

STATEWIDE IN ALASKA

Shrimp landings at Kodiak, Alaska's major shrimp port have continued at record levels during the first two months of 1971. According to figures released by the U.S. Department of Commerce, nearly 9.7 million pounds of shrimp were landed at Kodiak in January and February of this year. The figure for the same period in 1970 was 8.9 million pounds while the first two months of 1969 saw 6.1 million pounds of shrimp turned in at the island community. This continuation of the upward surge in the State's shrimp fishery takes on added significance when it is realized that both 1969 and 1970 saw record catches of the shellfish.

This rise in the shrimp fishery has already had a substantial effect on Kodiak's economy, and there is every indication that this trend will continue. According to the Kodiak Daily Mirror, the expansion of one company's shrimp processing facilities has created 80 new jobs for area residents. Furthermore, Kodiak's newest processing plant, a beached freezership owned by W.R. Grace Co. will employ in excess of 100 persons, many of whom will be engaged in shrimp processing. In addition to these two examples, many other processors are adding to their shrimp processing capacity or establishing such a capability, creating still more processing related jobs.

The economic effect, both on Kodiak and on other Gulf communities, is intensified by its relatively non-seasonal nature. Most other seafood related employment, notably salmon canning and to a lesser extent crab and halibut processing, is highly seasonal in nature. As a result, persons engaged in occupations related to the processing of these species can anticipate being unemployed during part of every year. Because shrimp are taken the year around, processing of the shellfish also continues throughout the year. As more people become employed in shrimp processing, this employment will have the effect of lowering the high off-season unemployment rates experienced by Kodiak and similar areas each year.

However, the permanence of the economic benefits deriving from the shrimp fishery are, in large measure, dependent upon the success of efforts to conserve the resource at levels such that it will renew itself year after year. One has only to look at king crab, a species which has nearly been fished out of existence in a few short years to see the truth of this statement. Recognizing the need to regulate the annual shrimp harvest, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has established catch quotas in waters around Kodiak where fishing for the shellfish occurs. The success or failure of these quotas will in turn depend to a great extent, upon the Federal Government's influence over the high seas fishing fleets of the Pacific Rim countries. These include most notably Japan, South Korea and the Soviet Union. If the government, through treaties or possibly economic and political sanctions can encourage these nations to hold their catches at an acceptable level, the resource can be maintained. If, on the other hand, this cannot be accomplished, then the economic benefits accruing from the shrimp fishery may prove only slightly more transitory than those of the now nearly defunct king crab fishery.