

Snow
7-66

SUMMARY OF THE 1965-66 CRAB SEASON SAMPLING AND
PROJECTED LANDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The Shellfish Investigation samples the crab catch along the Oregon coast each year for shell condition as an index to meat yield and suitability of season opening dates. In addition to sampling for condition, a number of animals are sampled for width frequencies to determine the mean size of crabs caught and percentage of recruitment from the previous years sublegal stocks. The following report summarizes the results of the 1965-66 season sampling.

The 1965-66 program of sampling commercial crab landings was hampered by price disputes and poor marketing conditions. Consequently only about 50% of the number of crabs usually sampled were examined. During February and March a promotional program was initiated and the market improved to some extent, however, several fishermen quit fishing early and stated that legal crabs were still available, but a weak market and the opening of the salmon season precluded continued crab fishing. Some fishermen went on a voluntary 6 1/2-inch minimum size to maintain a market late in the season.

Condition Sampling

Crab condition, as based on shell condition, was good in mid December when the first landings were made. The per cent of softshell crabs at this time ranged from 2-12% along the coast and steadily decreased until the completion of sampling in May. A total of 5,847 crabs was sampled at Astoria, Tillamook, Newport, Coos Bay, Fort Orford, and Brookings.

Width Frequencies

Of the total number of crabs sampled, 3,689 (63%) were measured for width frequencies, Figure 1. The mean size was 174.2 mm or 6.9 inches, as compared to 169.9 mm or 6.7 inches in the 1964-65 season.

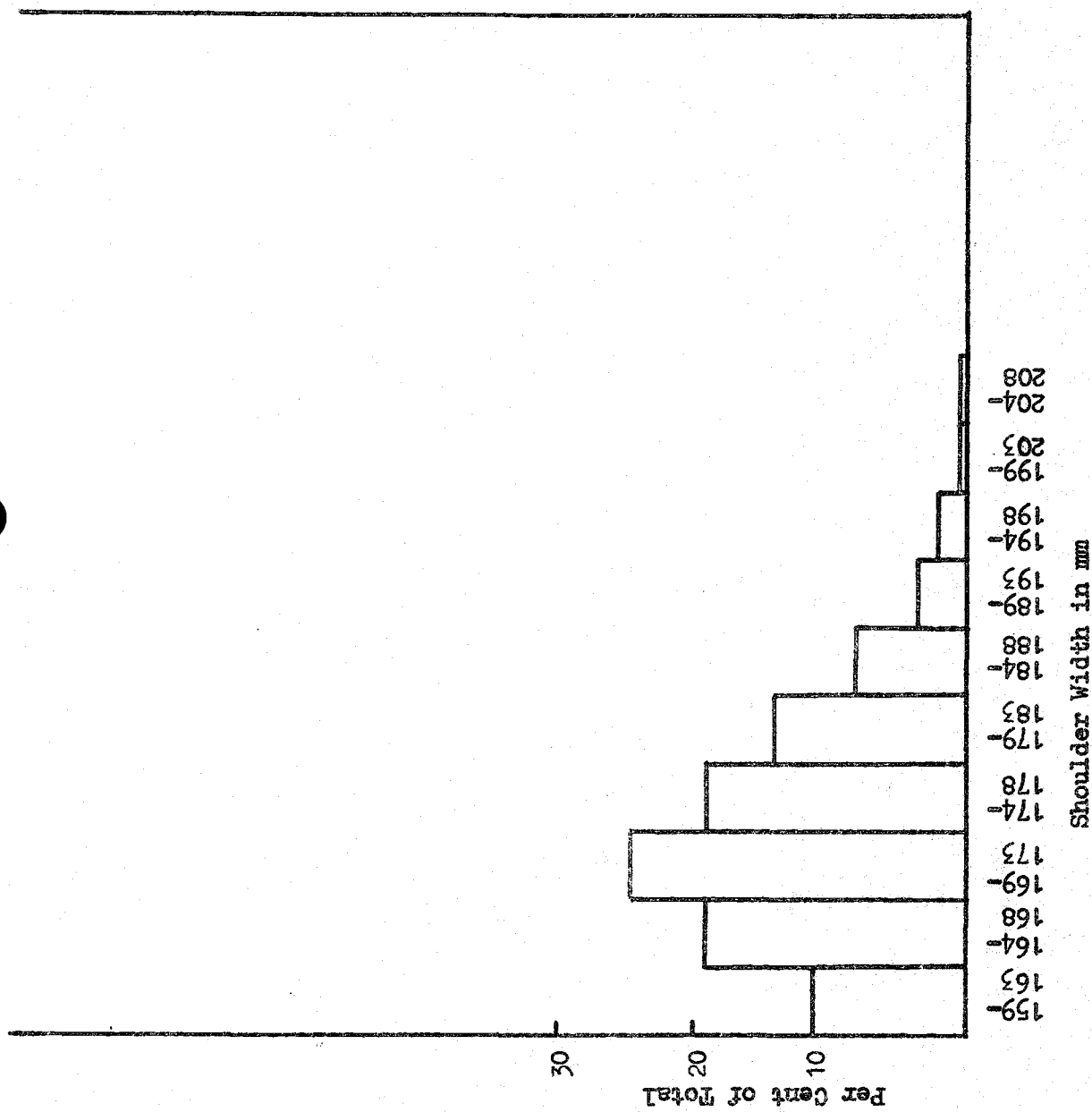


Figure 1. Size of Dungeness Crab Landed Commercially in Oregon in 1965-66 as Determined by Width of Backs.

