

Preservation and increase of the salmon supply.—It is not unnatural that the solicitude for the maintenance of the supply of salmon on the Columbia River should now be greater and more general than at any previous time in the history of the fishery. The catch of chinook salmon has recently shown an almost constant annual decrease, and the success of the industry is yearly becoming more jeopardized. People who within a short time scouted the idea of a permanent reduction in the number of chinook salmon entering the river, are now not averse to conceding the effects of overfishing, and there is probably no one peculiarly interested in the industry who does not realize that the time has come for active measures to prevent a still more serious impairment of the abundance of salmon. Of course the supply of chinook salmon in the Columbia Basin is still enormous and the productive capacity of the river is wonderful. All reference, therefore, to a decreased abundance must be construed in the relative sense as compared with the conditions prevailing when the acme of the canning industry was attained in 1884 and 1885. The threatened exhaustion of the supply must also be considered with reference to the extent of the fishing now carried on, which is not only commensurate with the supply, but is overtaxing the capacity of the river. The facts must also be borne in mind that the annual reduction is hastened by the employment of larger and larger quantities of apparatus; that as the supply becomes smaller the diminution becomes more pronounced in geometrical ratio; and that the results of overtaxation of the resources of the river in a given season are not seen the next year or the next, but are to be gauged in the fourth or fifth year following.

Special inquiries were made by the writer among the salmon-canners, fishermen, and citizens as to the legislative or other action demanded by the present condition of affairs. The practical unanimity of opinion is remarkable in view of the supposed diverse interests represented by canners, gill-net fishermen, trap fishermen, seine fishermen, wheel fishermen, etc.

Foremost among the measures advocated for the improvement of the salmon industry is artificial propagation. The reliance placed in fish-culture is practically unanimous. Some believe that nothing else is necessary for the regeneration of the fishery than very extensive fish-cultural operations, but most persons in the salmon districts think that, for a time at least—until the fishery begins to improve—the propagation work should be supplemented by some prohibitive measures.

It being generally recognized that the decline in the abundance of chinook salmon is due to the fact that the length of the fishing season and the avidity with which the fishery is prosecuted prevent a sufficient number of salmon reaching the spawning-grounds to repair the annual destruction by man, the character of the protection which has been considered most necessary is a shortening of the fishing season, supplemented by a short weekly intermission in the fishing.

Under present regulations the regular salmon-fishing on the Columbia River begins April 11 and continues until August 10. In the opinion of the U. S. Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries, if the fish that are now taken in April and August were allowed to pass up unmolested, a very marked improvement in the abundance of salmon would in due time be witnessed, and this protection, with ample artificial propagation, would rapidly restore the productiveness of the river.

F. C. B. 1894—10

Present time.	
No.	Average value per case.
0,000	\$4.80
1,000	5.00
2,000	4.70
3,000	4.51
4,000	4.76
5,000	5.97
6,000	0.25
7,000	5.84
8,000	5.52
9,000	5.62
10,000	5.50
11,000	5.42
12,000	5.25
0,404	-----