

80,000 people involved in harvest

Alaska fishermen bring in \$885 million in 1986

At times in 1986 the price paid for an Alaska sockeye salmon was more than that paid for a barrel of Alaska crude oil, according to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

Alaska's commercial harvest of fish was worth more than \$885 million to fishermen in 1986. This was an increase of \$178 million over the 1985 values, according to the department.

More than 80,000 people were involved in the harvesting and processing industries last year. The wholesale value of the 1986 harvests should exceed \$1.5 billion dollars.

Last year's commercial fisheries generated more than \$20 million in revenues from licenses and taxes to the state's general fund.

The 1986 salmon season produced the fourth largest harvest in



history, with 127.8 million fish taken, which were worth an estimated \$404 million dollars.

This is one of the highest values ever recorded, and it was the seventh consecutive year that Alaska's salmon harvest exceeded \$100 million fish.

A substantial price increase for sockeye salmon in 1986 was a major factor contributing to the high value of the salmon fisheries.

Shellfish harvests brought fishermen \$182 million, mainly because of an increased Bristol Bay king crab harvest of 11 million

pounds and a Bering Sea Tanner crab fishery that produced a harvest of more than 96 million pounds. In many other areas of the state populations of shellfish are still depressed.

Healthy halibut stocks statewide provided for an increased harvest in 1986. More than 57 million pounds of halibut was taken in Alaska last year, worth an estimated \$63 million.

Herring fisheries throughout the state were worth \$38 million. The herring sac roe fisheries contributed more than \$35 million of that

amount. Bristol Bay was the foremost herring fishery, producing herring worth nearly \$9 million.

Again in 1986, groundfish harvests in both the domestic and joint venture operations continued to increase substantially. These fisheries were collectively estimated to be worth more than \$198 million for a groundfish harvest that exceeded 3 billion pounds of fish.

The outlook for the 1987 commercial fishing season is favorable.

A slight decline is expected in the statewide salmon harvest, and the department expects a continued lower level of production from shellfish and herring fisheries.

However, healthy halibut stocks and the removal of all foreign fishing from the Gulf of Alaska waters should lend to increased landings in the halibut and groundfish fisheries.