



Anchorage Area Fishing Opportunities

Anchorage Area

The Anchorage Bowl areas includes all lakes and streams from Eklutna River (northern boundary) to Ingram Creek in the Turnagain Arm (southern boundary).

Anchorage is unique in the sport fishing world. Anglers can catch 20 to 30 pound Chinook salmon and 8 to 10 pound coho salmon right here in town. There's also excellent fishing for rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, and Arctic grayling in area lakes and streams.



Although many streams within the Anchorage area support natural runs of one or all five Pacific salmon species, most of these native runs are too small to support sport fisheries. Therefore, many flowing waters in the Anchorage area are closed to salmon fishing. Instead, the majority of the Anchorage area sport fishing is the result of enhancement which relieves pressure from various native stocks and increases sport fishing opportunities. Those enhancement fisheries include local lakes. There are over 130 stocked lakes just in Southcentral Alaska and 25 of those lakes are in the Anchorage Bowl area. Check out the 'Fishing in the Anchorage Bowl' stocked lakes publication for stocked lake information, fish species present in the lakes, directions, and bathymetric maps. These opportunities are the result of annual hatchery stockings from the William Jack Hernandez Sport Fish Hatchery (WJHSFH) which is located in Anchorage.

Managing Alaska's Fisheries

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Division of Sport Fish (DSF) is charged with the management of Alaska's sport fisheries under the sustainable yield principle, through regulations and management plans adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Enforcement of fishing regulations is primarily the responsibility of the Alaska Wildlife Troopers. ADF&G Anchorage office is the management office for the area.

Every year ADF&G releases four sport fishing regulations booklets for the Northern, Southcentral, Southeast, and Southwest areas. Sport fishing regulations specific to the Anchorage Bowl area such as bag and possession limits, seasons, tackle, or bait limits can be found in the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet.

These booklets are free of charge and are available at ADF&G offices, wherever sport fishing licenses are sold, and online at www.adfg.alaska.gov under the Regulations tab. Before you cast out your line, make sure you read all the regulations for the waters you are fishing. Don't forget to check for advisory announcements and emergency orders on the ADF&G website at www.adfg.alaska.gov.



ADF&G may issue an advisory announcement and emergency order to open, liberalize, close, or restrict any fishery at any time due to biological needs. In the event an advisory announcement and emergency order is issued,



ADF&G attempts to release the documents a minimum of 24 to 48 hours before it becomes effective. Anglers can find advisory announcements and emergency orders on the ADF&G website under the Sport Fishing tab. Select the Fishing Information link and then the Emergency Orders and News Releases tab. Once there, anglers can select the region and management area they intend to fish.

During the summer ADF&G posts weekly in-season fishing reports online. Anglers can find these under the Fishing Reports tab under the Fishing Information tab. ADF&G staff records these in-season fishing reports on the Anchorage sport fishing hotline at (907) 267-2502. Anglers can also subscribe to receive the notifications via their email. Updates are also posted on the ADF&G - Sport Fishing Southcentral Alaska Facebook page. If you have any questions, please contact the Anchorage ADF&G office at (907) 267-2218.



Ship Creek Chinook and Coho Salmon

Chinook or king salmon return to Ship Creek in mid- to late May, with the peak of the run in June. The majority of the Ship Creek Chinook salmon run is the result of enhancement stocking from WJHSFH. These fish are stocked as smolt, and spend one year rearing in freshwater and between one and four years in the ocean, before they return to Ship Creek.

A heavy-action spinning rod with 20 or 30 pound test line, or a 9 to 12wt fly rod, are recommended to not only overcome the snags and current of Ship Creek but are also effective in landing a Chinook salmon in this water system. The recommended tackle to use when fishing this creek includes yarn flies in various colors, Pixees, or Vibrax on slack tide. During tidal change, a majority of anglers will switch their setup to Spin-n-Glo ahead of a quarter-sized chunk of salmon roe in an egg loop knot with a 2 to 3 oz. pyramid weight on a sinker slider.



Many anglers prefer to start fishing about two to three hours before tidal changes, as measured at Anchorage. Anglers are reminded to be prepared and cognitive of the changing tides and the muddy shores. Many anglers wear hip boots or waders when fishing. Every year several anglers get stuck and have to be rescued before the tide comes in. Be careful, and don't venture into the mud.

