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Advisory Announcement

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2024 Lower Cook Inlet Commercial Salmon Fishery Outlook

This outlook is provided to assist the commercial salmon industry in planning for the 2024 season in the Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) Management Area. Information regarding the forecasts used to create this document will soon be available on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) web site:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyarealci.salmon#forecasts>

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) manages the Trail Lakes Hatchery (TLH), Port Graham Hatchery (PGH), and Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery (TBLH). Hatchery forecasts can be found by contacting CIAA directly.

Inseason modifications to harvest projections, season opening dates, and strategies for weekly fishing periods may occur as fisheries develop. Fishery announcements from the Homer office will routinely occur on Fridays at 2:00 p.m., and at other times as required. Interested individuals may sign up to receive email announcements here: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>. Recorded commercial fisheries announcements will be available at 907-235-7307. Harvest information and fisheries announcements are located on the ADF&G web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyarealci.salmon>. The next advisory announcement is expected to be released at 2:00 p.m., Friday, April 26.

The commercial harvest from LCI is forecast to be 793,000 salmon, of which 48,000 fish (6%) are anticipated to be of hatchery-origin harvested from special harvest areas (SHAs) (Table 1). Additional hatchery-origin fish are harvested incidentally with wild fish outside of SHAs. CIAA forecasts a total of 212,800 hatchery-produced sockeye and 735,000 pink salmon to return to LCI release sites in 2024. Of those, CIAA projects to harvest 195,200 sockeye (92%) and 705,000 pink salmon (96%) for cost recovery and broodstock.

Set Gillnet Fishery

The Southern District is expected to open for the 2024 season on Monday, June 3 at 6:00 a.m. for a 48-hour period. Subsequent commercial fishing periods will likely be 48 hours in duration beginning at 6:00 a.m. on Mondays and Thursdays, as specified in regulation. Harvest projections for this district and gear are 210 Chinook, 310 coho, 2,600 chum, 28,000 sockeye, and 24,000 pink salmon. The Port Graham Subdistrict is anticipated to open to commercial set gillnet harvest on June 3 and remain on a schedule concurrent with other areas in the Southern District for this gear. Fishing time in the Port Graham Subdistrict will be closely linked to escapement levels in English Bay and Port Graham rivers.

Purse Seine Fishery

Portions of the Southern District will open to purse seine harvest in mid-June, coinciding with hatchery-produced returns to Leisure and Hazel lakes. Historically, this return peaks in mid-July. CIAA forecasts a run of 29,000 sockeye salmon to Leisure and Hazel lakes combined, as well as 42,000 sockeye salmon to Tutka Bay. Of those, 26,000 (90%) of the fish returning to Leisure and Hazel lakes, and 38,000 (90%) of the sockeye salmon returning

to Tutka Lagoon will be used for cost recovery and broodstock purposes. A total of 735,000 hatchery-produced pink salmon are forecast to return to release sites in the Southern District. Of those, 705,000 pink salmon (96%) will be required for cost recovery and broodstock purposes. Commercial fishing time after mid-July will be primarily based on wild pink salmon escapement levels in this district.

Hatchery sockeye salmon runs to the Eastern District are forecasted by CIAA to be 111,500 fish of which CIAA has identified 101,200 (91%) for cost recovery and broodstock purposes. Wild stock harvest opportunity in the Eastern District will be linked to aerial survey observations of wild sockeye and pink salmon escapements in this district.

Portions of the Outer District may open to commercial harvest in mid-July focusing on sockeye salmon runs to McCarty Fjord lakes. In recent years, escapement to McCarty Fjord systems (Delight, Desire, and Delusion lakes) have been monitored by aerial survey and weir. The weir at Delight Lake will not be operated in 2024, consequently escapement monitoring for this system will be done via aerial surveys.

