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**Preliminary Commercial Salmon Catch Statistics
for the 1997 Season in Alaska**

by

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In 1997 the Alaskan commercial catches were generally below preseason projections. Chinook salmon catches were an exception to this rule, while coho runs were far lower than expected in most areas. Even so, the overall level of commercial catch is still quite high by historical standards. We suspect that last year's shortfall was due to unobserved changes in ocean conditions. The 1997 commercial harvest is broken down as 662 thousand chinook, 31.1 million sockeye, 3.15 million coho, 71.9 million pink, and 16.2 million chum salmon. Table 1 shows harvest numbers by species and fishing area, in units of fish harvested, and Table 2 provides this information in units of pounds harvested.

The exvessel value of the 1997 commercial harvest continued its downward trend. The preliminary estimate for 1997's harvest is \$274 million — well below the estimates of \$378 million for 1996, \$466 million for 1995, and \$489 million for 1994.

The 1997 Bristol Bay sockeye run was considerably under forecast. The 1997 forecast was for a return of 35.8 million, with an in-Bay catch of 24.8 million. The actual run was 20.1 million, with an in-Bay catch of 12.3 million. Because of this forecast error, the Department reviewed its forecasting methods and looked at using additional information that might improve this year's forecast. However, we were unable to provide a convincing explanation for last year's shortfall and therefore did not change our procedures for the 1998 forecast — which also turned out to be considerably above the actual 1998 run and catch levels.

Preliminary commercial catch estimates for 1998 can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://146.63.252.140/foresite/salmon/bluesheet/prod+report.dml>.

Table 1. Preliminary 1997 Alaska commercial salmon harvests by fishing area and species, in thousands of fish.

Fishing Area	Species					Total
	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	
Southeast Region	304	2,500	1,950	29,000	11,700	45,500
Prince William Sound	52	4,200	83	25,800	2,200	32,300
Upper Cook Inlet	13	4,090	144	71	89	4,410
Lower Cook Inlet	1	240	9	2,810	6	3,070
Bristol Bay	76	12,300	50	0	307	12,700
Central Region	143	20,800	287	28,700	2,600	52,500
Kodiak Area	19	2,500	381	11,000	520	14,400
Chignik	3	770	91	844	156	1,860
South Peninsula	7	2,240	112	2,300	606	5,260
North Peninsula	10	2,150	95	51	97	2,400
Aleutian Islands	—	—	—	—	—	0
Westward Region	39	7,660	678	14,200	1,380	24,000
AYK Region	175	123	234	0	530	1,060
Total Alaska	662	31,100	3,150	71,900	16,200	123,000

Missing data indicate no harvest, and zeros indicate harvest activity but <1,000. Columns and rows do not total exactly due to rounding.

Modified January 30, 1998

Table 2. Preliminary 1997 Alaska commercial salmon harvests by fishing area and species, in thousands of pounds.

Fishing Area	Species					Total
	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	
Southeast Region	5,170	16,200	15,600	116,000	99,400	252,000
Prince William Sound	1,250	27,200	623	97,100	18,900	145,000
Upper Cook Inlet	213	26,800	936	213	596	28,800
Lower Cook Inlet	21	1,580	62	8,440	40	10,100
Bristol Bay	1,250	72,600	330	0	2,000	76,200
Central Region	2,730	128,000	1,950	106,000	21,500	260,000
Kodiak Area	187	13,300	3,050	37,500	4,160	58,200
Chignik	47	4,850	709	2,790	1,230	9,630
South Peninsula	113	12,900	877	7,600	4,250	25,700
North Peninsula	161	12,400	744	168	680	14,200
Aleutian Islands	—	—	—	—	—	0
Westward Region	508	43,500	5,380	48,100	10,300	108,000
AYK Region	3,370	873	1,730	0	3,970	9,940
Total Alaska	8,430	188,000	23,000	270,000	131,000	620,000

Missing data indicate no harvest, and zeros indicate harvest activity but <1,000. Columns and rows do not total exactly due to rounding.