Coho or silver salmon arrive to Ship Creek in mid- to late July, with the peak of the run in mid-August. Coho salmon are aggressive biters and strike spinners, steamer flies, and salmon roe. When fishing for coho you can use lures in the 3 to 4 size range. Like Chinook salmon, the majority of the Ship Creek coho salmon run is the result of WJHSFH stocking the creek with smolts.

A small harvest of naturally-produced pink and chum salmon, about 400 fish per year, also occurs at Ship Creek. Most of these fish are caught by anglers fishing for coho salmon.



Youth-Only King Salmon Fishery

On the third Saturday in June, from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. a section of Ship Creek is the site of a youth-only fishery for Chinook salmon. During the youth-only fishery, only anglers 15 years old and younger may fish for Chinook salmon from the C Street Bridge upstream to the Bridge Restaurant. Although, people age 16 and older can assist youth anglers with landing a fish, this section of Ship Creek is closed to all fishing, including catch-and-release, for anglers 16 years and older during this time. Additional information can be found under the Anchorage Bowl area in the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet.

Ship Creek Access

Located in the industrial area of downtown Anchorage, Ship Creek is open to salmon fishing from its mouth upstream to a cable stretched across the creek about 100 feet downstream of the Chugach Electric power plant dam. The waters from a point 100 feet downstream of the Chugach Electric power plant dam (the cable stretched across the creek) upstream to the Elmendorf power plant is closed year-round to all fishing.



The land along the lower section of the creek is owned by the Alaska Railroad. Please be careful, and provide an extra level of courtesy when fishing here. Obey all parking and 'No Trespassing' signs, and stay off the railroad tracks and bridges. There is plenty of public parking, with fees charged in-season.

To reach the Ship Creek salmon fishing area, head north on E Street through the light at Third Avenue, turn right at the three-way stop sign, and drive down the hill on North C Street to the public parking area. Foot trails are present along the north and south banks of Ship Creek.

Campbell Creek

The Campbell Creek greenbelt runs through the center of Anchorage, through many residential and business areas. Please respect all private property, and keep our streambanks and waters clean of fishing tackle and trash. Some portions of Campbell Creek are closed to all fishing, including catch-and-release, some portions are only catch-and-release, and some portions are only open to specific fish species. Please review the Campbell Creek regulations under the Anchorage Bowl area in the



current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet. This portion of Campbell Creek is not tidally influenced.



Coho Salmon

From July 14 through September 30, anglers can fish for coho salmon from the Dimond Boulevard Bridge to ADF&G markers located just off Shelikof Street and then again at the ADF&G markers on the upstream side of the Lake Otis Parkway bridge to an ADF&G marker located near Piper Street. Coho salmon are generally in the lower sections of Campbell Creek by the season opening in late July, with the peak of the run about mid- to late August. By mid-August, fishing just downstream of the forks at Piper Street usually produces good catches. Popular lures used by anglers include size 4 Mepps or Pixees, or a quarter-sized chunk of salmon roe under a slip bobber in deep pools.



Youth-Only King Salmon Fishery

On the last Saturday and Sunday in June, from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. each day, a section of Campbell Creek is the site of a youth-only fishery for Chinook salmon. During the youth-only fishing times, only anglers 15 years old and younger may fish for Chinook salmon from the ADF&G markers under the Dimond Boulevard bridge to the Old Seward Highway. These are the only anglers who may target Chinook salmon on Campbell Creek. This is also the only time Campbell Creek is open to king salmon fishing. Additional information can be found under the

Anchorage Bowl area in the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet.

Rainbow Trout and Dolly Varden

A small population of rainbow trout and Dolly Varden are also present in Campbell Creek. If you are targeting rainbow trout, try fishing near the boardwalks at Folker Street or downstream from the pullout on Potter Drive. If you are interested in targeting Dolly Varden, try fishing the North Fork of Campbell Creek, upstream of Campbell Airstrip Road. This upstream area is also very popular with bears and anglers are reminded to be aware of their surroundings when fishing on Campbell Creek.

