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Advisory Announcement
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2020 KOTZEBUE SOUND SALMON SEASON SUMMARY

COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHERY

The commercial salmon season was opened July 10 and closed on August 31 by regulation. The last day buyers bought fish was August 28. During July, commercial fishing was allowed six days a week, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., 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. There were two buyers throughout the season, Copper River Seafoods and E & E Foods doing business as Pacific Star Seafoods.

Below average commercial catches compared to historical data, low catches at the Kobuk River test fish project near Kiana, and concerns expressed by Kobuk River village residents of poor subsistence catches resulted in the department limiting commercial fishing to 8 hours a day every other during the first three weeks of August. Commercial chum salmon daily catches were the highest the second week of August and at Kobuk River test fish project the third week of August. Commercial catches declined the third week of August and the buyers indicated they did not want to continue operations until the regulatory closure date. The department then allowed 8-hour commercial fishing periods for five days during the fourth week of August before the buyers ceased operations.

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.

The commercial harvest of 149,808 chum salmon was the lowest since 2007 (Table 1). Additionally, 3 king salmon and 9 sockeye salmon were sold and 38 Chinook salmon, 71 sockeye salmon, 2 chum salmon, 996 pink salmon, 15 coho salmon, 606 Dolly Varden, 46 sheefish and 2 whitefish in the catch kept for personal use.

There were 68 permit holders that sold fish in 2020, much less than last year when 92 permit holders sold fish; this was the lowest participation since 2013 (Figure 1 and Table 1). The highest daily fishing effort occurred on August 11 when 47 permit holders fished.

A total of 1,204,780 pounds of chum salmon (average weight 8.0 lbs.) were sold at an average of \$0.45 per pound. This year's average price was higher than last year's price of \$0.39 per pound. The total exvessel value was \$542,308 and was down nearly two-thirds from last year and was first time since 2015 that the exvessel value was below one million dollars. The average historical exvessel value of fishery was \$711,302 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 692 and was the 3rd lowest in the 28-year project history. No aerial surveys were conducted in 2020.

SUBSISTENCE SALMON FISHERY

No subsistence salmon surveys are scheduled. Subsistence harvesters reported difficulty in fishing this season because of high water conditions and that fishing for chum salmon on the Kobuk River was poor in July and improved in August. Subsistence harvesters on the Noatak River reported that fishing was good.

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

Year	Total catch	Number of permits ^a	Average catch per permit holder	Gross value of catch to permit holders ^b
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 ^c	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 1962–2020	230,852	107	2,376	\$711,302

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Year	Total catch	Number of permits ^a	Average catch per permit holder	Gross value of catch to permit holders ^b
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	494,593	92	5,376	\$1,556,257
2020	149,808	68	2,203	\$542,308
Average 1962–2020	230,852	107	2,376	\$711,302

^a 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.

^b Some estimates between 1962 and 1981 include only chum value which in figures represent 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.

^c Includes 2,000 chum salmon and \$3,648 from the Sikusuilq Springs hatchery terminal fishery.

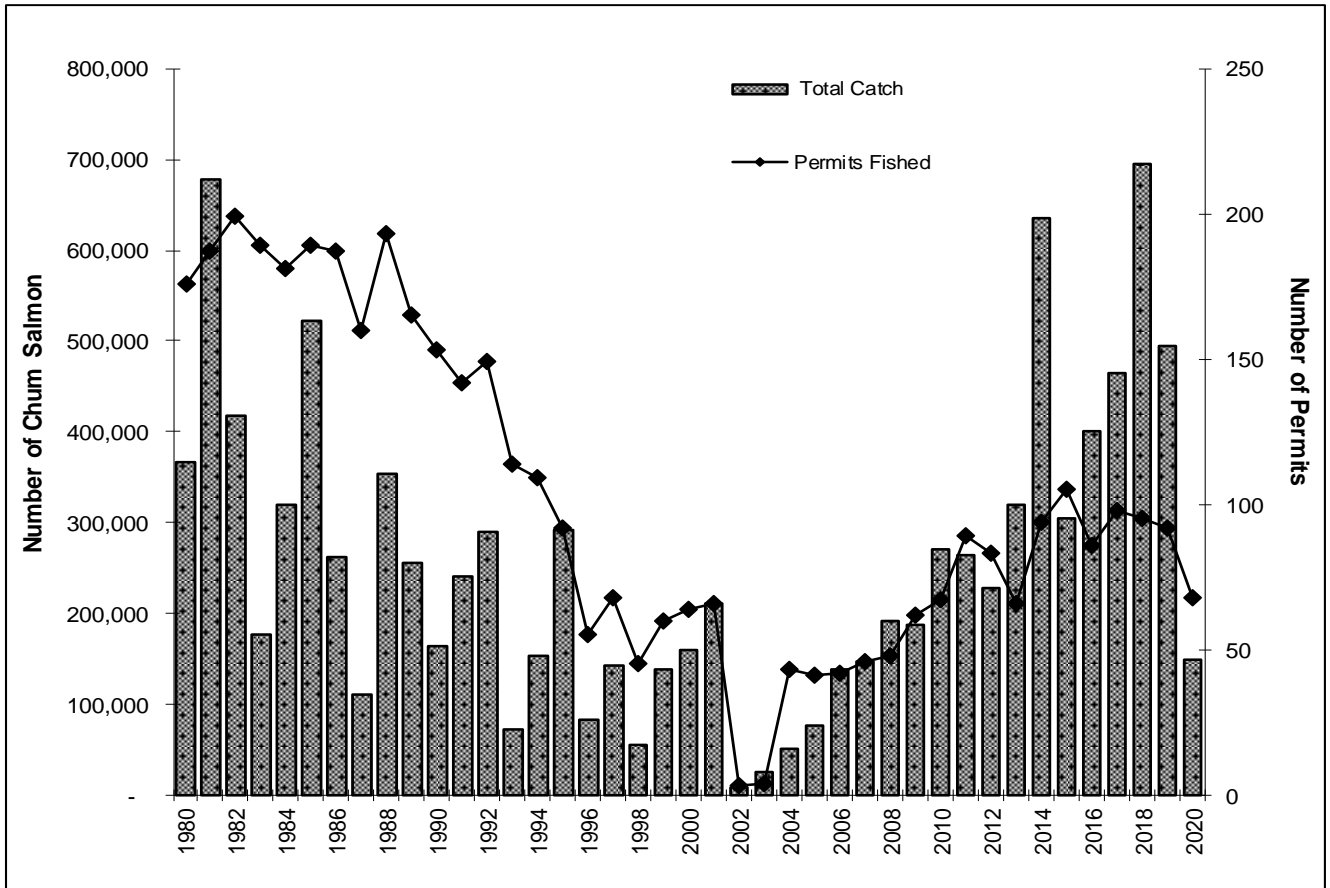


Figure 1.—Kotzebue District commercial chum salmon harvest and number of permits fished, 1980–2020.