

RECORDS OF THE US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

RECORD GROUP 22

Shortly after the purchase of Alaska, by an act of July 27, 1868 (15 Stat. 240), Congress directed the Secretary of the Treasury to enforce regulations relating to customs, commerce, and navigation in the District of Alaska. In Section 6 of the act, Congress specified protection of the fur-bearing animals within Alaska and its adjacent waters. In addition to fisheries agents, the Treasury began using the Revenue Cutter Service, eventually in its specialized Bering Sea Patrol, to protect the government's interests (see Record Group 26). By an act of February 9, 1871, Congress created the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries which began, the following year, a program of scientific research on the fur seal that continues today. In 1888, Congress established the Commission as a distinct bureau and, in 1903, consolidated it with related government programs in a new Bureau of Fisheries. On March 2, 1889 (25 Stat. 1009), Congress added supervision of the Alaskan salmon fisheries to the Secretary's responsibilities and other special agents for protection of salmon were appointed. These acts, as amended, defined the basic policies by which the Secretary of the Treasury regulated the Alaskan fur sealing and salmon fishing industries.

The Secretary of the Treasury was responsible for Alaskan fur sealing and salmon fisheries until July 1, 1903, when these functions were transferred to the newly created Department of Commerce and Labor (32 Stat. 827). The work was performed in that department by the Alaskan Fisheries, later known as the Alaska Division of the Bureau of Fisheries. In 1905 and 1908, respectively, the Bureau was given added responsibility for regulation of the Alaskan fishery and fur seal industries. Under the provisions of an act of June 6, 1924 (43 Stat. 464), the Bureau was also given broad powers to regulate commercial fishing in Alaska.

An act of June 7, 1902 (32 Stat. 327), was the first of several under the provisions of which the Bureau of Fisheries was given responsibilities for the protection of land fur-bearing animals in Alaska. These duties included leasing of selected islands used for the breeding of foxes. Foxes were not indigenous to most of the Aleutians Islands but were introduced first by Russian trappers and later by their American successors. Fox farming grew into a major industry, generating fabulous profits. In the mid-1920s, a silver fox pelt that cost about a hundred dollars in the Aleutians commanded a price of several thousand dollars in London. In spite of their catastrophic impact on bird populations, foxes were known to have been introduced to 455 islands in the Aleutian area and the Alexander Archipelago. In 1920, Congress transferred the land fur-bearer program to the Bureau of Biological Survey (41 Stat. 716). In 1925, Congress established the Alaska Game Commission to assist the Bureau (43 Stat. 739). Fox farming never recovered from its collapse in the Great Depression and, not being indigenous, foxes died out on many islands. In 1949, the Fish and Wildlife Service began systematic eradication of foxes, primarily to counter the devastation foxes had wrought both on migratory and island bird colonies.

When the Department of Commerce and Labor was divided in 1913, the Bureau of Fisheries remained in Commerce until its 1939 transfer to the Department of the Interior. On June 30, 1940, the Bureau of Fisheries and of Biological Survey merged to form the new Fish and Wildlife Service. The Service administered Alaska's wildlife and fisheries from administrative offices in Seattle and Juneau working directly with the appropriate divisions in Washington, D.C. When the Service was reorganized in 1956 (70 Stat. 1119) the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife were created within it. In 1970, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration was created in the Department of Commerce and the old Bureau of Commercial Fisheries function were reconstituted within NOAA as the National Marine Fisheries Service. The Fish and Wildlife Service retained the balance of responsibility for administering Federal laws for the control of fish, birds, and other wildlife and for managing national wildlife refuges. Established in 1974, the Alaska Regional Office (Region 7), in Anchorage, manages research field stations, laboratories, other installations, and national wildlife refuges.

Wildlife refuges were first established in Alaska in the early 1900s to protect seabird nesting islands. Eleven refuges were established in the years between 1909 and 1958. The expansion of protected lands that culminated in December 1980 with the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which added lands to existing refuges and created still others. Under ANILCA, existing refuges were combined into the newly established Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge while others came into being. The existing refuges are: Alaska Maritime, Alaska Peninsula, Arctic, Becharof, Innoko, Izembek, Kanuti, Kenai, Kodiak, Koyukuk, Nowitna, Selawik, Tetlin, Togiak, Yukon Delta, and Yukon Flats.

