
North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission

2021 Virtual Annual Meeting
2021 May 10–20

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NORTH PACIFIC SALMON CATCHES DECLINE IN 2020 TO LOWEST LEVELS IN FOUR DECADES

Vancouver, BC, Canada (May 28, 2021)—The North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) announced preliminary North Pacific-wide total salmon catches for 2020, as reported by its member countries Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States. Pacific salmon abundance in the North Pacific during 2020 was the lowest recorded (606.7 thousand metric tonnes, 322.5 million fish) since 1982, as indexed by aggregate commercial catches.

The member countries' portions of the total catch included 48% by Russia (292.7 thousand metric tonnes), 41% by the United States (245.7 thousand metric tonnes of which 241.1 thousand metric tonnes was caught in Alaska), 10% by Japan (61.1 thousand metric tonnes), and 1% by Canada (7.1 thousand metric tonnes) and less than 1% by Korea (139 metric tonnes).

Pink salmon constituted the majority of the total commercial catch (46% by weight) followed by chum (27%) and sockeye salmon (23%). Coho comprised 3% of the catch, while Chinook salmon, cherry salmon, and steelhead trout were each less than 1% of the catch by weight.

Pink and chum salmon dominate Asian catches, but overall catches have been generally declining since 2011. Pink salmon catches reached a high in 2018 (516.9 thousand metric tonnes) but declined to 178.2 thousand metric tonnes in 2020. The chum salmon catch has declined since 2015 and in 2020 was 135.2 thousand metric tonnes, compared to the 10-year average (2010–2019) of 222.8 thousand metric tonnes. This decline was attributed to reduced chum catches in Japan (54.7 thousand metric tonnes) and Russia (80.3 thousand metric tonnes). Russia currently catches the largest proportion of the total Asian catch, although prior to 2005, Japan often caught a greater proportion. Catches by the Republic of Korea are relatively minor.

The total North American catch in 2020 was 252.7 thousand metric tonnes, which was the lowest since 1977. Chum salmon catch has declined from 101.2 thousand metric tonnes in 2017 to 30.6 thousand metric tonnes in 2020. Sockeye salmon catch declined in 2020 to 107.4 thousand metric tonnes, compared to the five-year average of 133.6 thousand metric tonnes. In Alaska, sockeye and pink salmon are the primary species, followed by chum salmon. The 2020 chum salmon catch in Alaska was the lowest since 1989 (28.1 thousand metric tonnes). In Canada, pink, chum, and sockeye salmon were the most abundant species caught. While catches remain historically low, catches for sockeye, pink, and chum salmon increased compared to 2019. In Washington, Oregon, and California, Chinook, chum, and coho salmon are typically the most abundant species caught. Particularly low catches of chum and sockeye salmon in 2020 resulted in the lowest total catches of salmon on record (4.5 thousand metric tonnes) in the NPAFC database for Washington, Oregon, and California combined.

Hatchery releases of salmon and steelhead from NPAFC member countries have been stable since 1993, with approximately five billion fish released annually. After a record high in 2019 (5.5 billion fish), the number of hatchery releases decreased to 5.1 billion fish in 2020. Hatcheries released 2,002 million fish (39% of the

total) in the United States, 1,593 million (31%) in Japan, 1,287 million (25%) in Russia, 209 million (4%) in Canada, and 8 million (< 1%) in Korea.

Hatchery releases were primarily chum (3,299 million, 65%) and pink salmon (1,277 million, 25%), followed by Chinook (224 million, 4%), sockeye (187 million, 4%), coho salmon (82 million, 2%), steelhead trout (19 million, <1%), and cherry salmon (12 million, <1%).

Table 1. Preliminary 2020 commercial salmon catches in Canada, Japan, Korea, Russia, and the United States. Commercial catches by foreign fleets in the Russian EEZ are not included. Japanese catch data are based on Fisheries Research Agency data sources, not official statistics. Commercial catch weight for Alaska is based on landed weight (Alaska Department of Fish and Game).