Campbell Creek Access

1. Parking area on the north side of Dimond Boulevard, just west of Victor Road, there is a small slope to the boardwalk and an unimproved trail.
2. There is a small parking area where Victor Road terminates north of Dimond Boulevard. There is a paved path to the creek.
3. Boardwalks are located at Arctic Boulevard across the street from Gallo's Mexican Restaurant.
4. There is a small parking lot at the end of the 76th Avenue and King Street in the Municipality of Anchorage's Taku-Campbell Lake entrance.
5. A small pullout is located east of Potter Drive on Dowling Road between C Street and Old Seward Highway.
6. There is a paved trail located off Folker Street, just east of Lake Otis Parkway and south of Tudor Road.
7. There is access from Piper Street, south of Tudor Road, two blocks to the east past Folker Street.
8. To access the upstream section of the North Fork of Campbell Creek. Turn south on Campbell Airstrip Road which is off Tudor Road about ½ mile east of Boniface Parkway. There is a parking area at mile 1.1. Walk back to the North Fork, where there is a foot trail along the banks.

Eagle River

Eagle River may present an opportunity for Chinook salmon fishing, with a very small run. A portion of Eagle River is open to fishing for king salmon for four consecutive three-day weekends (Saturday, Sunday, and Monday), beginning Memorial Day weekend. The area open to target Chinook salmon is from the Bailey Bridge on Fort Richardson Army Post upstream to the ADF&G markers located in the Alaska State Park's Eagle River Campground at mile post 12 of the Glenn Highway (Hiland Road exit). A lower portion of Eagle River is tidally influenced. JBER lands are accessible only through the Fort Richardson guard station. Take the Arctic Valley Road exit, then turn north to enter Fort Richardson.

In certain sections of the Eagle River drainage, anglers may fish for coho salmon and Dolly Varden. The

populations of these fish species is small and anglers are reminded to review sport fishing regulations.

Bird Creek

Bird Creek is a popular roadside sport fishing spot in the Anchorage Bowl area situated on Turnagain Arm, and located about 25 miles south of Anchorage along the Seward Highway. Anglers can park in designated fee parking areas on the east or west side of Bird Creek and take the paved trails down to the bridge. A majority of Bird Creek shoreline and banks are very muddy, so please be careful. All land, as well as the streambed upstream of an ADF&G marker about 500 yards upstream of the Seward Highway bridge is private property. Private land begins approximately 100 yards downstream of the ADF&G markers on both sides of the creek. For legal public access upstream of the private property boundary, anglers must remain in the streambed. Please be respectful of private property. Anglers are reminded to be vigilant in bear country.



Bird Creek is an enhanced fishery and has been stocked with coho salmon since 1992. Coho salmon usually arrive in late July through late August. Quarter-sized chunks of salmon roe under a slip bobber, coho flies, Vibrax and Mepps spinner, and Pixees spoon are all effective when fishing for coho salmon. Bird Creek also supports a small run of sockeye, pink, and chum salmon. These salmon are usually caught by anglers fishing for coho salmon.

Bird Creek is open to salmon fishing from July 14 through December 31, except Chinook salmon, from its mouth to an ADF&G marker about 500 yards upstream. Bird Creek is closed year-round to Chinook salmon fishing. Many anglers prefer to start fishing two to three hours before tidal changes, as measured at the Anchorage tide charts. Anglers are reminded to be prepared and cognitive of the changing tides and muddy shores of Bird Creek. It is recommended anglers wear chest waders or hip boots.

Turnagain Arm

Several Turnagain Arm streams along the Seward Highway including Twentymile and Placer rivers, and Portage, Glacier, and Ingram creeks. These water bodies support

multiple fish species; however, the rivers and creeks are closed year-round to Chinook salmon. Twentymile and Placer rivers, and Portage Creek support late-run naturally-produced coho salmon. These runs typically peak in late August or early September. Twentymile and Placer rivers are accessed by jet boat, while Portage Creek is accessible by foot.



The Twentymile River supports the largest harvest of naturally-produced coho salmon in the Anchorage area. Coho salmon harvests in the Placer River and Portage Creek are smaller. Twentymile and Placer rivers support smaller sockeye salmon harvests, usually caught by anglers fishing for coho salmon. Many anglers prefer to start fishing about two to three hours before tidal changes, as measured at Anchorage in tide charts. Additional information can be found under the Anchorage Bowl area in the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet.

Sixmile Creek

Sixmile Creek is located on the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Base, and land access is restricted. Although this drainage supports the most sizeable population of sockeye salmon in the Anchorage Bowl area the run is still small and Sixmile Creek is closed to all fishing. The area opened to sport fishing for salmon is in the saltwaters that are seaward of a steel cable stretched across the creeks mouth. Snagging is not permitted in this area or in the Turnagain Arm saltwaters. Information such as bag and possession limits can be found in the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet.

