

ALASKA
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FISHERIES

Some observations on the salmon fisheries of Southeastern Alaska and the general work of the Alaska Fisheries Service in 1923.

Southeast Alaska stands preeminent among the districts of Alaska in the production of food fish. It leads in the quantity and value of salmon products, and the season of 1923 closed with a total production in excess of 3,000,000 cases of salmon, or three-fifths of the entire pack of Alaska in that year. In comparison with other years, the record of 1923 was surpassed only in the three seasons of 1917, 1918 and 1919, when inordinate demands were made on the fisheries.

As early as 1914, it was generally held to be true that the salmon fisheries were being rapidly exhausted and that if relief by legislation or regulation was not soon had the runs of salmon in southeast Alaska would be destroyed and the industry pass away. Those were dire predictions, but not groundless ones, as many streams once prolific producers of salmon were even then almost devoid of fish life. But the largest packs in the history of the industry were made since that date, and the forebodings of a decade ago have not materialized. It cannot be disputed, however, that fewer salmon are escaping into the streams, so other reasons must account for the large pack in 1923. It must also be considered that this increased production affected almost wholly the humpback salmon.

In 1921, packers of salmon in southeast Alaska voluntarily restricted operations in order that the market might absorb the accumulation of humpback and chum salmon resulting from the large packs of the three preceding years. This favored a larger escapement of salmon than would have occurred if operations had been carried on normally.

In 1922 and 1923, conditions were favorable for exhaustive fishing but very unfavorable for the escapement of salmon to the spawning grounds. Both seasons were uncommonly dry so that all streams were affected and the quantity of water reduced in many below that required by ascending salmon. The weather in both seasons was propitious for the fishermen as they were able to operate without interruption by storms. The large catch of salmon in 1923 may therefore be attributed in some measure to the partial suspension of fishing in 1921 and to the dry season of 1923. The situation is not to be viewed with complacency, however, as 1924 may be a very lean year by reason of the inadequate escapement in 1922.

Ordinary prudence demands recognition of the fact that a large catch of salmon in any year does not of itself indicate a wholesome condition of the fishery. All factors entering into the problem must be considered in their interrelation if a true perspective is obtained. Too much attention cannot, then, be given to the streams and the accu-
pency of them by spawning salmon if the real condition is to be known and the continuance of the runs is to be even approximately foretold.

It is easy to say that the runs are good or poor as the pack may be large or small, but it is quite another thing to say that the escapement has or has not been sufficient for the continuance of an adequate supply of fish for replenishment of the runs.

In southeast Alaska, where there are hundreds of small salmon streams without tributaries of consequence, the most practicable plan of securing a sufficient escapement is to establish close seasons in which all fishing must be prevented, rather than to attempt to accomplish the same result by limitation of pack and apparatus. This plan appealed with such force to the inhabitants of southeast Alaska that the Territorial Legislature passed an act in May dividing the district into two areas in each of which a close season of 20 days was provided for the escapement of salmon. This law was not respected by either fishermen or packers. Although there was almost no divergence of views as to the ultimate benefit to be derived from its observance, there was a considerable difference of opinion on the question of the Legislature's right under the organic act to legislate as it did. This was a legal question, pure and simple, and in my judgment it cannot be set up as a reason for totally disregarding the Territorial law, when the necessity of the law was practically admitted by every one. The honorable and right thing to have done under the circumstances was to have laid the foundation for a test case by a single violation of the act and thereafter to have obeyed the law until the courts could pass on its validity, but this was not done. Such indifference to this law by the fishing population of southeast Alaska only reacts to the injury of the Territory by encouraging contempt for all law.

The local court took action in the matter and hundreds of indictments were found against packing companies and fishermen. One case was brought to trial and arguments were heard on a demurrer that the Legislature was without authority to pass an act affecting the fisheries. The demurrer was overruled and the judge of the United States district court for the First Division held that the law was valid and that it must be enforced.

One other objection was voiced against the plan of adopting close seasons for the preservation of the runs of salmon, but it was solely an idealistic proposition. The theory is held that a close season benefits only a part of the run and that unless provision is made for a continuous escapement the supply of salmon in some waters may be entirely destroyed and many spawning grounds be thus unused. Probably no one will gainsay the statement that conditions will be ideal when the movement of salmon into the streams continues from the beginning to the end of the season without interruption of fishing, but if that cannot be brought about in a practicable way, the best alternative plan is to make escapement possible by a close season, whether it be at the beginning, middle or end of the season. This plan also has the advantage of being a practicable solution of the problem and in the long run it will prove to be of material benefit.

