

CHAPTER 6:

Fish Fights

COMMERCIAL FISHING VS. COMMERCIAL FISHING

CONFLICTS OVER the commercial salmon fishery date back to the early 1880s when there was a rapid expansion of the kind of gear used to harvest the fish. Initially, fish fights were actual acts of violence between groups of commercial fishermen. These early fish fights were between groups of gill net fishermen and trap fishermen; gill net fishermen and fish wheel operators (as well as upriver and downriver fishermen); and everything in between. Early on, as I've noted, commercial fishing for salmon was permitted the entire length of each river. Even so, practicality generally kept the major commercial fishery confined to the tidewater reaches of our rivers.^{69 80}

The overt issues sparking most fish fights revolved around the question of what were the best means for the conservation of the fisheries resource. Beneath this façade of conservation were social and economic issues of resource uses and allocation. The history of fish fights suggest that conservation was used as a political wedge for one group to take a larger share of the fisheries' resource from another