Sockeye salmon return to the mouth of Sixmile Creek from mid-July through mid-August, with the peak fishing period occurring around mid- to late July. Streamer flies and small spinners are effective when fishing.

Healthy Bank Stewardship

Most people understand healthy river systems are important for strong and healthy salmon populations. However, it is important to ensure that clean, healthy

rivers don't stop at the water's edge. In fact, protecting and managing healthy streambanks and adjacent riparian areas are critical components to the overall health of a river system.



Vegetation along streambanks helps keep river water clean by filtering out sediment and pollutants from surface and storm runoff, reduces peak flows during rain and runoff events, slows flood waters, stabilizes streambanks from excessive erosion, and helps moderate stream temperatures. Vegetated streambanks also provide food and nutrients to fish and other aquatic organisms, as well as, provide critical habitat for rearing juvenile salmon. Any alteration to the streambank area reduces its ability to carry out these important functions, this includes repeat trampling of the vegetation while trying to get to your favorite fishing spot. While out on the river, please be respectful and follow any requirements landowners may have. By following the simple steps listed below, you can help maintain important habitat for salmon and be good stewards of the land.

- Use established trails to reach the river.
- Use established entry and exit points to get in and out of the river.
- Respect and abide by signs that close areas to fishing from the bank.
- Stand in the river to fish and don't place your pack or other gear on the vegetation.
- Pack out what you pack in, including discarded fishing line and tackle.
- Use the restroom in the provided facilities.



Pacific Salmon Identification

Chinook (king) Salmon



- Spots on back and both lobes of the tail
- Black mouth with a black gumline

Coho (silver) Salmon



- Spots on back and upper lobe of the tail
- Black mouth with a white gumline

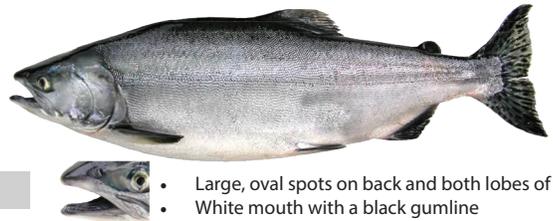
Marine Phase

Sockeye (red) Salmon



- No distinct spots on back or tail
- White mouth with a white gumline
- Large, bright gold eye

Pink (humpy) Salmon



- Large, oval spots on back and both lobes of tail
- White mouth with a black gumline

Chum (dog) Salmon



- No spots; calico bands on body (often faint in salt water)
- White mouth with a white gumline

Photographs courtesy of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Chinook (king) Salmon



- Spawning adults turn maroon or olive brown
- Spots on body and both lobes of the tail remain

Coho (silver) Salmon



- Males develop pronounced "kype" (hooked-nose)
- Spots on back and upper lobe of the tail remain
- Male and female turn dark maroon and have dark backs

Spawning Phase

Sockeye (red) Salmon



- Spawning adults develop dull-green heads
- Males develop hump on back
- Both female and male turn red

Pink (humpy) Salmon



- Spawners turn dull gray on their backs and upper sides
- Lower sides appear cream color or white
- Large, oval spots on back and both lobes of tail remain

Chum (dog) Salmon



- Spawners develop pronounced, vertical calico bands on sides
- Males exhibit large, canine-like teeth



Scan the QR code for Southcentral sport fishing regulations.

Find Ship Creek regulations under the "Anchorage Bowl"



Photographs by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Identifying Your Catch

Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)

Chinook or king salmon are the largest Pacific salmon, ranging from 12 to 40 plus pounds. They are the first salmon to arrive into the freshwater streams for anglers. Most juvenile Chinook salmon spend at least a year in freshwater, feeding first on plankton and then on insects, before migrating to sea. After feeding for one to five years in saltwater on finfish, squid, or crustaceans, adult king salmon return to spawn. Adult Chinook salmon have black spots on their back and both tail lobes, and a black mouth with a black gum line.

Sockeye Salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)

Sockeye or red salmon usually spawn only in those freshwater streams that have a lake attached. Juvenile sockeye salmon stay in the lake, feeding mainly on plankton, for one to three years before migrating to saltwater. Adults return after spending one to four years at sea. While in the ocean, sockeye salmon feed mainly on zooplankton, although they also eat young fish in the larval stage, such as sand lance larvae. Sockeye salmon have silver sides, blue backs, and no black spots. They average from four to eight pounds.

