

Salmon Fishermen

Sail After Accord

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Fish & Fishing

The salmon boats sailed this morning.

Some 40 Santa Cruz commercial boats joined a fleet of more than 1,000 California vessels in the race for the rich king salmon catch, ending a three-week strike which had seen the entire West Coast fleet tied up since the opening of the commercial season on April 15.

The fishermen objected to the price offered by buyers — some 30 per cent less than last season's closing price.

But they sailed this morning for a price only minimally higher than that offered at the season opening. First price offered by the buyers was 75, 55 and 40 cents per pound for large, medium and small salmon. Current offering is 76, 56 and 46 cents per pound.

Don Dodson, chairman of the Santa Cruz Fisherman's Marketing Association, said the California fleet would not have sailed for that price offering, but fishermen in Oregon and Washington caved in and took to the sea, breaking the back of the strike.

The northern fishermen sailed more than a week ago at prices generally three cents per pound less than those offered the California fishermen.

Last year's beginning prices were 84, 64 and 54 cents per pound, and the the end of the season the price on the large fish had risen to \$1.06.

Buyers said the reason for the lower prices was last year's banner salmon catch which left the dealers with large stores of frozen fish at the beginning of the current season.

Malio Stagnaro of Cottardo Stagnaro Fishing Corp. said dealers got rid of much of the frozen fish during the strike period, but many of them still had large frozen supplies remaining. He said he had talked to one San Francisco dealer, however, who said his supply of frozen fish almost was exhausted before the strike ended.

Stagnaro said there was no way of knowing whether the price would come up during the season. He cited last year's large in-season rise and noted the dealers themselves had accounted for it by attempting to outbid each other for the catch.

It's hard to say what the beginning-season strike may have cost the fishermen, he added. "But they lost some," he noted, "there's no question about it. There has been some bad weather and a lot of rough water and some of the small boats and some of the small boats couldn't have fished anyway. But it probably cost them an average of \$100 per day.

"I'm glad to see the end of it and glad to see the fishermen working. They're the underdogs in this thing. Many of them have large families and a lot of expenses. I hope the price keeps going up again."