

STATEWIDE IN ALASKA

Highlights: Alaska's shrimp fishery is on the rise. According to figures released by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, landings of shrimp at Kodiak for the period January through March of 1970 totaled better than 13.3 million pounds. This represents a 34 percent increase over the figure for the comparable period in 1969. The first quarter figure is especially significant in view of the fact that 1969 was a record year for shrimp landings at Kodiak. Since Kodiak accounted for more than 95 percent of Alaska's total in 1969, its first quarter figure is also a good indicator of the State's total shrimp catch for the period January through March of 1970.

There is good reason to believe that this upsurge in Alaska's shrimp landings signals a permanent trend for the fishery. Currently, there is a large demand for shrimp on both the domestic and foreign markets. Furthermore, this demand is expected to increase throughout the rest of the twentieth century. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries economists estimate that the world demand for shrimp may equal and possibly surpass supplies of the shellfish by 1980. 1/

If this prediction is even approximately correct, then the shrimp fishery could have a considerable effect upon Alaska's fishing and fish processing industries and indeed on the State's economy as a whole. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries reports indicate that stocks of shrimp in Alaskan waters are sufficient to support an annual catch of around 400 million pounds and still remain intact. A catch of this magnitude would be a nearly tenfold increase over Alaska's 1969 shrimp landings. Furthermore, it would rival and possibly even surpass the State's salmon fishery.

Such a greatly increased shrimp fishery would result in more year round employment in the fishing communities on the Gulf of Alaska. Communities most effected would be those in an arc stretching from Yakutat in the south, and including Cordova and Seward in the north, to Kodiak in the west. The improved employment situation would stem from the fact that shrimp can be taken the year around, whereas salmon, crab and halibut, presently the area's major fisheries, are highly seasonal. In addition, employment relating to the taking and processing of these species tends to be subject to market fluctuations. For example, an insufficient market for King Crab was a major contributor to a price dispute between processors and fishermen during late 1969. This dispute caused layoffs of around 100 cannery workers in Kodiak alone. Because of the worldwide extent of the market for shrimp, the taking and processing of shrimp would probably not be subject to these fluctuations. As a result of this and the relatively unseasonal nature of the fishery, a stable year around source of employment for area residents would be assured.

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1/ Cleary, Donald P., "World Demand for Shrimp and Prawns May Outstrip Supply During Next Decade", Commercial Fisheries Review, Vol. 32, No. 3 (March 1970), pp. 19-22.