With the purchase of Alaska in 1867 and as it well-intended, the United States acquired the Russians' sealing program on the Pribilof Islands, the summer breeding grounds of the northern fur seal. As it had for the Russians, the harvesting of seal hides became a proven commercial venture of legendary reward for the Federal government. At the same time, some of the earliest and most enduring Federal activities in Alaska centered upon protection of the fur resource, especially against foreign intruders. Some of the first cases in the records of the U.S. District Courts (Record Group 21) are condemnation proceedings against foreign sealing ships. The earliest known document in the Region's holdings is a 1867 trackline chart of the Revenue Cutter *Manning* of its summer patrol to the seal islands. The government's interest in fur harvesting and protection of this resource are documented in virtually every agency's records of the period.

The American era in Pribilof seal harvesting began when special agents for the protection of fur seals were sent to the larger Pribilof Islands of St. Paul and St. George. By an act of July 1, 1870 (16 Stat. 180) Congress authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to accept bids for a twenty-year exclusive lease to harvest fur seals on these islands, subject to stipulations specified by the Secretary. The activities of the company winning the bid were to be overseen by special fisheries agents who would also have considerable control over the lives of the individual islanders. The Alaska Commercial Company held the first lease from 1870 to 1890 and the North American Commercial Company held a renewal of the lease for the next twenty years. During this period, the United States became involved in sometimes deadly controversies as ships from Canada, Great

Britain, Russia, Japan, and the United States itself hunted the fur seal with increasing ruthlessness well epitomized in Jack London's *The Sea Wolf*.

Because of increasing complaints about treatment of the islanders by the contractor, because of concern over depletion of the seal herds, and for other reasons, Congress terminated the leasing system in 1910. The Bureau of Fisheries assumed direct management of both the harvest and the islands, including responsibility for the health and welfare of the natives, providing schools, medical service, all essentials of subsistence, and overseeing the social and cultural fabric of island life. Under the authority of the fisheries agents, the islanders' lives were tightly regulated and oriented around the cycle of the harvest. The islands became, *reductio ad absurdum*, an insular company town to which none could go, nor none leave, without permission of the agent. For 112 years, the work gangs of the Pribilofs quietly provided, as they had for the Russians before, a stunningly lucrative source of revenue. Through the life of the American program, the seal harvest provided Federal revenues of over \$184,000,000, in dollars *not adjusted for inflation*. Seward's Folly indeed. The Pribilof fur seal program was the most tightly-managed, longest-running government program in the history of the Republic. Long before the rise of the salmon industry or the gold rushes or Prudhoe Bay oil and the pipeline, the commercial value of the seal harvest had been the focus of the Federal government's interest in Alaska. But times change. Massive seal hunts by the Federal government came to be seen in a different light. The last commercial harvest took place in 1982. Shortly thereafter, the National Marine Fisheries Service ended direct administration the islands although it maintains a scientific research station on St. Paul.

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

Dates: 1872-1985

Volume: 319 cubic feet

Records of the Alaska Game Commission, 1927-1936. Includes a small volume of annual reports, correspondence, and approximately fifty negatives or prints relating to game management and enforcement activities.

Records of the Alaska Regional Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage: Bristol Bay Comprehensive Management Plan Files, ca. 1981-1984. Consists of the proposed comprehensive management plans for the Bristol Bay and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Coastal Management Programs. These files include correspondence, and miscellaneous files such as cooperative agreements, invoices, publications, files of land use and planning committees, reports and consultations, comments, summaries of village meetings, draft environmental impact statements, and a packet for public review of draft maps. Also included are records of the Bristol Bay Cooperative Management Project, 1981-1985. Included are public meetings documents; correspondence; plans; proceedings; preliminary environmental impact statements; inter-agency agreements; news releases; hearings; annual reports; reviews; and video cassette of meetings held at Aleknagik, Anchorage, Bristol Bay, Chignik, Cold Bay, Dillingham, Egegik, False Pass, Igiugig, Ivanhoff Bay, King Cove, Kodiak,

Manakotak, Naknek, Nelson Lagoon, New Halen, Pilot Point, Port Heiden, Quinhagak, Sand Point, South Naknek, Togiak, Twin Hills, and Unalaska.

Records of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Juneau: Records Relating to Fishery Management and Enforcement, 1949-1959. Includes correspondence and reports on the enforcement of international and Federal regulations on fisheries.

