

# Alaska salmon industry milestones



Reaping the Bristol Bay salmon harvest, in the early 1980s

PAUL BROWN / Anchorage Daily News file photo

**1878** – First Alaska canneries open at Klawock and Old Sitka.

**1892** – 22 canneries close because of glut of canned salmon, falling profits.

**1893** – Surviving canners form powerful San Francisco-based cartel, the Alaska Packers Association.



Alaska Packers Association

**1903** – Inventor E.A. Smith builds "Iron Chink" fish-cleaning machine, displacing scores of cannery workers.

**1912** – Bristol Bay catch exceeds 20 million fish for the first time, but fishery remains virtually unregulated.

**1916** – Alaska Packers Association, built on premium red salmon, begins to lose dominance as World War I stokes demand for cheap pinks, chums.

**1919** – Salmon markets collapse as big military purchases end; Bristol Bay run fails as federal biologists warn: *"Total exhaustion of the fisheries will occur ..."*

**1942** – After Pearl Harbor, canners adopt new ad slogan: *"Food fit for MacArthur's men."* Fishing intensifies.



The Fishermen's News  
This retailer's display was the winning entry for a national advertising campaign in 1940.



Butterfly brand label

Source: Anchorage Museum of History and Art

**1951** – Power boats allowed in Bristol Bay, rapidly replace sailboats.

**1953** – President Eisenhower declares Alaska disaster area due to lowest salmon pack in 32 years; overfishing blamed.

**1955** – Rebuilt Japanese fleet takes staggering 50 million fish, many of them young Bristol Bay red salmon.

**1973** – State law enacted to limit number of fishermen.

**1974** – State begins hatchery program to supplement depleted salmon runs. Hatcheries produce 34% of 2000 commercial catch of 136 million fish.

**1976** – Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act leads to ouster of Japanese and other foreign fishing vessels within 200 miles of U.S. coast.

**1990** – Legislature bans fish farming in Alaska as foreign fish farms begin dramatic rise.

**1992** – Alaska wild salmon harvest eclipsed by farmed fish for first time.

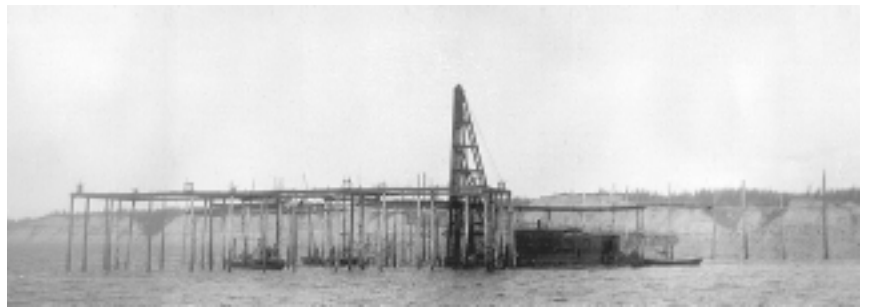
**2001** – Alaska salmon value dips to \$216 million; Gov. Knowles declares economic disaster for Western Alaska.

1850

1900

1950

2000



Anchor Point fish trap in the 1950s

Anchorage Museum of History and Art

**1959** – Alaska becomes state, immediately bans hated cannery-owned fish traps.

**1982** – Three Europeans die of botulism linked to Alaska canned salmon, leading to a giant recall and creation of Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

**1982** – Frozen salmon production exceeds canned for first time in Bristol Bay.

**1988** – Alaska salmon value peaks at \$768 million. Fetching up to \$2.40 a pound, a Bristol Bay red salmon is worth as much as barrel of Alaska crude oil.

