation of salmon purse seines also is permitted throughout Alaska, as in 1958.

TITLE 50 - WILDLIFE  
CHAPTER I - FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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SUBCHAPTER F -ALASKA COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

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REVISION OF REGULATIONS

Basis and Purpose: Section 1 of the Act of June 6, 1924 (43 Stat. 464), as amended by the Act of June 18, 1926 (44 Stat. 752; 48 U.S.C. 221), provides that for the purpose of protecting and conserving the fisheries of the United States in all waters of Alaska the Secretary of the Interior from time to time may set apart and reserve fishing areas in any of the waters of Alaska over which the United States has jurisdiction, and within such areas may establish closed seasons during which fishing may be limited or prohibited as he may prescribe. The Act cited further provides that under the authority to limit fishing in any area so set apart and reserved the Secretary may (a) fix the size and character of nets, boats, traps, or other gear and appliances to be used therein; (b) limit the catch of fish to be taken from any area and (c) make such regulations as to time, means, methods, and extent of fishing as he may deem advisable.

In accordance with the proviso to paragraph (e), section 6, of the Act of July 7, 1958 (72 Stat. 339), providing for the admission of the State of Alaska into the Union, the Act of June 6, 1924, as amended, and other existing laws providing

for the administration and management of the fish and wildlife resources of Alaska were continued in effect for administration by the Federal Government until the first day of the first calendar year following the expiration of ninety legislative days after the Secretary of the Interior certifies to the Congress that the Alaska State Legislature has made adequate provision for the administration, management, and conservation of said resources.

By a Notice published in the Federal Register on November 14 1958 (23 F.R. 8874), the public was informed that the Secretary of the Interior intended to adopt amendments to existing regulations governing fishing for or taking species of commercial fish and shellfish in the waters of Alaska. Interested persons were invited to participate in the adoption of amendments to the regulations by presenting their views, data, or arguments in writing to the Director, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Department of the Interior, Washington 25, D. C., on or before December 31, 1958, or by presenting their views orally or in writing at a series of open discussions scheduled to be held on certain dates in Seattle, Washington, and in Juneau and Anchorage, Alaska. By a document published in the Federal Register on November 26, 1958 (23 F.R. 9144), the time for submitting views, data, or arguments in writing to the Director, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, was extended to allow such submission on or before January 22, 1959, and the list of places at which public discussions were to be held on proposed amendments to the regulations was expanded to include a number of additional locations in Alaska.

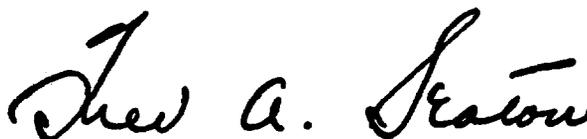
One of the most important issues raised by the proposal to amend these regulations is the issue presented by the proposal to prohibit, beginning in 1959, the use of fish traps in Alaskan waters, except those operated by Indian tribes or villages in certain waters. The proposal to prohibit the use of fish traps in Alaskan waters beginning in 1959, with an exception in behalf of certain Indian tribes or villages was included on the agenda for the hearings held in accordance with the Notice published on November 14, 1958, as modified by the document published on November 26, 1958.

It has been determined that the use of fish traps as a means of taking salmon in Alaskan waters shall be permitted only at not to exceed the eight sites customarily operated within the Annette Island Fishery Reserve; not to exceed the nine sites customarily operated by the organized Village of Kake; and not to exceed the four sites customarily operated by the Angoon Community Association. Within the limitations stated, the number of Indian traps to be permitted to operate will be determined from time to time by the Secretary of the Interior. Because of the relatively poor salmon runs expected in Southeastern Alaska during the 1959 cycle, and the need for insuring the escapement of adequate spawning stocks, it has been determined that only eleven of the twenty-one Indian traps can be permitted to operate during the 1959 season.

Careful consideration having been given to all relevant

matters submitted orally and in writing as a result of the Notice of Proposed Rule Making, and it having been determined that a revision of the regulations under Subchapter F is necessary and desirable for the purpose of protecting and conserving the commercial fisheries resources of Alaska, the regulations under Subchapter F are revised in their entirety as set forth below.

This revision shall become effective at the beginning of the 30th calendar day following the date of this publication in the Federal Register.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jew A. Seaton".

Secretary of the Interior

Date: March 7, 1959