

Fishing Gear Limit On Licenses Posed

JUNEAU—Gov. Walter J. Hickel revealed details of a major proposal to place a limit on the total number of commercial fishing gear licenses which will be issued in the Bristol Bay in 1968, and in future fishing seasons.

The proposal will go to the state Board of Fish and Game for consideration when it meets at Sitka Dec. 8. This is the first time in Alaska history that an effort has been made to limit fishing gear in the Bristol Bay, which has been hard-hit in recent seasons by relatively low catch totals compared to the number of fishermen involved.

At the heart of the proposal, hailed by Hickel as "the first serious step aimed at solving—not just temporarily alleviating—depression of the Bristol Bay economy," is a recommendation that will place a limit of 1,692 on the number of commercial salmon fishing licenses which will be issued in the bay next season.

This compares with 2,529 licenses in the area during the fishing season earlier this year.

In announcing formal completion of the proposal, Hickel said:

"The economic disaster in Bristol Bay this year again proved the need for the state to provide for welfare assistance to those Alaskans involved, for basically this problem is one of too many fishermen to divide the catch and still provide a decent return to the individual.

"But now we are going beyond the welfare concept.

We are proposing what we consider a dynamic new solution, one which we believe is fair, reasonable and which will help—along with other projects geared to economic development—to bring prosperity to the people of all of western Alaska."

The proposal which will go to the Fish and Game Board at Sitka, says, in part:

"The 1960-61 average base of 1,642 gear licenses will be used for the issuances of 1968 gear licenses. No more than 1,692 or less than 1,592 will be issued in '68. This number of fishermen was adequate to catch all the fish the canneries could handle in record runs of 1960-61.

The proposal specifies that gear licenses will be issued on the basis of a point credit rating which will take into account the applicant's fishing experience, welfare needs, hardship, past violations and native origin.

"The system will also provide for new people to enter the fishery," Hickel stressed.

The point credit system will include specifications allowing for:

—Ten points for each year a gear license was obtained for 1960-67.

—The head of a household or any member of a family who received welfare assistance during the years 1962, '63, '64 or '67 will be given a five point credit for each year on welfare assistance.

—Up to 10 per cent of the eligible applicant list, not to exceed 164 gear licenses, will be reserved for allocation

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on a basis of hardship.

—Applicants of native origin, having a quarter or more of Eskimo, Aleut or Indian blood will get a 10 point credit, a measure, Hickel said, which is aimed at making sure sustenance fishermen, and persons who count on the fishery for their basis income, are protected.

The proposal also provides for penalty deductions in cases where gear licenses were obtained during the 1963-67 period but not used, and for "destructive" violations, such as fishing in closed waters or during closed periods.

The Governor emphasized that the proposal provides that any person denied a gear license under the new system, by reason of his ranking in the point credit system, may appeal to the Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game in Juneau.