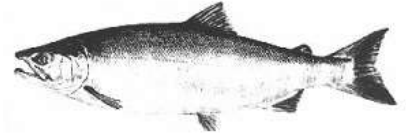


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES  
NEWS RELEASE**



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**2019 KOTZEBUE SOUND SALMON SEASON SUMMARY**

**COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHERY**

The commercial salmon season opened on July 10 and closed by regulation after August 31. The last day the buyers bought fish was August 30. Commercial fishing was allowed six days a week with no fishing on Saturday due to the lack of plane availability to ship the catch out on the following day, and to allow a one-day window for fish passage to provide for more opportunity to subsistence users. From July 10 through July 12, fishing was open for 10 hours daily; from July 14 through August 2, fishing was open for 12 hours daily; from August 4 through August 14, fishing was open for 14 hours daily; from August 16 through August 30, fishing was open 12 hours daily. During the season, the earliest fishing opened was at 8 a.m. and the latest fishing closed was at 10 p.m. Commercial fishing periods increased to 14 hours daily once a floating processor vessel arrived and restrictions to fishing time due to air cargo capacity were unnecessary.

In the commercial salmon fishery, gear is limited to set nets with an aggregate of no more than 150 fathoms per permit holder. Permit holders generally operate with one end on or near shore and they also set in deeper channels from the mud flats farther out from shore. Most gear used in the district is 5-3/4 inch to 6-inch stretch mesh gillnet.

There were three buyers during the season, Copper River Seafoods (CRS), Maniilaq dba Arctic Circle Wild Salmon and Pacific Star. CRS and Pacific Star were the buyers throughout the season. Maniilaq bought gilled and gutted chum salmon from July 22 until August 9.

The commercial harvest of 493,295 chum salmon was the seventh highest harvest on record. In addition, 16 king salmon and 29 sockeye salmon were sold. No chum salmon were reported kept for personal use, but 151 Chinook salmon, 475 sockeye salmon, 2,767 pink salmon, 111 coho

salmon, 936 Dolly Varden, 191 sheefish, 16 whitefish and 1 pike were reported in the catch and kept for personal use.

The 2019 harvest was the fourth time in the last five years the harvest exceeded 400,000 chum salmon but was only the tenth time in history for a harvest that high. There were 93 permit holders that sold fish in 2019, slightly less than last year when 95 permit holders sold fish (Figure 1 and Table 1) and was the fifth highest permit holder participation in 25 years. The highest daily fishing effort occurred on July 29 when 61 permit holders fished.

A total of 4,004,727 pounds of chum salmon (average weight 8.1 lbs.) was sold at an average of \$0.38 per pound. This year's average price was 5% lower than the 2018 average price of \$0.40 per pound. The total exvessel value was \$1,538,976 and was down nearly one-third from last year but was only the fifth time since 1988 that the value was over one million dollars. The historical average exvessel value of fishery was \$713,912 without adjusting for inflation (Table 1).

### **ESCAPEMENT**

Primary fishery management objectives are to provide adequate chum salmon escapement throughout the duration of the commercial fishery to ensure sustainability of the fishery and to provide for the subsistence priority. A test fishery conducted on the Kobuk River provides the only inseason escapement index of the Kotzebue Sound District.

This year's chum salmon cumulative daily CPUE index at the department test fish project on Kobuk River near Kiana was 1,508 and was the 11<sup>th</sup> highest in the 27-year project history.

No aerial surveys were conducted in 2019.

### **SUBSISTENCE SALMON FISHERY**

No subsistence salmon surveys are scheduled. Subsistence harvesters reported difficulty in fishing this season because of high water conditions but that there were enough chum salmon in both the Kobuk River and Noatak River for subsistence needs.

Table 1.—Kotzebue District chum salmon catch and dollar value, 1962–2019.

Year	Total Catch	Number of Permits <sup>a</sup>	Average Catch per Permit Holder	Gross Value of Catch to Permit Holders <sup>b</sup>
1962	129,948	84	1,547	\$4,500
1963	54,445	61	893	\$9,140
1964	76,449	52	1,470	\$34,660
1965	40,025	45	889	\$18,000
1966	30,764	44	699	\$25,000
1967	29,400	30	980	\$28,700
1968	30,212	59	512	\$46,000
1969	59,335	52	1,141	\$71,000
1970	159,664	82	1,947	\$186,000
1971	154,956	91	1,703	\$200,000
1972	169,664	104	1,631	\$260,000
1973	375,432	148	2,537	\$925,000
1974	627,912	185	3,394	\$1,822,784
1975	563,345	267	2,110	\$1,365,648
1976	159,796	220	726	\$580,375
1977	195,895	224	875	\$1,033,950
1978	111,494	208	536	\$575,260
1979	141,623	181	782	\$990,263
1980	367,284	176	2,087	\$1,446,633
1981	677,239	187	3,622	\$3,246,793
1982	417,790	199	2,099	\$1,961,518
1983	175,762	189	930	\$420,736
1984	320,206	181	1,769	\$1,148,884
1985	521,406	189	2,759	\$2,137,368
1986	261,436	187	1,398	\$931,241
1987	109,467	160	684	\$515,000
1988	352,915	193	1,829	\$2,581,333
1989	254,617	165	1,543	\$613,823
1990	163,263	153	1,067	\$438,044
1991	239,923	142	1,690	\$437,948
1992	289,184	149	1,941	\$533,731
1993 <sup>c</sup>	73,071	114	641	\$235,061
1994	153,452	109	1,408	\$233,512
1995	290,730	92	3,160	\$316,031
1996	82,110	55	1,493	\$56,310
1997	142,720	68	2,099	\$187,978
1998	55,907	45	1,242	\$70,587
1999	138,605	60	2,310	\$179,781
2000	159,802	64	2,497	\$246,786
2001	211,672	66	3,207	\$322,650
2002	8,390	3	2,797	\$7,572
2003	25,763	4	6,441	\$26,377
2004	51,077	43	1,188	\$64,420
2005	75,971	41	1,853	\$124,820
Average 1962-2019	232,277	108	2,377	\$713,912

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Table 1–Page 2 of 2.