(a) Preliminary 2020 commercial catch in millions of fish.

	Sockeye	Pink	Chum	Coho	Chinook	Cherry	Steelhead	Total
Canada	0.079	1.919	0.271	0.103	0.092	-	-	2.464
Japan	0.003	4.061	17.509	0.001	0.001	-	0.000	21.575
Korea	-	-	0.055	-	-	-	-	0.055
Russia	13.120	135.533	26.734	3.230	0.056	0.000	-	178.673
USA	46.468	61.136	8.839	2.774	0.518	-	0.020	119.755
Alaska	46.460	61.136	8.586	2.454	0.275	-	0.001	118.912
WOC	0.008	0.000	0.253	0.320	0.243	-	0.019	0.843
Total	59.670	202.649	53.408	6.108	0.667	0.000	0.020	322.522

WOC: Washington, Oregon, and California

“0.000” means non-zero catch but too low to report; blank cell means no data available

“-” means zero catch

(b) Preliminary 2020 commercial catch in metric tonnes (round weight).

	Sockeye	Pink	Chum	Coho	Chinook	Cherry	Steelhead	Total
Canada	175	4,481	1,472	304	618	-	-	7,050
Japan	6	5,409	54,669	2	5	1,046	0	61,137
Korea	-	-	139	-	-	-	-	139
Russia	29,916	172,820	80,349	9,327	261	1	-	292,674
USA	107,234	96,622	29,135	8,662	3,938	-	91	245,682
Alaska	107,220	96,613	28,084	7,689	1,535	-	1	241,142
WOC	14	9	1,051	973	2,403	-	90	4,540
Total	137,331	279,332	165,764	18,295	4,822	1,047	91	606,682

WOC: Washington, Oregon, and California

“0” means non-zero catch but too low to report

“-” means zero catch

Table 2. Preliminary 2020 hatchery releases in NPAFC member countries in millions of fish.

	Sockeye	Pink	Chum	Coho	Chinook	Cherry	Steelhead	Total
Canada	113.276*	9.263*	35.592*	8.311	42.036	-	0.192	208.670
Japan	0.213	110.875	1,469.789	-	-	11.935	-	1,592.812
Korea	-	-	8.060	-	-	-	-	8.060
Russia	18.132	282.560	983.370	2.142	0.907	0.235	-	1,287.346
USA	54.956	874.413	801.741	71.199	180.571	-	19.068	2,001.948
Alaska	40.339	873.916	767.316	33.612	10.921	-	-	1,726.104
WOCI	14.617	0.497	34.425	37.587	169.650	-	19.068	275.844
Total	186.577	1,277.111	3,298.552	81.652	223.514	12.170	19.260	5,098.836

