

Subsistence Fisheries Harvest Database Update and Report Preparation (04-751 Final)

The overall goal of this project was to improve access to harvest data for Alaska's subsistence fisheries. The project updated the Alaska Subsistence Fisheries Database by adding the findings of 22 annual subsistence salmon harvest monitoring programs in 2003, 2004, and 2005. Annual reports that summarize the subsistence salmon fisheries in 11 management areas were produced and distributed for 2003, 2004, and 2005. A prototype of an online database system to present harvest information from the Alaska Subsistence Fisheries Database was developed and is under review and revision. Also, a subsistence fisheries information page was added to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game website with background on subsistence regulations and links to the annual reports in PDF format.

Data presented in the annual reports for 2003, 2004, and 2005 suggest stable to slightly declining subsistence salmon harvests from 1994 through 2005. The recent 12-year average annual harvest was an estimated 1.112 million salmon; the recent 5-year average annual harvest was an estimated 1.005 million salmon. Limitations to complete analysis of trends in Alaska subsistence salmon fisheries include a lack of pre-1994 data in the database for some of the largest subsistence fisheries; lack of coverage of the Cook Inlet personal use salmon fisheries; incomplete coverage of harvests in the Northwest Management Area; and an incomplete record of subsistence harvests for some subsistence fisheries or areas, due to low levels of participation in the harvest monitoring programs or the harvests of significant numbers of salmon for home use with rod and reel or removal from commercial catches that are not recorded on subsistence permits. Evaluation of trends for some fisheries is also limited by a lack of systematic contextual information.

The report concludes by noting that uncertain funding threatens the sustainability of annual subsistence fisheries harvest assessment programs. Rather than cutting back on programs, efforts to expand communication of program findings, outreach about the importance of the documentation of subsistence harvests, and further development of collaborative programs are needed. Also needed is additional technical review of current programs by fisheries managers, subsistence researchers, and data management personnel.

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