Year	Total Catch	Number of Permits <sup>a</sup>	Average Catch per Permit Holder	Gross Value of Catch to Permit Holders <sup>b</sup>
2006	137,961	42	3,301	\$229,086
2007	147,087	46	3,198	\$243,149
2008	190,550	48	3,970	\$385,270
2009	187,562	62	3,025	\$376,554
2010	270,343	67	4,035	\$860,125
2011	264,321	89	2,970	\$867,085
2012	227,965	83	2,747	\$567,664
2013	319,062	66	4,834	\$689,163
2014	636,187	94	6,768	\$2,879,016
2015	305,383	105	2,908	\$867,583
2016	400,417	86	4,656	\$1,123,248
2017	463,749	98	4,732	\$1,839,637
2018	695,153	95	7,317	\$2,279,477
2019	493,295	93	5,304	\$1,538,976
Average 1962-2019	232,227	108	2,377	\$713,912

<sup>a</sup> During 1962–1966 and 1968–1971, figures represent the number of vessels licensed to fish in the Kotzebue District, not the number of permit holders.

<sup>b</sup> Some estimates between 1962 and 1981 include only chum value, which typically represents over 99% of the total value. Figures after 1981 represent the chum value as well as incidental species such as Dolly Varden, whitefish and other salmon.

<sup>c</sup> Includes 2,000 chum salmon and \$3,648 from the Sikusuilaq Springs hatchery terminal fishery.

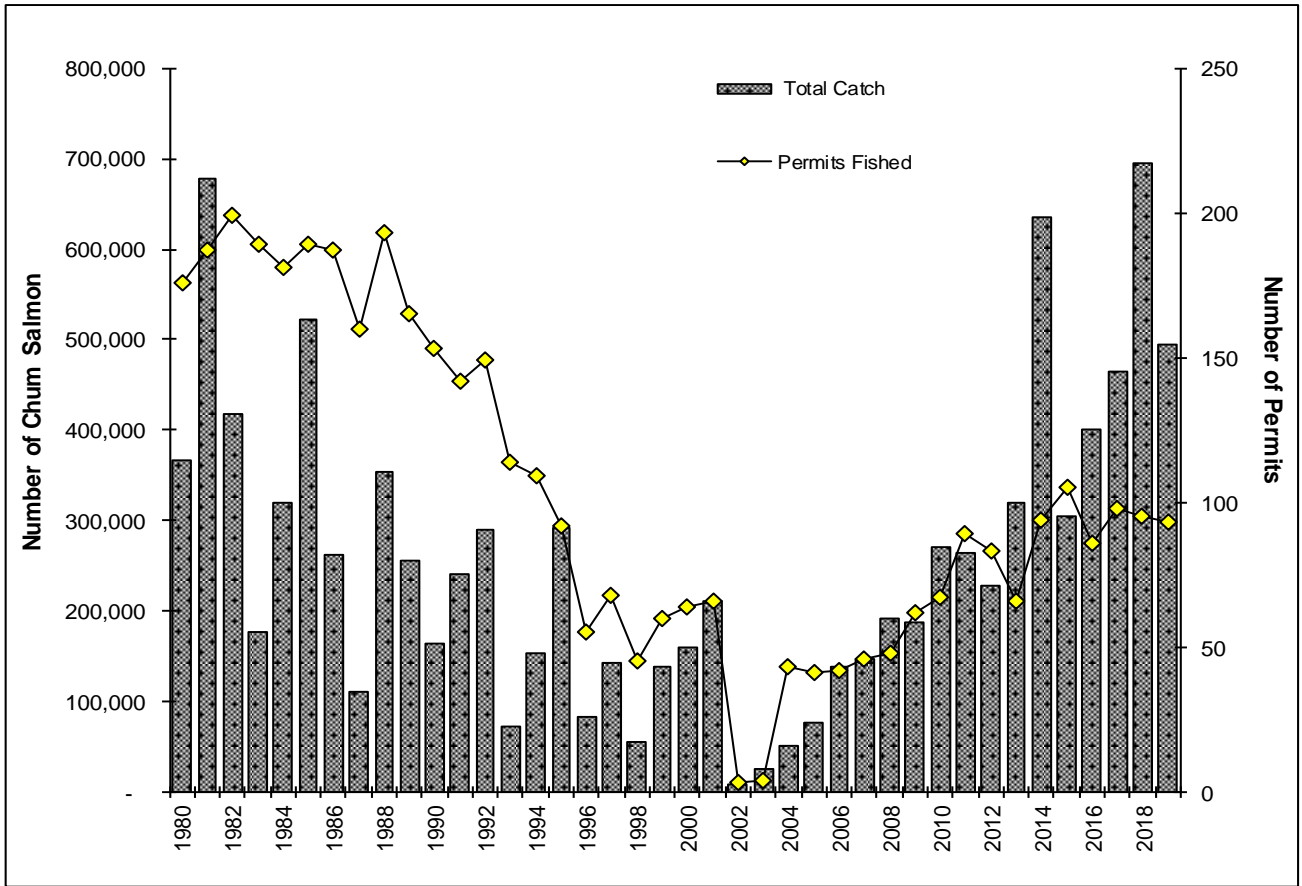


Figure 1.—Kotzebue District commercial chum salmon harvest and number of permits fished, 1980 - 2019.