



## FISHING IN THE CORDOVA AREA

### Cordova Area

Cordova is a small commercial fishing town, population 2,500, located on the southeastern side of Prince William Sound (PWS). The town can be reached only by air or by ferry. Cordova is about a 51-mile flight from Valdez or 160-mile flight from Anchorage. The Cordova area is known to receive a lot of rain. July and August are the warmest months, with temperatures ranging between 60 to 65°F. August and September are the rainiest months, with 9 to 13 inches of precipitation each month.

Eyak and Alutiiq are the main Alaska Native tribes that settled around the Copper River Delta area, although, Tlingit and Athabascan residents are also part of the area. The town of Cordova was renamed from Puerto Cordova in 1906 when the Alaska railroad was built to move copper ore mined in the region.

Commercial fishing has been a major industry for Cordova since the 1940s, so please be careful around commercial boats and nets. The Division of Commercial Fisheries offers a wealth of information on their website, including in-season harvest information at <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingcommercial.main>.

### 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.

The Forest Service officials also act as enforcement agents in the Cordova area. Management for the Prince William Sound and Cordova fisheries are divided between the ADF&G Anchorage and Cordova offices.

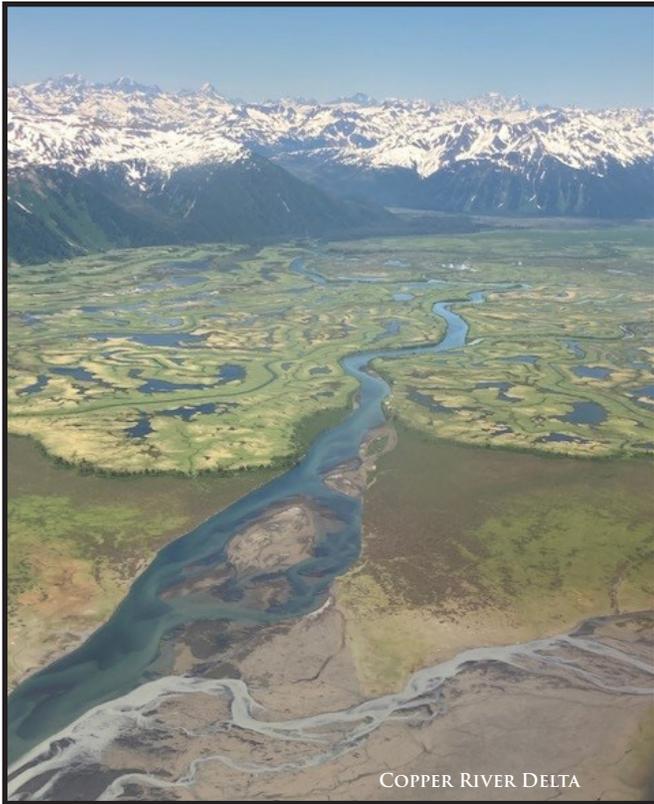
Every year ADF&G releases four sport fishing regulations booklets for the Northern, Southcentral, Southeast, and Southwest areas. Sport fishing regulations specific to the Cordova area such as bag and possession limits, seasons, or tackle can be found in the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing 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](http://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 under the sport fishing tab. Select the Fishing Information link and then the "Advisory Announcements and EOs" tab. Anglers can select the region and management area they intend to fish. 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.

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 Prince William Sound sport fishing hotline at (907) 267-2504. 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 Sport Fish Information office at (907) 267-2218.





## Pacific Salmon in Cordova

### Chinook Salmon

Chinook or king salmon return at different ages. Chinook salmon that return after only one year in saltwater are called 'jacks', typically weigh about one to two pounds and are almost always males. Others may return after two years in the saltwater and weigh between five to 15 pounds. The majority of Chinook salmon typically return after spending three to four years at sea and weigh between 25 to 45 pounds.

Stocked Chinook salmon typically return to Fleming Spit between mid May to late June and will remain through early July. Popular methods include larger lures and spoons, such as 1/2 to 2 oz. Pixees, Dardevles, Vibrax, or herring under a bobber. Fishing is the best off the shore of the spit during the four hours around high tide. Trolling anglers often add a dodger/flasher.

The most significant run of wild Chinook salmon returns to the glacial Copper River, east of Cordova. Although there is a commercial Chinook salmon fishery at the mouth, most anglers target Chinook salmon far upriver. Wild feeder Chinook salmon can sometimes be caught near Cordova saltwaters by trolling in late fall and mid-to late winter. Try to find areas where herring are overwintering and troll very slowly near these schools.

### Sockeye Salmon

There is a small run of sockeye or red salmon available in Prince William Sound during most of the summer, and sockeye salmon are the first salmon to return to Cordova streams. Juvenile sockeye salmon may spend up to two years rearing in freshwater lakes and migrate out to sea as smolt.