This method of securing a supply of salmon on the spawning grounds

is now used in Bristol Bay where the fishing season opens June 25 and closes July 25. If the reasons advanced against its adoption in southeast Alaska are sound it would seem that they might have been used with equal logic against it in other districts where the streams are much larger, yet there is no evidence that this was done. It is very doubtful if the salmon entering any stream in southeast Alaska are destined to any particular area in the stream or to any particular tributary. Certainly no observations are recorded that such a situation exists anywhere in Alaska.

There are several localities in southeast Alaska where the runs of salmon have been seriously depleted and fishing in each one should be prohibited for at least two seasons. They are as follows:

Anita Bay	Boca de Quadra.
Breezy Bay	Burroughs Bay
Burnett Inlet	Cholmondeley Sound
Chilkoot Inlet	Chilkat Inlet
Chaik Bay	Dundas Bay
Port Johnson	Excursion Inlet
Filmore Inlet	Freshwater Bay
Ford Arm	George Inlet
Hassler Harbor	Port Frederick
Hood Bay	Hadley
Kasaan Bay	Karta Bay
Lake Bay	Lizianski Inlet
Mosman Inlet	McHenry Inlet
Olive Cove	Princess Bay
Pybus Bay	Port Houghton
Petersburg Creek	Wrangell Narrows.
Ratz Harbor	Rose Inlet
Rodman Bay	Red Bay
Redfish Bay	Short Bay
Sulzer Bay	Saginaw Bay
Silver Bay	Surge Bay
Salt Lake	Salmon Bay
Security Bay	Soda Bay
Shipley Bay	Skowl Arm
Shrimp Bay	Thoms Place
Tenakee Inlet	Thorne Arm
Takanis Bay	Totem Bay
Thorn Bay	Twelve Mile Arm
Walkers Cove	Wards Cove
Aqua River	Ankow Slough
Italic River	Lituya Bay

In 1923, watchmen were placed at the following localities for a period of approximately 60 days each. The name of the watchman at each place is also given.

Takanis and Klag Bays - - - - -	Peder A. Anderson
Basket Bay and Tenakee Inlet - - - - -	George W. Samples
Chilkoot Inlet - - - - -	Clay Wintersteen
Chilkat Inlet - - - - -	Neil C. Gallagher
Port Frederick and Tenakee Inlet -	Eli Katanuk
Pavlof Harbor and Howard Bay - - - - -	Thomas A. Conrad
Redoubt Bay - - - - -	James L. Brightman
Taku Inlet - - - - -	H. S. Sokoloff
Bartlett Cove and Taylor Bay - - - - -	Charles E. Ferdine.
Killisnoo to Wilson Cove - - - - -	Harry Peehan
Salmon Bay - - - - -	H. F. Power
Petersburg Creek - - - - -	Ole Lomen
Eagle Creek - - - - -	Thomas Case
Rocky Bay and Menefee Inlet - - - - -	George W. Card
Staney Creek and Deweyville - - - - -	John H. Mantle
Thorn Bay - - - - -	S. M. Wyatt
Port Johnson - - - - -	V. D. Cook
Thoms Place and Olive Cove - - - - -	Frank Spalding
AnanCreek - - - - -	Fred H. Gray
Naha Bay - - - - -	J. E. Barker
Karta Bay - - - - -	William J. Morgan
Keegan Cove - - - - -	Eli J. Copeland
Olive Creek and Whale Passage - - - - -	J. K. Nevill
Lake Bay - - - - -	William M. Taylor
Sockeye Creek - - - - -	Edwin Hofercamp

It should be recorded here that these men, with the one exception of Eli Katanuk, were faithful to their trust and performed satisfactory service even under very trying circumstances in some instances. The lot of a stream watchman does not always fall in pleasant places as these men are often abused and attempts are made to intimidate them by threats of violence or bulldoze them to such an extent as to drive them from the service.

The Bureau operated four motor boats in fishery and seal patrol work in 1923. These boats began active service in April and continued in a cruising status until the end of October. The milage by each vessel is as follows:

Auklet - - - - -	5,003
Murre - - - - -	8,360
Petrel - - - - -	4,737
Widgeon - - - - -	7,661

The number of hours each boat was actually cruising was as follows:

Auklet - - - - -	655
Murre - - - - -	1,045
Petrel - - - - -	779
Widgeon - - - - -	953

The personnel on each boat was as follows:

AUKLET	-	Charles E. Tibbits	- -	Master
		Luther D. Moore	- - -	Engineer
		Otto E. Klose	- - - -	Cook
MURRE	-	Arthur McLean	- - - -	Master
		Frederick W. Oliver	-	Engineer
		Edward T. McNulty	- -	Cook

Several changes in the cook on the Murre were made during the season because wages were unsatisfactory.