Modified January 30, 1998

Chinook Salmon

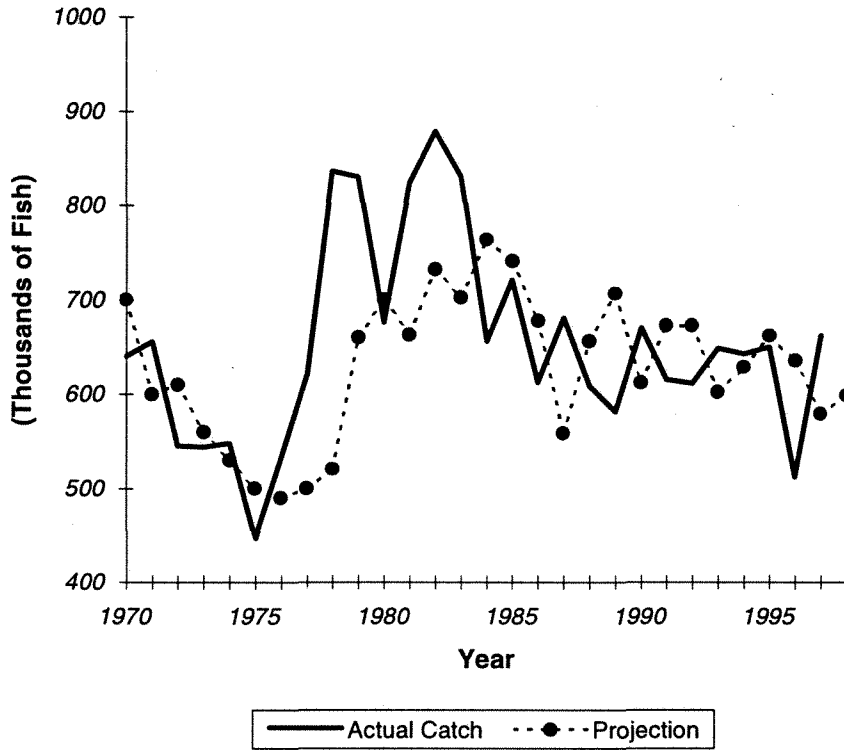


Figure 1. Relationship between actual catch (thousands) and projected catch (thousands) for Alaska chinook salmon from 1970 to 1997, with the 1998 projection.

Sockeye Salmon

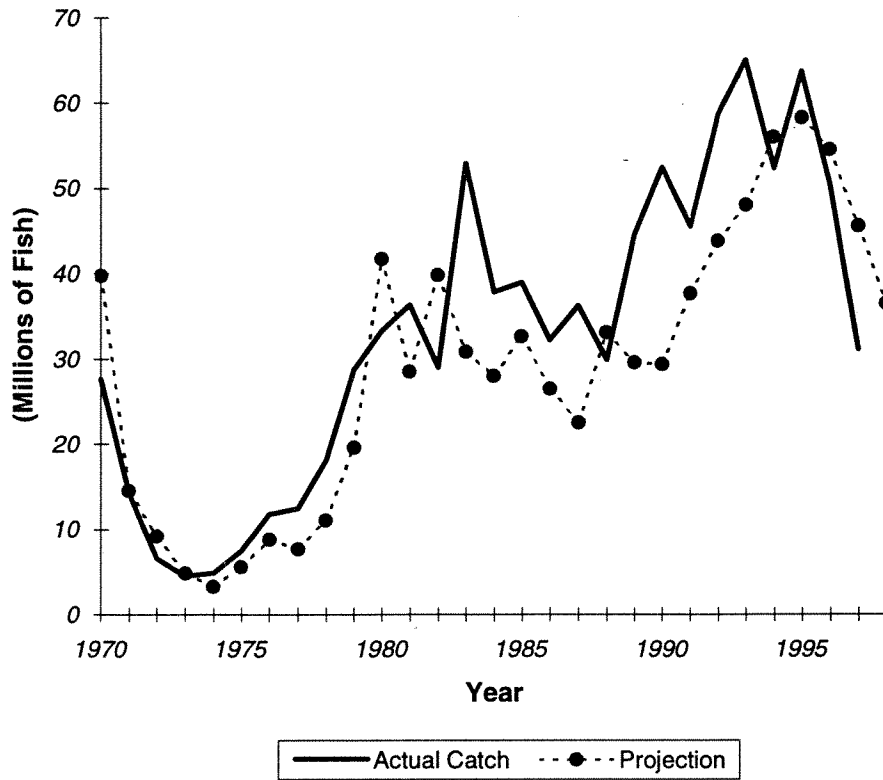


Figure 2. Relationship between actual catch (millions) and projected catch (millions) for Alaska sockeye salmon from 1970 to 1997, with the 1998 projection.

