

Salmon making a comeback

By NANCY BARR

The salmon were back this year, but Monterey Bay area fishermen had to travel a little further to find them, according to officials of the state Department of Fish and Game.

"There was an improvement in the number of fish and the size of each (king salmon) this year over last year," said Pete Kalvass, a marine biologist with the state Department of Fish and Game in Menlo Park.

Kalvass keeps track of how many salmon are taken by both commercial and recreational fishermen, who are required by the state to report their catches.

Those reports indicate the number of fish unloaded in a particular area, but do not specify where the fishermen are based.

So, Kalvass said, even though there were fewer salmon caught in the Monterey Bay area, it doesn't mean local fishermen didn't do well this year. The fishermen usually follow the fish, he said, and would have done more fishing north of here.

"They were fishing more northerly. Just because the landings (number of fish caught) were half in the Monterey area, doesn't mean (Monterey area fishermen) were off economically, he said."

Fishermen Bill Tomlinson, of Watsonville, said this week that it wasn't unusual for fishermen to travel north for a good part of the season. Tomlinson said he decided to stop fishing for salmon during the season and instead went for tuna, but that most of the salmon fishermen went north after May.

Kalvass reports the effects of El Niño, the warm water current that led to a decline in the number of fish off the Central

Coast last year, seem to be wearing off.

The fishermen's reports show that although only half as many salmon were caught this year in the Monterey Bay area as were caught last year, the San Francisco and Bodega Bay areas both saw drastic increases.

From May 1, when salmon season opened, to Sept. 22, a week before the season closed, 51,370 king salmon were caught in the Monterey area, as opposed to 93,852 in 1983.

Fish unloaded in Morro Bay, Monterey, Moss Landing and

Santa Cruz are included in the Monterey figures, but Kalvass said well over half the fish were caught by Moss Landing fishermen.

In the San Francisco area, twice as many king salmon were caught during this past season than last year. While 48,567 salmon were caught last year, 93,786 were pulled in this year. The Bodega Bay area, just north of San Francisco, had an even more impressive increase in the number of salmon caught — from 21,596 in 1983 to 64,667 this year.

One unusual thing about this

year's salmon season, Kalvass said, was that silver salmon were in great abundance in Northern California.

(Most fishermen prefer to catch king salmon rather than silvers, Kalvass said, because the kings generally bring in more money per pound.)

In the Monterey area, 5,494 silver salmon were caught this year, as compared to the 2,124 last year. In the San Francisco area, 69,187 silvers were caught this year; 49,937 in 1983. (Figures were not available on silver salmon caught in the Bodega Bay area.)