WOCI: Washington, Oregon, California, and Idaho

* This includes hatchery releases and spawning channel production

“-” means zero hatchery release

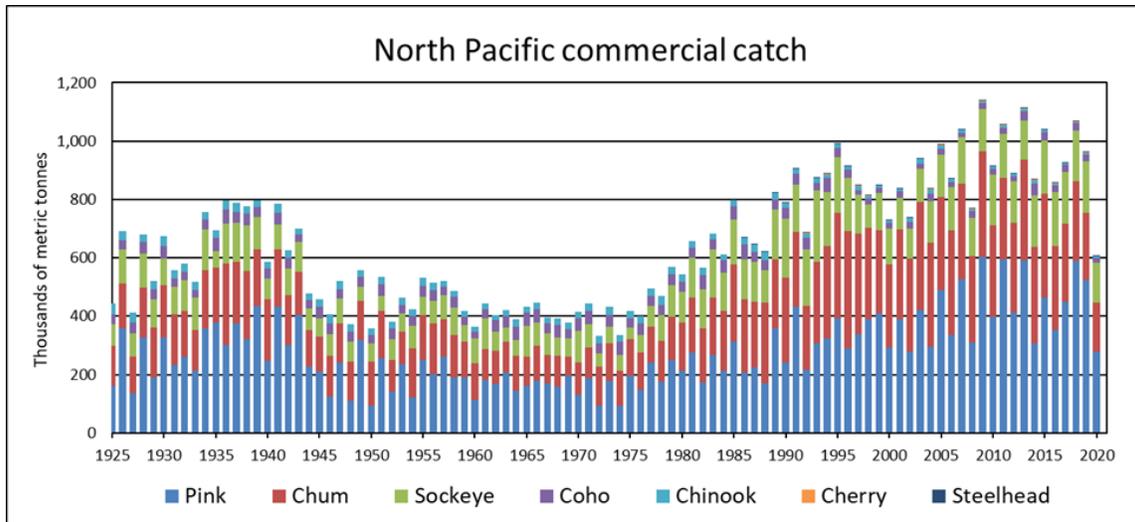


Figure 1. North Pacific commercial catch (thousands of metric tonnes) of Pacific salmon by species from 1925 to 2020 (2020 catches are preliminary).

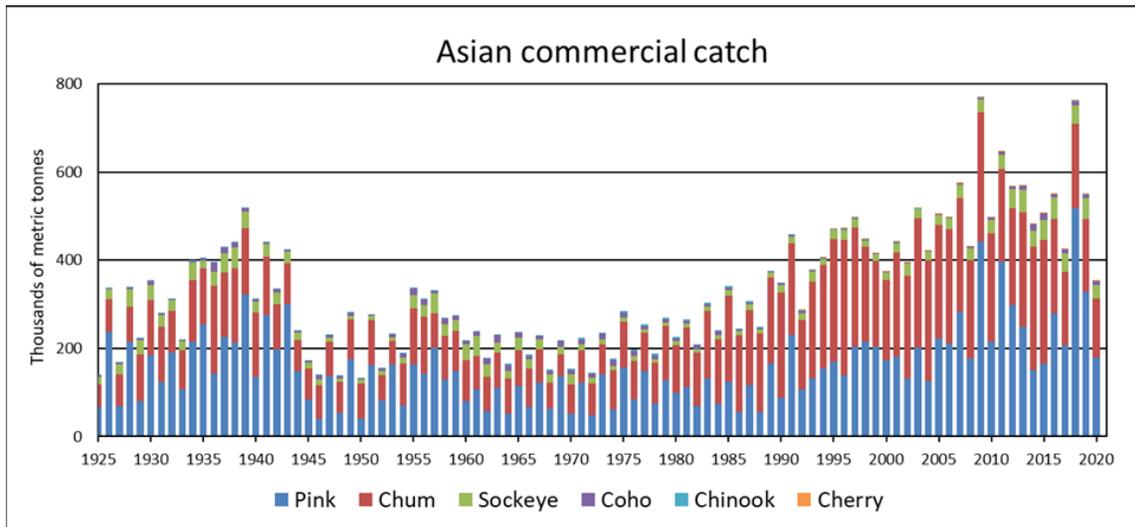


Figure 2. Asian commercial catch (thousands of metric tonnes) of Pacific salmon by species from 1925 to 2020 (2020 catches are preliminary).

