

Sailing Back to the Bay



Once There Were Thousands, Now There Is One

For 66 years the salmon of Bristol Bay were harvested from sailboats, double-ended wooden gillnetters manned by two rugged fishermen. It all changed in 1951 when the Territory of Alaska allowed powered boats to fish the waters of the Bay. In 2017 the era of power finally surpassed the era of sail. To commemorate this transition, our bounty of wild salmon and the longevity of the Bristol Bay Commercial Fishery, the Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust will sail one of the last remaining sea worthy Bristol Bay double-ended sailboats from Homer back to Bristol Bay.



Most of the old sailboats are gone, a few remain in museums and even fewer remain as operating vessels. Those few that may still be on the water have been heavily modified. There is one, however, that remains in its original sailing configuration – a Libby, McNeil, Libby double-ender dating to the 1930's in Homer, Alaska.



If we can raise enough support to make some minor repairs and cover the costs of the expedition, the plan is to sail the boat from Homer with a launch during SeaFair on Memorial Day Weekend 2020. The course will reverse the way it came - across Cook Inlet, over the Pile Bay road, down Lake Iliamna and the Kvichak River to Bristol Bay, arriving in Naknek for Fish Expo and as the Bristol Bay commercial fishing season is about to begin. The working plan also includes stops at communities along the way to provide local residents the opportunity to view this artifact of their heritage.

No one knows the last time a sail on a double-ender was raised on the waters of Bristol Bay, but no doubt it was well before many of those now fishing the Bay were born. Photographs and museum exhibits can tell the story of the sailboat days in Bristol Bay, but nothing can convey what it was really like better than seeing one of these old boats back on the waters in the place where they were built to fish.

Help us make this adventure possible by making a donation to:

Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust
Sailing Back to the Bay
P.O. Box 1388
Dillingham, AK 99576



Or donate online at: bristolbaylandtrust.org

<NN> This project is part of the **<NN>** Cannery History Project celebrating the cannery workers from Alaska and around the world who made the Bristol Bay Commercial Fishery the most productive on earth