Coho Salmon

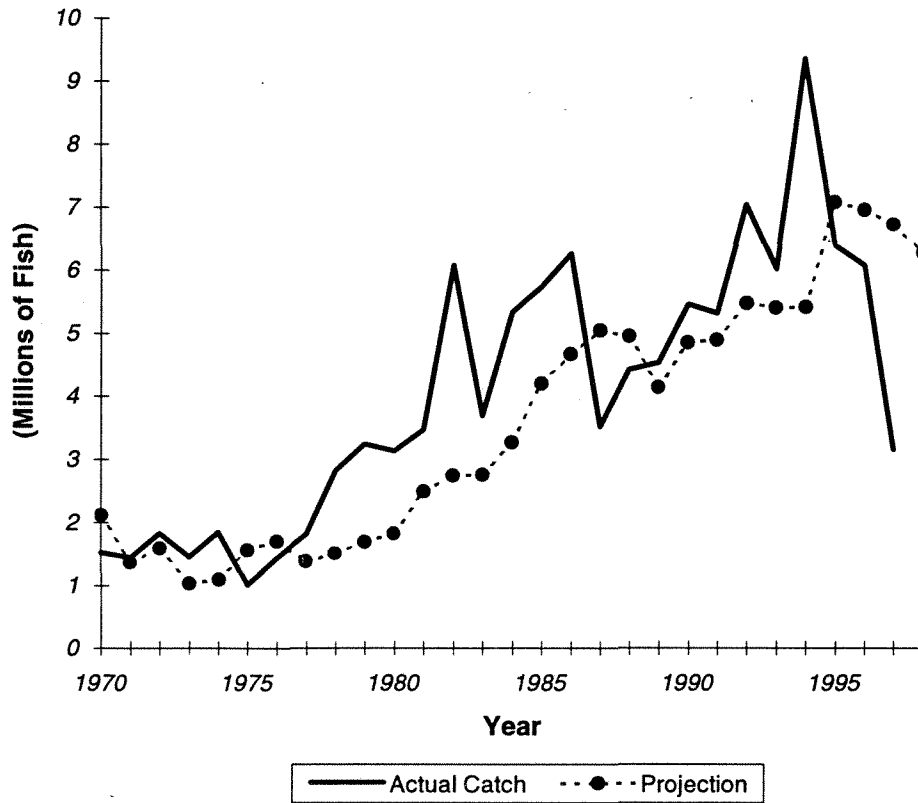


Figure 3. Relationship between actual catch (millions) and projected catch (millions) for Alaska coho salmon from 1970 to 1997, with the 1998 projection.

