

Negative Bristol Bay Salmon Run Turns Out to Be Excellent

What had appeared to be a very disappointing salmon run to Bristol Bay only a few days ago is now shaping up as a very good run, according to Ken Middleton, Regional Supervisor for the Commercial Fisheries Division in Anchorage.

It is now fairly certain that the total run will go slightly over 18 million red salmon, or fairly close to the 21 million forecasted earlier by the Department.

Catch figures have been delayed several days due to the continuous fishing in effect for the stronger districts since July 7.

Mike Nelson, Assistant Area Biologist in charge of the Dillingham Office, reported that some 2 million fish have been caught between the Naknek-Kvichak

and Egegik districts during the week of July 7.

Nelson also reports that the Nushagak fishermen have done pretty well, considering that 200 boats this year have caught as many fish as 600 boats did last year in this district.

Larry Van Ray, newly appointed Area Management Biologist for Bristol Bay, reports from King Salmon that many outside fishermen began to leave right after the relatively poor catch of July 5 and that local fishermen who stayed for the "scratch fishing" have realized a fairly decent season.

The escapements to most systems are excellent according to Middleton, and of course, the bulk of some escapements were obtained during the strike.

However, it is also apparent that we have experienced an unusually prolonged run and that good numbers of fish have continued to sift on through the fishery.

This might be attributable in part to the scattered pattern of fish that have been running since the peak of the run.

At this moment the catch is 5.827 million and the escapement 11.687 million for a 17.514 million run. Additional catches and escapement should put the total over 18 million.

A figure exceeded only by the peak years of 1956, 1960 and 1966. The 1966 run was also 18 million, but the catch-escapement relationship was nearly reversed for that run.