

SR#29

Alsea Bay Shellfish Resources

1956

The most valuable shellfish resource in Alsea Bay is probably the Dungeness crab (Cancer magister). A fair sports fishery exists in the bay for this crab with both rings and rakes being employed for harvesting. In addition to the sports fishery a commercial fishery also exists. Four to five boats fish the bay annually with a catch of 2,582 dozen crabs for the fiscal year 1954-55 and 2,365 dozen crabs in 1955-56. Several of the crab fishermen operate roadside stands where they sell their catch and the excess above their needs is sold to the local fish plant.

The most important clam in the bay is the softshell (Mya arenaria). These clams occur in good numbers and are utilized by local people and tourists. The clams are available on relatively low runouts and though they are not the largest softshell clams in Oregon they are usually in good condition as to meat yield. In addition to the sports fishery a small commercial fishery is also conducted in the bay. The annual average poundage for a four-year period has been 1,568 pounds.

The only other clam that is harvested to any extent commercially is the cockle (Clinocardium nuttali). The annual average poundage for this species is 211 pounds for four years. The cockle beds are not too extensive and the local landings probably are used in the most part for fish bait at the moorages.

A small bed of gaper clams (Schizothaerus nuttali) also occurs in the bay and harvesting is probably all by sports diggers. These clams though not numerous are of good size and quality. In addition to the previously-mentioned clams it has been reported that littleneck clams (Protothaca staminea) occur in the bay in small numbers. Also the smaller and relatively unimportant species such as Macoma, Cryptomya, etc. are present.

In addition to the clams and crabs mentioned previously a good population of ghost shrimps occurs within the bay and are harvested for both fish bait and crab bait. In the year 1952 approximately 10,000 dozen ghost shrimp (Callinassa Sp.) were sold by four boat moorages for fish bait.

The Oregon Fish Commission Research Laboratory at Newport, Oregon in the past years has conducted surveys on the Alsea Bay to determine clam abundance and condition, to discover prospective oyster grounds, and to follow the unsuccessful attempts of growers to cultivate Japanese oysters. In addition to these things during the spring and summer of 1956 Commission personnel helped conduct hydrographic surveys on the Alsea Bay running salinities and temperatures from the bar to a point up river where the water is fresh.