PETREL	-	Iver N. Stensland	- -	Master
		Cedric M. Davis	- - -	Engineer
		Bruce C. McNutt	- - -	Cook
Widgeon	-	Earle L. Hunter	- - -	Master
		Leslie T. Oneel	- - -	Engineer
		Charles S. Blair	- -	Cook
		Carl Christensen	- -	Seaman

The cook on the Widgeon was also changed several times during the season because of a dislike for that particular job.

It is a pleasure to state here that these men, or such of them as remained with their jobs to the end of the season, are deserving of the fullest commendation for the excellent service they performed. The boats were in the keeping of conscientious men who took pride in having the boats of their respective commands ready for work at any time. Some difficulty was experienced in securing competent cooks as the pay of those positions is too low to attract the right sort of men. Fortunately the pay of the cook on the Widgeon was increased to the former rate of \$90 per month exclusive of bonus and an excellent man was secured. His salary should be increased to \$125 per month as he is easily worth that to the Bureau and he can undoubtedly get higher pay elsewhere. The pay of the seaman on the Widgeon should also be increased by at least \$20 per month.

The usual patrol work was carried on throughout the season and a number of violations of law were reported and successfully prosecuted. These offenses were due largely to faulty adjustment of traps during the weekly close season. Special reports were made on this subject giving the several cases in detail which need not be repeated here.

Special report was also made on the seal patrol and authentication of skins at Sitka and it is not necessary to discuss that phase of the work again.

These notes would be incomplete without some reference to the statutory employees of the Bureau assigned to the southeastern district. There were four such employees stationed in Southeast Alaska in 1923, of which three were wardens and one an assistant agent,- the writer of these notes.

Warden Michael J. O'Connor has served the Bureau faithfully and efficiently for several years. He continued this service with energy and ability in 1923.

Warden Howard H. Hungerford was appointed a warden in March and he reported for duty at Wrangell early in April. He has had much experience in this district as a curer of salmon and he is familiar with the salmon business in general. The police duty he was required to perform was new to him but he took hold of the work with enthusiasm and rendered excellent service. Within a year he was given speedy and material promotion and was transferred to the Pribilof Islands. By this transfer, the fishery branch of the service lost a man of exceptional worth and ability in a field where his experience was invaluable.

Warden John T. White was appointed in April and took up his work in the same month. He is an old-timer in Alaska and he has a fair knowledge of the fishery business, though this was not acquired through any connection with the industry either as a curer or as a fisherman. In his work for the Bureau, Mr. White had constantly before him the thought and desire to do the most he could for the salmon, and he was relentless in his efforts to enforce the law against those who in his judgment were the most culpable and who were doing the most harm to the fisheries by disregard of law. This led him into errors in judgment as to what was evidence and caused him to give too much credence to the statements of others who pretended at least to know the facts in the matters with which he was concerned. This resulted in the development of some animus toward him by those who to him appeared to be involved in unlawful acts. One case reported by him on a charge of wantonly wasting salmon was tried at Ketchikan and resulted in an acquittal of the accused. Men who were relied upon as government witnesses gave testimony favoring the defendant company although the waste of salmon was not controverted or denied. The defense was built on the ground that the waste was unavoidable after strenuous efforts had been made to dispose of the excess supply at other canneries. No effort appears to have been made to stop the supply at its source in time to avoid waste. This was at least a contributing cause and one which the jury apparently did not consider. In my humble judgment, the grand jury is not without some responsibility in this and similar cases. Too frequently their investigations are not sufficiently thorough to develop the facts, and a true bill is returned seemingly as a matter of course. Such juries have the power to call any person to testify and both sides of any case can be ascertained with regard for all the rules of evidence so that the facts may be known.

Mr. White felt considerably aggrieved over the outcome of this trial and he further felt that in this and other matters he had presented the sympathies of the Bureau were with those he had reported rather than with him and his work which was the best he could render. Mr. White tendered his resignation in October and it was accepted.

Police work in connection with the fisheries of Alaska is by no means a pleasant duty. Employees so engaged are reviled and abused by those whom they accuse of violating the law; they are condemned and traduced by those who contend that the laws are not enforced or who think they could effect better enforcement if the work were entrusted to them. There are always those looking on who by an exalted opinion of their own ability think they can do the job better than the other fellow. After all, confidence is the basis of good service and without it, the best that any one can do will go for naught.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "E. M. Dill". The signature is written in dark ink and is centered below the typed name.

Assistant Agent.