Coho Salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)

Coho or silver salmon are spectacular fighters and are noted for their impressive runs and aerial displays after being hooked. As juveniles, coho salmon stay in freshwater sloughs, ponds, and backwater areas. They primarily eat insects, for one to three years before migrating to saltwater. They feed for one year in the ocean, mostly on fish such as herring and sand lance, returning to spawn. Returning adult coho salmon range from seven to 15 pounds and are identified by their bright silver color, black spots on their back and upper tail lobe, and a black mouth with a white or gray gum line.

Chum Salmon (*Oncorhynchus keta*)

Chum or dog salmon are native to several Anchorage area streams, but the runs are not very large. Soon after they emerge from the gravel, juvenile chum salmon move out to sea. They first feed on zooplankton and then on crustaceans, squids, herring, and other fish. Chum salmon feed for three to four years at sea before returning to spawn. Adult chum salmon are similar in size to coho salmon ranging from seven to 15 pounds. They don't have any distinctive black spots on the back or tail lobes, and are mostly silver. After reaching freshwaters, their sides become mottled with purple and green vertical bars. Just before spawning the males develop a hooked snout called a kype and very large teeth are typical of this salmon. Their appearance at this time partially accounts for their

nickname of 'dog salmon.' In the Anchorage area, run timing for chum salmon is similar to coho salmon. Most chum salmon harvested are taken by anglers targeting coho salmon.

Pink Salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*)

Pink or humpy salmon in the Anchorage area range from two to 10 pounds. Almost immediately after they emerge, the juvenile fish migrate to saltwater. They spend one winter feeding in the ocean on larval forms of various sea life and small fish before returning to spawn the next summer. This creates a 'every-other-year' cycle. In the Anchorage area the strongest pink salmon runs and availability occur on even years, with the peak in mid-July through early August.



Rainbow Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)

There are very few native populations of rainbow trout in the Anchorage bowl area. Hatchery rainbow trout are the first fish to be stocked each spring. There are over 25 lakes and two streams (Campbell and Chester creeks), in the Anchorage area that are stocked with rainbows. Rainbow trout vary in color from silvery to dark green, with most displaying a reddish stripe along their sides and small black spots covering their entire body. Hatchery rainbow trout average eight to ten inches at the time of stocking. If not harvested, some rainbows can reach 29 inches or more.



Dolly Varden/Arctic Char (*Salvelinus malma/alpinus*)

Dolly Varden are native to many of the Anchorage bowl area streams. They can be found throughout the year in several streams including Eagle and Twentymile rivers,

and Bird, Campbell, and Chester creeks. Many Dolly Varden spend their entire life in freshwater, feeding on aquatic insects and eggs of spawning salmon, while others are anadromous and spend a portion of their lifecycle in saltwater before returning to freshwaters to spawn.

Dolly Varden are distinguished by light-colored spots on their backs, and pink to orange spots on their backs and sides. These colors become more pronounced during the fall when Dolly Varden spawn. Hatchery-reared Arctic Char are similar in appearance to Dolly Varden, and are taking a more prominent role in Anchorage area lakes.



Arctic Grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*)

There are no known native populations of Arctic grayling in the Anchorage Bowl area. Hatchery-reared fingerling sized Arctic grayling have been stocked in Beach, Sand, and Taku lakes. They feed on small insects and grow to catchable size. These 'sailfin' fish will aggressively rise and strike at small dry flies or small lures such as Mepps and Vibrax spinners.

For a nice back country experience right here in the Anchorage area, try fishing Symphony Lake for Arctic grayling. Symphony Lake was stocked with Arctic grayling and there is a naturally-reproducing population with fish ranging in size from 12 to 16 inches. This lake is located in the Chugach State Park, off the South Fork of Eagle River. The trailhead is located off Hiland Road. From the trailhead it is about a five mile hike one-way through beautiful country. Anglers are reminded to be vigilant in bear country.



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Sport Fish Information Center
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M-F 8am - 5 pm
Except on state & federal holidays



These opportunities funded in part by Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This summary is available in alternative communication formats. If you need assistance, please contact the ADF&G ADA Coordinator at (907) 465-6078; TTY/ Alaska Relay 7-1-1; or 1 (800) 770-8973.

www.adfg.alaska.gov

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