

Subsistence salmon fishing by residents of Nome

Abstract: Nome was among the first western Alaska communities to be affected by the recent declines in western Alaska salmon stocks. In response to severe salmon fishing restrictions in the Nome subdistrict, some Nome families began subsistence fishing in adjacent less regulated areas. Except in Pilgrim River, the efforts and harvests of these fishing families have not been documented, either through permits or surveys. Nome residents' impact on the fish stocks and on the fishing opportunities for residents of these adjacent areas has been unknown. This project identified three different strata of Nome households believed to be fishing for salmon outside the Nome permit areas: (1) members of the King Island Community, (2) other Nome households identified by a network of key respondents in Nome, and (3) Nome households whose members had obtained sport fishing licenses in 2000. Households in each group were surveyed to estimate the number of salmon harvested in 2001, the locations of harvests, and other data. In addition, key respondents in Teller and White Mountain were interviewed to discuss the impacts of Nome residents' fishing on adjacent communities. An analysis of Nome survey and permit data for 2001 indicated that Nome residents harvested 47 percent of their salmon outside the Nome permit area. Of the estimated 6,138 salmon harvested by sampled households, 1,158 salmon (19 percent) came from the Port Clarence area, and 1,426 salmon (23 percent) came from the White Mountain-Golovin area. Nome residents relied primarily on nets to harvest salmon in the Port Clarence area, where 94 percent of Nome's harvest was taken with nets and only 6 percent taken with rod and reel. Rods and reels were more commonly used in the White Mountain-Golovin Area, where 61 percent of the harvest was taken with nets and 39 percent with rod and reel. Respondents interviewed in White Mountain and Teller reported increased competition for fishing sites related to increased effort by Nome residents. In Teller, the sites in contention were set net sites along the beach in front of the community. In White Mountain, the sites in contention were seining sites along the Fish and Niukluk rivers. In Teller, respondents reported that Nome residents typically fished 300-foot nets, compared to 100- to 150-foot fished by Teller respondents, and a few Teller residents changed their location or increased their gear length in order to compete with Nome residents. Respondents in both Teller and White Mountain were concerned that increased effort and harvest in their areas by Nome residents eventually would lead to increased regulation of subsistence fishing.

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