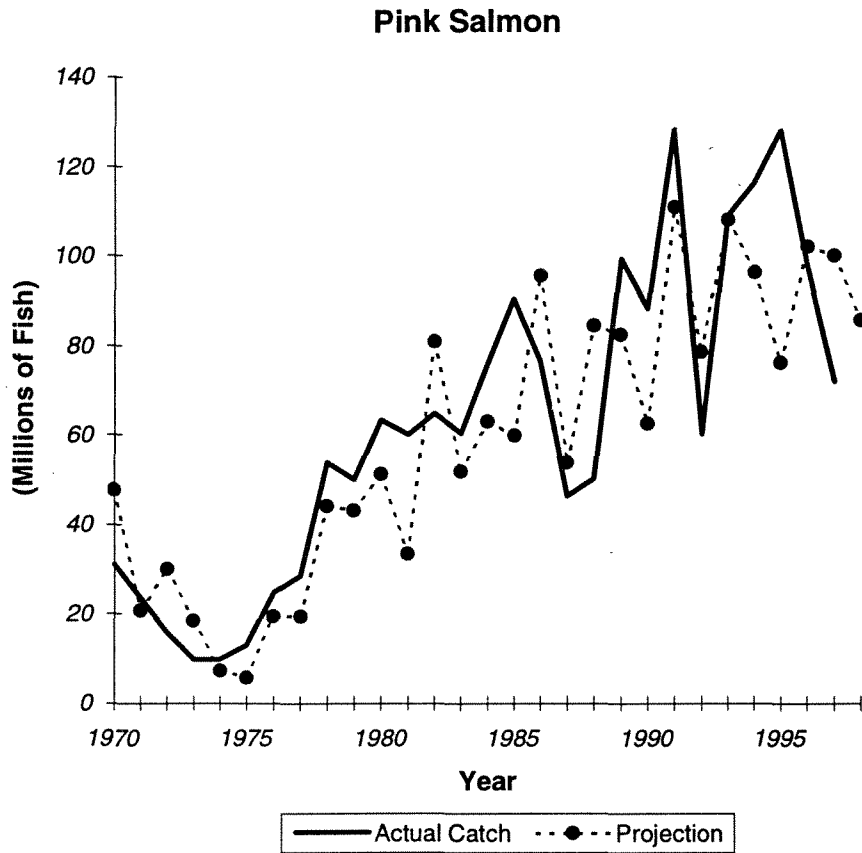


Figure 4. Relationship between actual catch (millions) and projected catch (millions) for Alaska pink salmon from 1970 to 1997, with the 1998 projection.

Chum Salmon

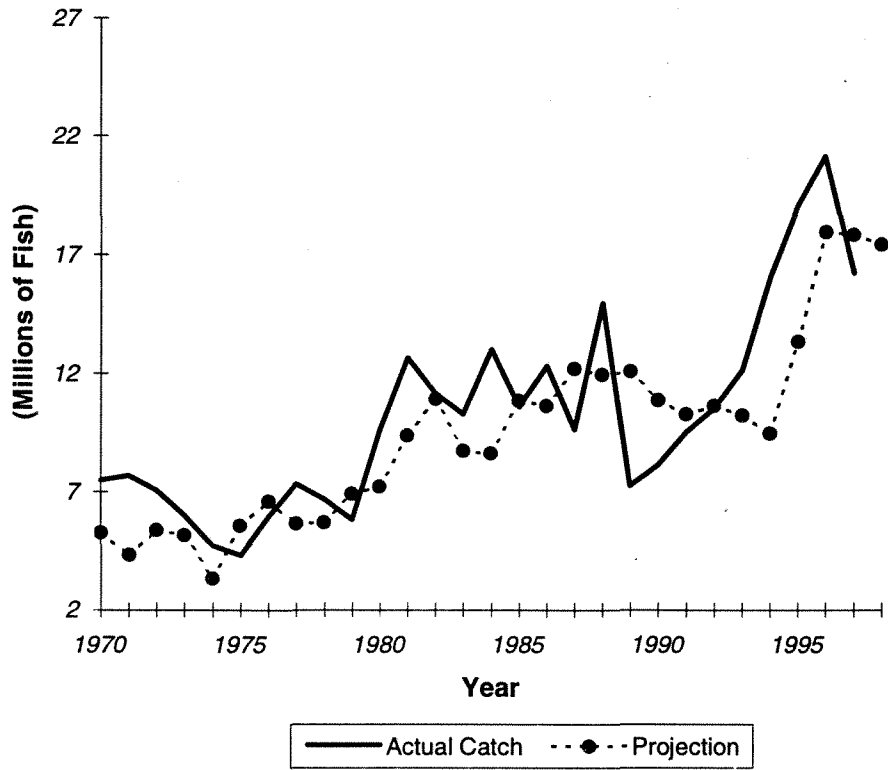


Figure 5. Relationship between actual catch (millions) and projected catch (millions) for Alaska chum salmon from 1970 to 1997, with the 1998 projection.