**1989** – Exxon Valdez oil spill disrupts some salmon fisheries.

**1995** – Commercial catch tops 200 million fish for first time, including record 44 million red salmon in Bristol Bay.



Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute



AL GRILLO/The Associated Press  
Driftnet fishing boats crowd the mouth of the Naknek River in 1999



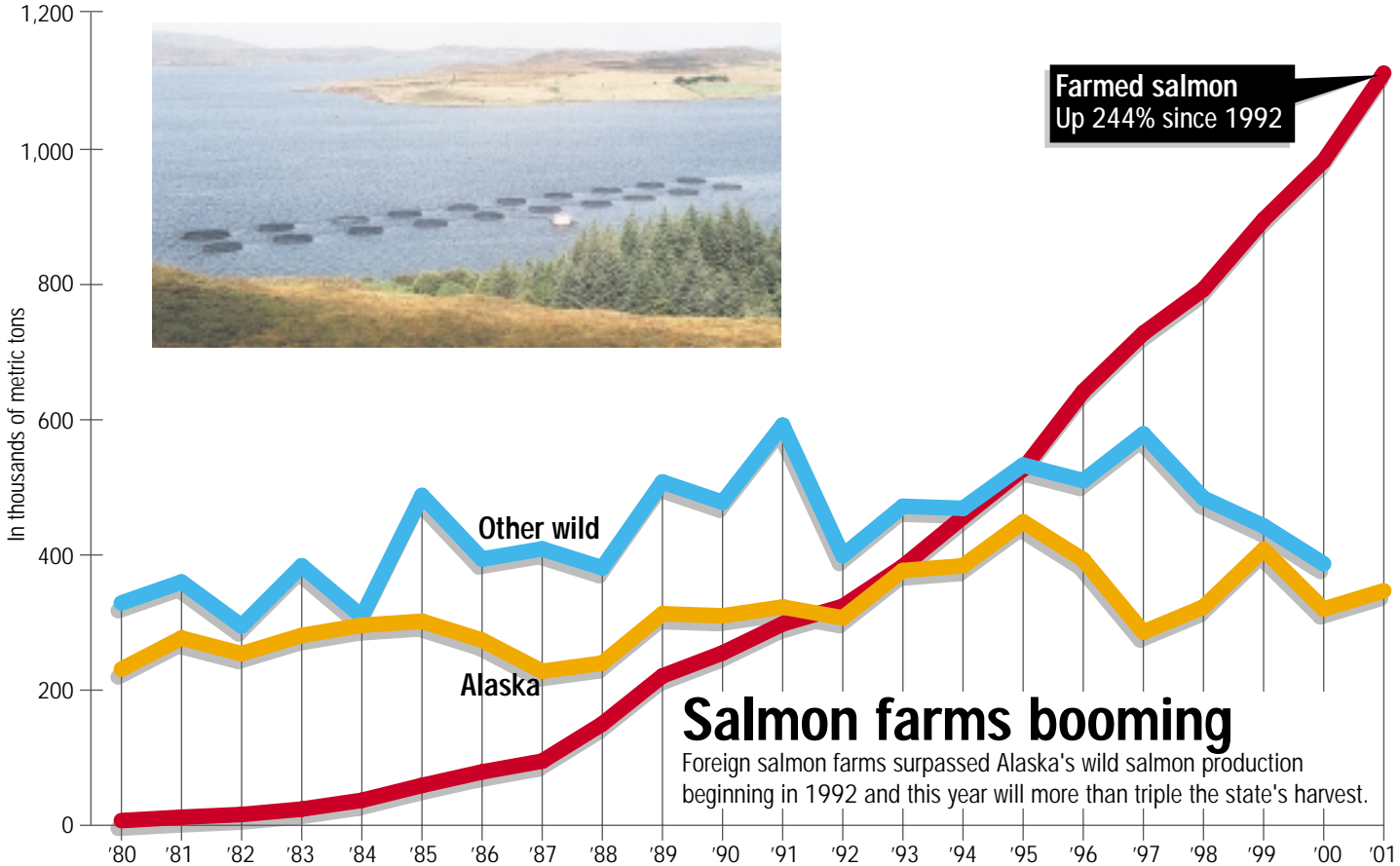
Bristol Bay sunset

ANDY DOLAN/The Associated Press

Sources: Ernest Gruening's book "The State of Alaska" (Random House, 1954); "Sockeye and the Age of Sail" (video, John Sabella & Associates Inc., 2001); Richard Cooley's book, "Politics and Conservation: The Decline of the Alaska Salmon" (Harper & Row, 1963); and Bob King, spokesman for Alaska Gov. Tony Knowles.