This increase in size was the result of better growing conditions sometime during the life of this group of crabs. Insufficient information is available to identify the conditions causing such growth.

Landings

Crab landings from December 1965-April 1966 totaled 8.0 million pounds as compared to 6.7 million pounds during the entire 1964-65 season. It is estimated that the 1965-66 season will exceed 9.0 million pounds. This will be the best crab season since 1960-61 when 11.3 million pounds were landed (Figure 2). The landings over the past 20 years have averaged 7.5-8.0 million pounds per year. Fishermen interviews have indicated good numbers of males over 6 1/4 inches still available in the ocean which provide an optimistic outlook for the coming 1966-67 season.

C. D. Snow
July 21, 1966

Distribution:
Portland (3)
Commissioners
Research
Snow (2)

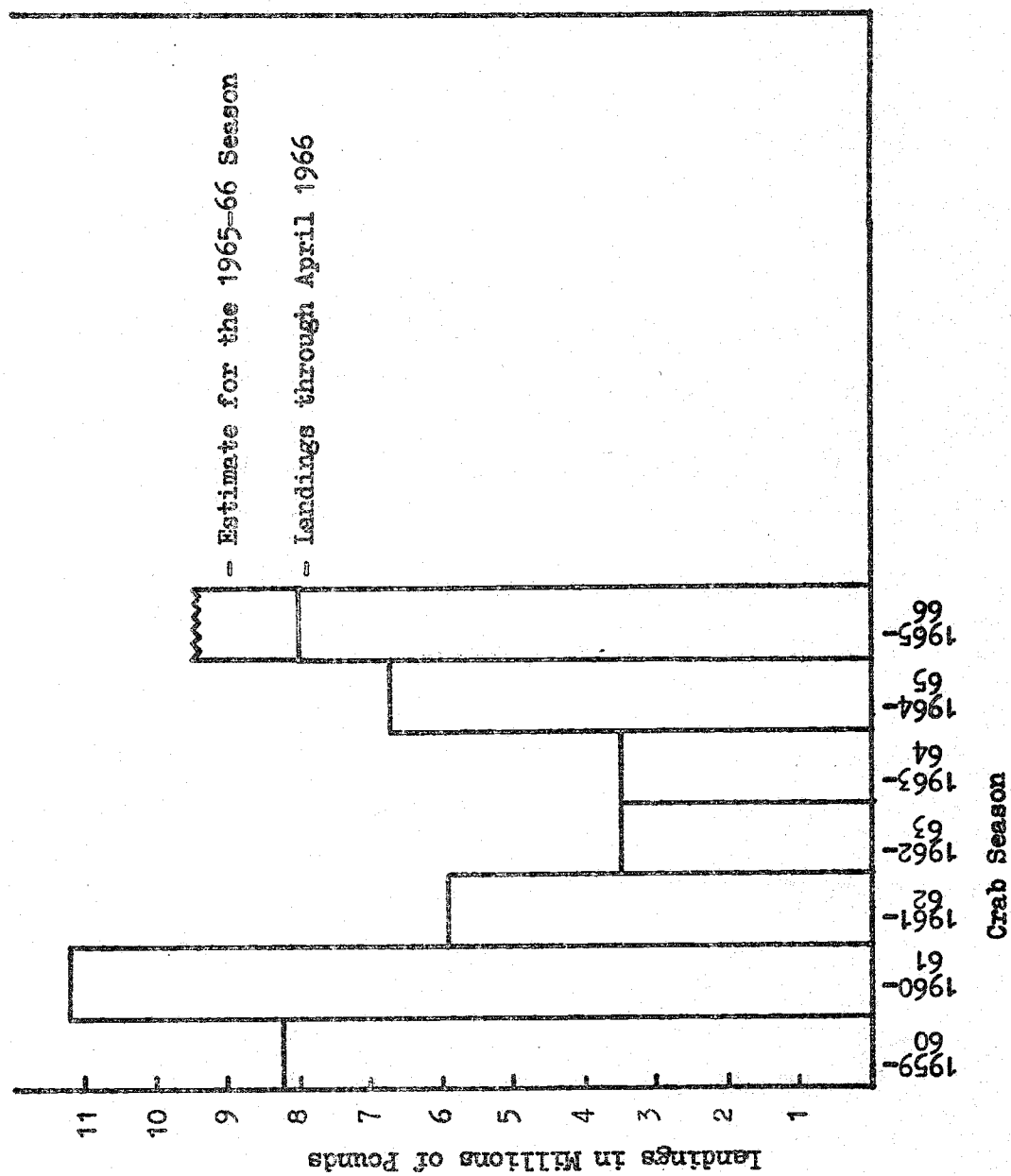


Figure 2. Pounds of Crab Landed by Season, 1959-60 Through 1965-66.