Waters in the western portion of the Outer District may be open by late-July, focusing on pink and chum salmon runs to Port Dick, as well as Windy and Rocky bays. There are numerous other smaller systems in the Nuka Passage area that are also monitored for chum and pink salmon. Dogfish Bay, Chugach Bay, and Port Chatham in the western portion of the district will be evaluated for chum and pink salmon harvest potential from August to early September. Harvest projections for the Outer District include 22,200 sockeye, 23,700 chum, and 398,900 pink salmon. Pink salmon harvest in numbers of fish for the three most recent even years from this district are 32,326 (2018), 1,563,893 (2020), and 324,836 (2022).

The Kamishak Bay District is anticipated to open to commercial harvest in mid-June. Commercial harvest projections for wild stocks in this district are 63,600 sockeye, 8,300 chum, and 11,200 pink salmon. The majority of the sockeye salmon harvest is expected to come from Chenik Lake, while the chum salmon harvest has historically been spread throughout the district. The hatchery sockeye salmon run to Kirschner Lake is forecast to be 30,300 fish, of which 30,000 (99%) are expected to be required for hatchery cost recovery. The department tracks salmon escapement in this district using remote video monitoring sites at Chenik and Mikfik lakes, as well as regular aerial surveys of pink and chum salmon index streams. The department intends to monitor the Chenik run using satellite streamed video from the lake and will consider opening Chenik Lagoon once escapement into the lake is adequate.

Table 1.–Projected salmon harvests for Lower Cook Inlet, 2024. Hatchery cost recovery goals are preliminary.

SOCKEYE SALMON				
	Total anticipated harvest =			175,200
Wild stocks, (area-wide commercial harvest)^a				157,600
Southern District, (purse seine, excluding hatchery SHAs)				43,800
Southern District, (set gillnet)				28,000
Eastern District, (Aialik Bay)				0
Outer District				22,200
Kamishak Bay District, (excluding Kirschner Lake Subdistrict)				63,600
	Hatchery run	Broodstock harvest	Cost recovery harvest	Commercial harvest
Sockeye salmon hatchery programs^b				
Resurrection Bay	111,500	12,200	89,000	10,300
China Poot and Hazel lakes	29,000	0	26,000	3,000
Tutka Bay Lagoon	42,000	5,000	33,000	4,000
Kirschner Lake	30,300	0	30,000	300
Port Graham Bay	0	0	0	0
English Bay Lakes	0	0	0	0
Hatchery stocks (area-wide totals)	212,800	17,200	178,000	17,600
PINK SALMON				
	Total anticipated harvest =			582,000
Wild stocks, (area-wide commercial harvest)^a				552,000
Southern District (purse seine, excluding hatchery SHAs)				117,800
Southern District (set gillnet)				24,000
Eastern District				100
Outer District				398,900
Kamishak Bay District				11,200
	Hatchery run	Broodstock harvest	Cost recovery harvest	Commercial harvest
Pink salmon hatchery programs^b				
Tutka Bay Lagoon	281,000	92,000	179,000	10,000
Port Graham Bay	454,000	60,000	374,000	20,000
Hatchery stocks (area-wide totals)	735,000	152,000	553,000	30,000
CHUM SALMON - Wild production^a				
	Total anticipated harvest =			35,000
Southern District (purse seine)				400
Southern District (set gillnet)				2,600
Eastern District				0
Outer District				23,700
Kamishak Bay District				8,300
COHO SALMON – Wild production^a				
	Total anticipated harvest =			750
Southern District (purse seine)				200
Southern District (set gillnet)				310
Eastern District				0
Outer District				120
Kamishak Bay District				120
CHINOOK SALMON – Wild production^a				
	Total anticipated harvest =			310
Southern District (purse seine)				100
Southern District (set gillnet)				210
Eastern District				0
Outer District				0
Kamishak Bay District				0
Total LCI anticipated commercial harvest- all salmon species =				793,260

Note: Rows and columns may not total exactly due to rounding to the nearest hundred fish.

^a Area-wide harvest forecasts for wild production were produced by ADF&G using trend forecast models based on historical harvests (<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyarealci.salmon#forecasts>).

^b Provided by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association, based on parent year releases and recent ocean survival.