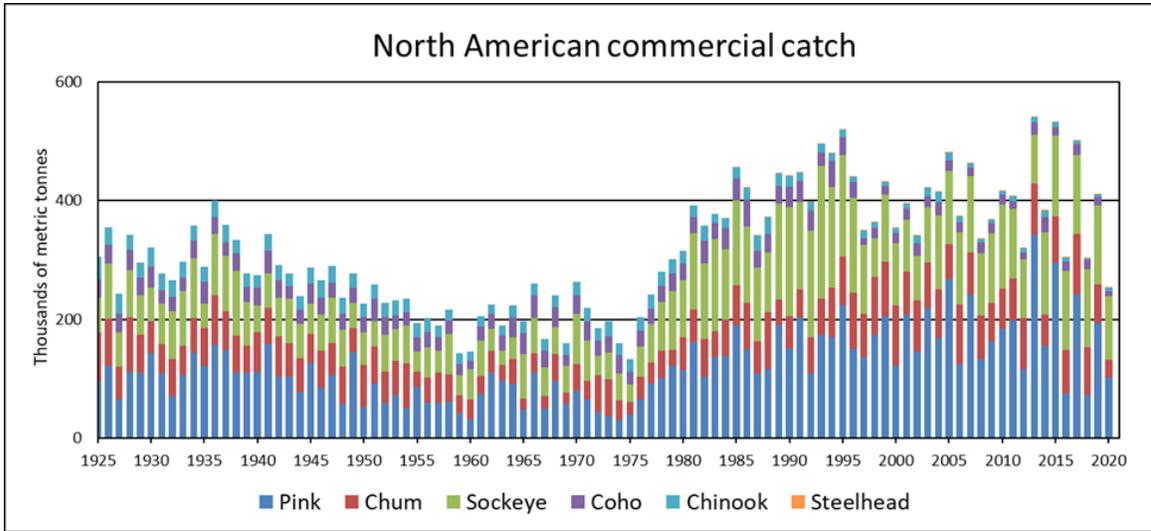


Figure 3. North American commercial catch (thousands of metric tonnes) of Pacific salmon by species from 1925 to 2020 (2020 catches are preliminary).

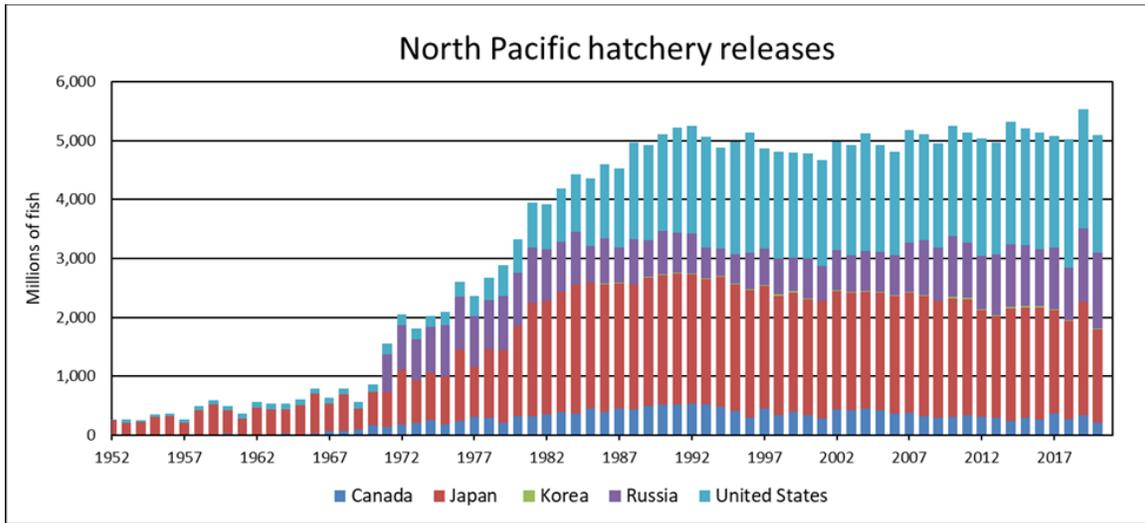


Figure 4. Annual North Pacific hatchery releases (millions of fish) of Pacific salmon by member countries from 1952 to 2020.

* Canadian estimates include both hatchery releases and spawning channel production.

-END-

Contact: Vladimir Radchenko
 NPAFC Executive Director
 Phone: +1-604-775-5550
 E-mail: secretariat@npafc.org
 Website: <https://npafc.org>

About NPAFC

The NPAFC is an international organization that promotes the conservation of Pacific salmon (chum, coho, pink, sockeye, Chinook, and cherry salmon) and steelhead trout in the North Pacific and its adjacent seas, and serves as a venue for cooperation in and coordination of scientific research and enforcement activities. The NPAFC Convention Area is located in international waters north of 33°N latitude in the North Pacific, Bering Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk beyond the 200-mile zones of coastal States. NPAFC member countries include Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America.