Pribilof Islands Logbooks, 1872-1961. There are daily narrative accounts of island activities oriented to the seal harvest but including an unparalleled wealth of information about the islands and their inhabitants. Included are census records for the islanders, including rolls; records, mostly of medical and dental service, including reports on water supply, sewage, sanitary facilities, housing, food supply, and the use of alcohol; and records concerning marriage laws, Native bank accounts, and church funds. The logs also included extensive notations on the culture and beliefs of the Natives, community life, education, intemperance, morality, their relationship with the Russian Greek Orthodox Church, government, weather observations, medical and sanitary conditions, and natural resources. Until the end of the leasing program, there are entries by the Federal agent responsible for overseeing the contract between government and the corporation which, in return for harvesting furs, was to provide subsistence and education for the Native population.

Pribilof Islands Program, Records, 1916-1970. For the most part, the records contain agents' annual reports and correspondence; weather reports; personnel applications and related records for agents, physicians, and teachers; information on medical and dental service; school reports for St. George (1924-1939) and St. Paul (1927-1944); reports concerning schools and children sent to the Chemawa and, later, Mt. Edgecumbe Indian Schools; files on foxing and sealing operations, including blubber by-products, branding, and confiscation; records of the St Paul Sealing Division, (1919-1929), St. George Sealing Division (1919-1948), St. Paul Foxing Division (1919-1948), files relating to the North Pacific Sealing Convention of July 7, 1911 (1926-1932); and the U.S. Coast Guard's Bering Sea Patrol (1927-1938); records of the Fouke Fur Company and other contractors; reports on Native earnings, including names of individuals and wages earned for St. George and St. Paul (1918-1961); incoming and outgoing radiograms from the St. Paul Radio Station (1938-1942); store records; and records relating to the Aleut evacuation and relocation (1942-1945) from the Pribilof and Aleutian Islands to southeast Alaska during World War Two. Also included are census reports for St. Paul (1906-1928) and St. George (1877-1899). The records also contain mortality investigations of fur seals, population data, other fur seal research data; sea otter reports (1928-1937); reindeer censuses (1928-1937); seal censuses (1922-1937); minutes of meetings of the North Pacific Fur Seal Commission (1958-1970); correspondence relating to Arctic flora and fauna, including whale investigations; and correspondence, reports, and information on the Amchitka Island substation (1937-1940). The following vessels are represented in the correspondence: *Eider*, *Capella*, *Hakuyo Maru*, *North*, *Penguin*, *Penguin II*, *Sirius*, *Spica*, and *Vega*.

Note: When the National Marine Fisheries Service was created, it took over the Pribilof Island program. Although this agency's records are Record Group 370, they are described here to maintain

the cohesiveness of this unique program's records.

Records of the Pribilof Island Program, 1870-1985. These are records created or acquired by the National Marine Fisheries Service which assumed responsibility for the management of the Pribilof Islands in 1971 and continued to administer them until 1984. The records include census' (1906-1966), inventories of government property and supplies (1943-1985), administrative correspondence on activities and operations of other Federal agencies on the islands covering such topics as administrative, legal, environmental, economic, and social issues (1888-1984); annual reports by government agents (1930-1963), time books and personnel records showing daily work assignments for Natives labouring on the harvest (1922-1951); and fur seal and fox harvesting records (1870-1962). There are also selected records concerning the on-going scientific research the Service conducts on the fur seal population.

Records of the Auke Bay Fisheries Laboratory, Auke Bay: Raw Data, Logs, Notes, and Studies, 1901-1970. Also included are fisheries research data files, 1904-1960, which contain monthly and semi-monthly reports (1939-1953) and records of catch statistics (1883-1927); Puget Sound (Washington) trap catch data (1925-1949); pack reports (1930-1949); regulations, including fishery leaflets, laws, trap lists, and other related files (ca. 1900-1955); correspondence relating to marine mammals (1933-1945) and fish traps (1933-1947); scale sample books for the Alaska Peninsula, Bristol Bay, and southeastern Alaska (ca. 1914-1957?); tagging scale books for Alitak, Bare Lake, Bering River, Cook Inlet, Copper River; Karluk, Kodiak, Norton Sound, Prince William Sound, Uganik, and the Yakutat District. There are Alaskan fisheries data summaries; IBM punch cards on the Alaska herring industry for Kodiak, Prince William Sound and southeastern Alaska (1942-1945) and other IBM cards (1946-1954); mounted glass slides of herring scales and assorted unmounted scales; data charts and maps; trap location maps and sound location charts; statistical data/catch records of canning companies (1904-1927); data on halibut and sable fish, including general files, allocation files, and permits; daily catch reports for the Copper River, and southeastern Alaska (ca. 1920s); statistics on gill net, stake, and set nets; trap license lists (1923-1955); summaries and daily averages for Cook Inlet, Icy Strait, Kodiak, and Prince William Sound; weir reports (1925-1957); maps; diaries; trap reports, arranged by regulatory district and area (1912-1955); subject files including beaver and beaver control studies, aerial photographs, correspondence, and working papers (1947-1949); station logs (ca. 1920-1960); fish record books, including for fish taken from Puget Sound (Washington), fish trap litigation files for Angoon, Annette, and *Kake v. State of Alaska*; trap catches and summaries of trap catches. Interfiled in this record series are the administrative files of the U.S. Office of Fishery Coordination, Alaska Area Coordinator, Juneau (1942-1945).

