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INFORMATIONAL REPORT

The 1965 Personal-Use Razor Clam Fishery

Introduction

Razor clam diggers were sampled as in the past on every other minus tide during the April to September period. Considerable effort was also spent on public relations, and the local court records were checked for clam violations.

Car counts on the three access roads to the beach were interrupted periodically due to vandalism, and the construction of an apartment house at Gearhart made that road almost impassable for about three months so the car counter was not installed until the latter part of June. Corrections for lost counts were made.

Sport Harvest

Some 1.13 million clams were taken in 1965 by nearly 76,000 diggers, which is a slight increase over 1964 (Table 1). In addition, about 186,000 clams were wasted for a total removal of 1.32 million clams (Figure 1). It may be noted in Table 1 that 72% of the clams were taken from the 2-mile Seaside beach. The drastic decrease in the north beach production may reflect the very large harvest of small clams from that area in 1964. Conditions more favorable to setting of the clams and excellent availability of large clams on outside bars during the time of heaviest digging can be cited for the successful season at Seaside. It should also be noted that approximately 200,000 clams were taken by commercial diggers from the Seaside beach.

Age Composition

Figure 2 shows the age composition of personal-use dug clams for 1964 and 1965. The reduced take of 0's from 58% in 1964 to 27% in 1965 is evident.

Also, the high take of 1+ clams indicates good survival of small clams from 1964 and evidence of a large year class.

Public Relations

The constant cry of those cited for razor clam violations is that of not being informed. To at least ease this situation, the razor clam regulations were printed on 8½" x 11" cards and placed in 89 motels and other business houses in the Seaside-Gearhart area. Also, 2,500 foodfish and shellfish synopses were supplied to most businesses in the area that rented or sold clam shovels, the state police, chambers of commerce, and several hundred individual diggers.

Table 1. Personal-Use Harvest of Razor Clams by Area from Clatsop Beaches, April-September 1965.

Area	Miles of Beach	No. of Diggers	Mean No. Clams Per Dig	No. Clams Dug	No. Clams Wasted
1- ^{1/}	16	30,412	11.3	343,656	24,400
2- ^{2/}	2	45,394	17.6	789,856	161,920
TOTAL	18	75,806	13.0	1,133,512	186,320

^{1/} Necanicum River to Columbia River (North Beach).

^{2/} Tillamook Head to Necanicum River (Seaside).

On a smaller scale, six digging demonstrations were held on the biggest tide series to inform those interested in the how, when, and where of digging and tips on how to clean and cook the catch. The success of the demonstrations ranged from 0 to 150 persons. TV, radio, and newspaper coverage materially aided this effort.

