

Salmon harvest to top 100 million fish

Preliminary catch information from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game indicates that the commercial salmon harvest for 1986 will again top 100 million fish.

This will be the seventh year in a row that the harvest has exceeded this level.

As of Aug. 16, with more than a month of commercial harvest remaining, data indicate that 97.6 million salmon have been harvested statewide. So far, fishermen have earned about \$340 million from Alaska salmon this year.

Escapements have been met in most areas, according to department officials. While the total harvest may be somewhat below the pre-season forecast, some late season runs are well above record harvests.

Pink salmon make up the largest portion of the harvest statewide, with nearly 54 million fish taken by Aug. 16. Pink runs remain strong in southern Southeast.

More than 26 million pink salmon have been taken in southern Southeast, and the department expects the harvest to be between 30 and 40 million fish before the season ends.

As of Aug. 16, the total statewide sockeye salmon harvest was 29.6

million fish. Bristol Bay sockeye harvest accounted for 15 million of the fish with all systems at or above the projected pre-season forecast, except for the Kvichak River.

Openings in the Kvichak had to be severely limited, as only 1.8 million sockeye returned to the river. The department's escapement goal for the Kvichak River was between 4 and 6 million sockeye salmon.

Prices paid to fishermen for Bristol Bay sockeye were up over last year, with the 1985 price of 81 cents for each pound being eclipsed by this year's \$1.50 for each pound.

Kodiak Island sockeye harvest is setting a record this year with more than 2.2 million fish harvested. Late returns remain strong.

Most escapement goals have been met, and harvest may exceed 3 million sockeye for Kodiak Island. The next best years on record were 1936 with 2.7 million and 1945 with 2.1 million sockeye harvested on Kodiak.

Coho harvests have been very good in Southeast's outer-coast troll fisheries and southern inside fisheries.

Very strong coho harvests are also being reported on the Kuskokwim. As of Aug. 16, 3.9 million coho had been taken statewide, with 530,000

harvested in the Kuskokwim fishery.

The strength of the coho run in the Kuskokwim River has helped to offset below average returns of chum and chinook to that fishery. The chum harvest to Aug. 16 was 9.6 million fish statewide.

The pre-season projection was for a total harvest of 10.6 million chum. The department expects the statewide chum salmon harvest to exceed the pre-season projection.

Chinook salmon fisheries are nearly over, with 543,700 thousand chinook taken statewide. An additional six-day chinook troll opening in Southeast began on Aug. 21. The opening will allow for the harvest of 43,000 chinook remaining of the harvest limit set under the U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty.

The approximately \$340 million fishermen have earned from Alaska salmon so far this year will probably increase to close to last year's total value of \$370 million by the end of the season.

Of the current value, \$260 million has been earned in the sockeye fisheries, \$31 million from pink salmon, \$26.1 million in chum, \$16 million in coho, and \$9.1 million in chinook.