**Farmed salmon**  
Up 244% since 1992



## Salmon farms booming

Foreign salmon farms surpassed Alaska's wild salmon production beginning in 1992 and this year will more than triple the state's harvest.

Source: Gunnar Knapp, University of Alaska Anchorage

# An industry flounders

In salmon fisheries all over the state, low fish prices have torpedoed both the average gross earnings, before expenses, for fishermen and also the value of their fishing permits.



ERIK HILL / Anchorage Daily News

Fish wheel near Fort Yukon on the Yukon River.

## Yukon River

Depressed king, chum salmon populations meant no commercial fisheries allowed last summer. Fishery was worth more than \$8 million in 1995.  
**2001 CATCH: 0 FISH**  
**VALUE: \$0**

## Bristol Bay

Home of the world's largest wild red salmon run.  
**2001 CATCH: 14.9 million fish**  
**VALUE: \$38.6 million**

## Cook Inlet

Fishery competes fiercely with sportfishing for salmon. Red salmon dominates harvest.  
**2001 CATCH: 3.1 million fish**  
**VALUE: \$8.8 million**

## Prince William Sound

Mainstays are early-season king and red salmon, which have won a loyal Lower 48 following. Later, focus shifts to hatchery-origin pinks.  
**2001 CATCH: 40.3 million fish**  
**VALUE: \$44.7 million**

## Alaska Peninsula

Also known as False Pass or Area M fishery, fishermen focus on red salmon migrating to Bristol Bay.

**2001 CATCH: 9.0 million fish\***  
**VALUE: \$9.4million**

\*Catch down significantly because of fishermen's strike.

## Chignik

A hundred purse seine boats yearly target rich red salmon run along Alaska Peninsula.  
**2001 CATCH: 2.8 million fish**  
**VALUE: \$8.5 million**

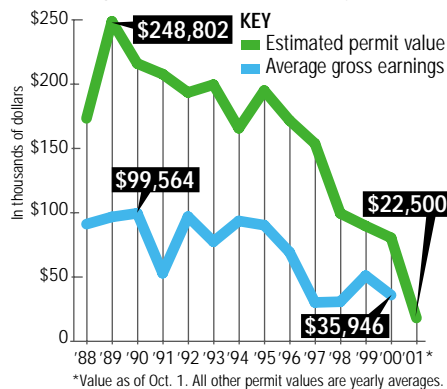
## Kodiak

Island fishermen, packing plants stay busiest on red salmon, pink salmon.  
**2001 CATCH: 23.7 million fish**  
**VALUE: \$18.9 million**

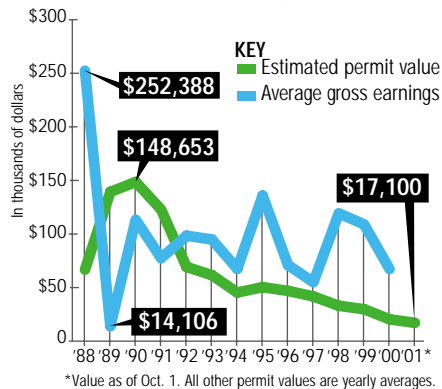
## Southeast

Big focus is roe-rich chum salmon, many released from hatcheries, and pinks. Also, troll-caught kings and silvers.  
**2001 CATCH: 81.1 million fish**  
**VALUE: \$86.1 million**

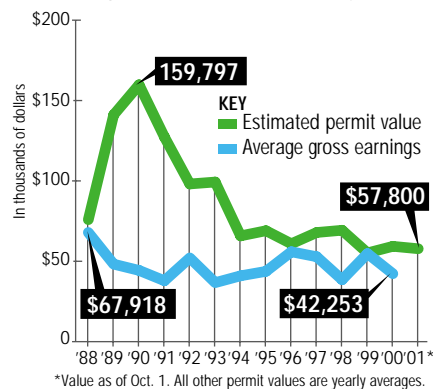
### Bristol Bay drift-gillnet boat fishery



### Kodiak purse seine fishery



### Prince William Sound drift-gillnet boat fishery



### Southeast purse seine fishery