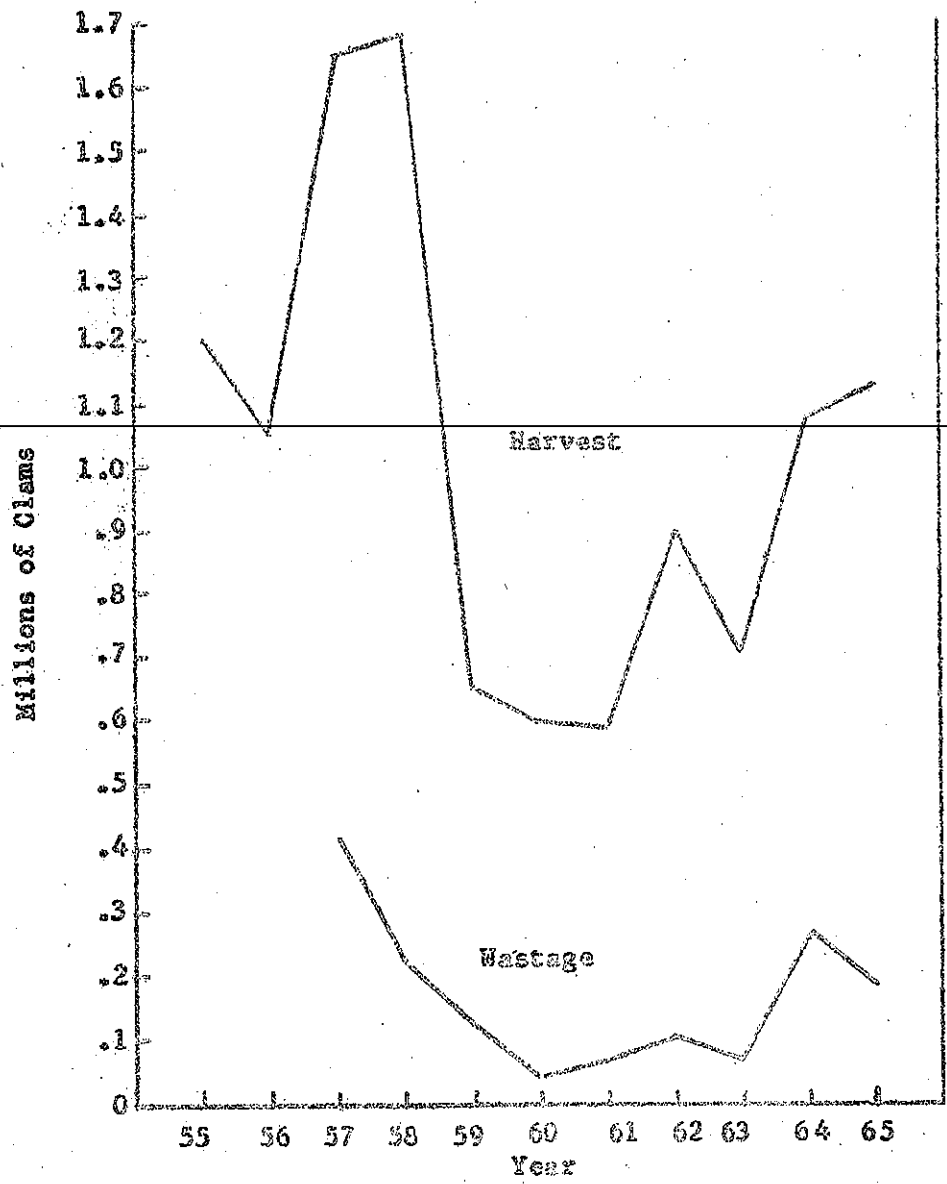


Figure 1. Personal-Use Harvest and Wastage of Razor Clams from Clatsop Beaches, 1955-65.

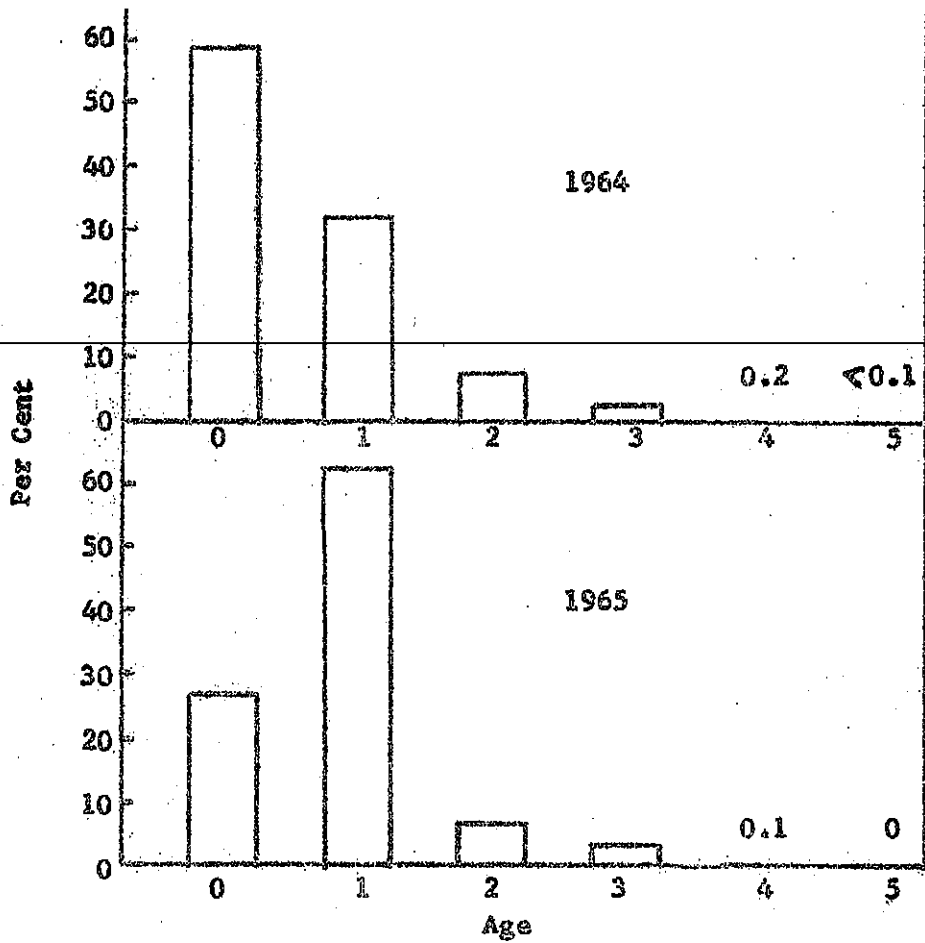


Figure 2. Age Composition of Personal-Use Razor Clams from Clatsop Beach, April-September, 1964-65.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement activity by the state police increased considerably in 1965 as the dense crowd of diggers at Seaside was suited to infiltration by numerous plain clothes officers. In 1965, 346 citations were issued as compared to 122 last year. It was also encouraging to note that the number of wastage cases increased from 42 in 1964 to 125 in 1965. The number of suspended, dismissed, and continued cases also decreased sharply in 1965. On the other hand, fines were much lower in 1965 and reflect more arrests for minor violations. That is, arrests were made for two clams over the limit or one or two wasted. So far as wastage is concerned, this is important because if a digger wastes one clam, then each time the conditions occur that induce wastage, a clam will be wasted.

Discussion

Although the razor clam stocks seem to be increasing, a pattern for decline has once again repeated itself. Evidence for this statement rests in the fact that the 1955-58 situation has repeated itself in the 1962-65 period (Figure 1). Also, the catch of 0's in 1965 decreased sharply as happened in 1958. If wastage increases early in the season in 1966, this will also fit the decline pattern. However, a rough calculation indicates that the decrease may not be as severe.

The failure of the north beach is disturbing as history shows this is where the bulk of the clams have been harvested. If indeed there are no 2+ clams in 1966, then I will conclude that the bulk of the clams were dug in 1964 as 0's and that the fishery will decline further.

Therefore, it appears reasonable that some measure of protection be afforded razor clams if early next season wastage increases and 2+ clams fail to appear on the north beach.

If such a situation does materialize, it is recommended that Clatsop beach be closed to all digging when the per cent 0's in the catch, including wastage, reaches 50%.

Darrell Demory
Shellfish Investigation
Oregon Fish Commission
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