Records of the Auke Bay Fisheries Laboratory, Auke Bay, Salmon Fisheries Research Data, 1914-1966. Consists of a wide variety of textual and non-textual fisheries research data relating to scales, age, length, and sex of salmon. The Bristol Bay salmon data includes summations of catch and escapement, migrant data, and marking studies of all salmon throughout Alaska. Other data consists of Naknek stream survey sheets and Alaska Sockeye weir counts; Bristol Bay ground and aerial survey of spawning grounds, directions for marking water temperature and weather observations,

indices to old data, catch, pack, gear efficiency and other data; Naknek Lake sockeye scale data, operation plans and reports (1956-1960); unpublished reports and statistics on sockeye and related studies; weather and hydrographic data with tagging summaries for Bristol Bay (1955-1957); Karluk and Brooks Lake data; and salmon scale slides from 1914-1969. There are project case files, administration files, and experimental data from 1948-1972 for American Creek, Becharof Lake, Copper River, Egegik, Grovenor Lake, Karluk, Naknek, Togiak, Tebenkof Bay, Ugashik, and Wood River, and a log from Brooks Lake.

Records of the Bureau of Fisheries and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Juneau: The material includes fisheries management records, 1930-1959; trap licenses (1952-1958); trap files, arranged by name of operator for the Alaska Peninsula, Chignik, Cook Inlet, Kodiak, Prince William Sound, and Southeast Alaska Districts; fisheries violation files (1930-1959); information relating to the ownership and location of fish traps (1922-1958); and fisheries districts operations and enforcement files (1949-1959). Also included are operations files and other information relating to the Pacific Marine Fisheries Commission (1940-1959) and the International North Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission (1955-1963). Also included in Bu. of Commercial Fisheries research and development project case files, 1950-1969, which include technical files and Pribilof Island Community Reports of annual inventories, individual personal property management records, and property records of the M/Vs *Heron* and *John R. Manning* and R/V *Cripple Creek*.

Nontextual records include aerial photographs, maps and charts, drawings and plans of buildings and facilities, photographs, salmon scale slides, and video cassettes.

RELATED RECORDS

- RG 21 (there are cases files relating islanders and to seizures of foreign vessels for violating the pelagic sealing laws in the vicinity of the islands)
- RG-26 (Records of the U.S. Coast Guard) for records of the Bering Sea Patrol, 1926-1940, relating to fisheries law enforcement.
- RG- 48 (Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior) for records relating to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Cases, 1973-1982.
- RG 75 (esp. The Village Census Rolls enumerating the evacuees to Funter Bay and other sites in SE Alaska)
- RG 95 contains records relating to fox farming
- RG 370 Records of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RELATED MICROFICHE/FILM

- A3303 Pribilof Islands Logbooks, 1872-1961 (19 rolls)
- J-87 Annual Reports of the Office of the Governor, Alaska
- M430 Interior Department Territorial Papers: Alaska, 1869-1911
- M641 Alaska File of the Revenue Cutter Service, 1867-1914
- M720 "Alaska File" of the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury, 1868-1903

- M802 Alaska File of the Special Agents Division of the Department of the Treasury, 1867-1903
- M939 General Correspondence of the Alaskan Territorial Governor, 1909-1958
- M1245 Interior Department Appointment Papers: Alaska, 1871-1907
- M1293 Public Hearings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians
- T1189 Records of Alaskan Custom Houses, 1867-1939
- T1200 Chronological Files of the Alaskan Governor, 1884-1913
- T1201 Correspondence of the Secretary of Alaska, 1900-1913