Once at sea they feed and can reach between four to 12 pounds after one to four years in the saltwater.

A good number of sockeye salmon begin returning to Eyak River in Cordova in late May and early June, and various later runs in the Eyak provide sockeye salmon through August. Sockeye salmon return via Alaganik Slough, McKinley Lake area, and Clear Creek from mid-June through early July, with the peak of the run occurring in late June. Anglers can fish from both shore and boats in Alaganik Slough. Boats can be launched at points along the road that runs parallel to the slough, as well as a U.S. Forest Service boat ramp.

Eyak River is best accessed with a boat; however, there is a fly fishing only area along the highway. Please review the Eyak River regulations under the Prince William Sound area in the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet. Clear Creek is not easily accessible due to washed out roads, and you will need a boat to access fishing locations across the Copper River.

Sockeye salmon are perfect for a medium-action spinning gear or a 8 or 9 wt. fly rod. Because sockeye salmon are not aggressive biters, size two to six streamer flies such as the Mickey Finn or the Russian River coho fly has proven to be the most productive technique for catching sockeye salmon, even for those using spin casting rods. In freshwater, sockeye salmon tend to hug the shore, so save your 50-yard cast for surf fishing!



### Coho Salmon

Wild coho or silver salmon spawn in Cordova's freshwater streams from August through October. After spawning, the adult fish die, leaving their eggs to hatch the following spring. Juvenile salmon remain in freshwater streams through the following summer and winter. In the spring of their second or third year, coho salmon migrate out to saltwater as smolt. They remain in the saltwater for about 14 months before returning to their natal freshwater streams as eight to 12 pound adults to spawn. Because Prince William Sound streams experience severe flooding from time to time, wild coho salmon runs have been and will continue to be extremely variable.

Late August and early September are the best coho salmon fishing months. Good spots to target coho salmon include Elsinore Creek, Ibeck Creek, Eyak River, Fleming Spit, and

Orca Inlet just north of town. Alaganik Slough and Clear Creek, especially where it flows into the Copper River, also provides excellent roadside coho fishing. Anglers should consult the Southcentral Sport Fishing Regulation Summary Booklet for more information.

Coho salmon strike readily at lures, clusters of salmon roe, and streamer flies, making these aggressive and hard fighting salmon a prime target for anglers.

### Special Coho Salmon Bag Limits Near Cordova

Stocked as smolt by the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association, coho salmon returning to the Fleming Spit area have become a very popular fishery, however the run varies year to year and typically picks up in September. Marine waters north of a line from Odiak Slough to Stump Point, and south of a line from Orca Cannery to Knot Point are designated as a "Terminal Harvest" area. Because this area is a Terminal Harvest area, daily bag limits are higher than the rest of eastern Prince William Sound. Please review the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet for additional regulation information.



### Pink Salmon

There are over 200 streams in Prince William Sound that support natural runs of pink or humpy salmon. In addition, there are four private nonprofit hatcheries that rear pink salmon. Pink salmon return to Prince William Sound from mid-June through late August, but typically peak in late July. Popular spots to fish for pink salmon in the Cordova area include Sawmill Bay on Evans Island, and below Hartney Creek bridge on the Cordova road system.

Pink salmon are fun fish to catch and aggressively bite at any Pixee, Daredevil, or Tee Spoon type of lure, or at any large flashy fly.

### Chum Salmon

Chum or dog salmon have the widest distribution of any of the five Pacific salmon species. They utilize the broadest spawning areas, in intertidal and freshwater areas. Like pink

salmon, chum salmon juveniles quickly move out to nearshore saltwaters soon after emerging from their gravel redds. Chum salmon feed in the saltwater from three to six years, before returning to freshwater streams as seven to 18 pound fish.

In the Cordova area, chum salmon are usually targeted by anglers when they are fishing for other salmon species. The marine waters of Orca Inlet, Simpson Bay, and Sheep Bay all provide anglers an opportunity to harvest Chinook, sockeye, and coho salmon. Chum salmon are especially hard fighters that will bite at a variety of flies and lures.



### Resident Species

#### Dolly Varden

Dolly Varden are available in most of the Cordova area streams throughout the year. Two distinct populations of Dolly Varden are present in Prince William Sound. Resident Dolly Varden spend their entire lives in freshwater. Anadromous or sea-run Dolly Varden spend their first few years in freshwater and then migrate to saltwaters in the fall, return to freshwater lakes and remain there through winter, and then return to the saltwaters the following spring.

The best fishing spots include Eyak Lake and its tributaries, Ibeck Creek, Power Creek, Alaganik Slough, and Clear Creek, although a majority of the roadside streams and lakes have Dolly Varden. These fish average 12 to 20 inches long.

Dolly Varden will hit small spinners, single eggs, and clusters of salmon roe. Popular flies include nymph and midge patterns fished both wet and dry, as well as, salmon egg and smolt imitations.

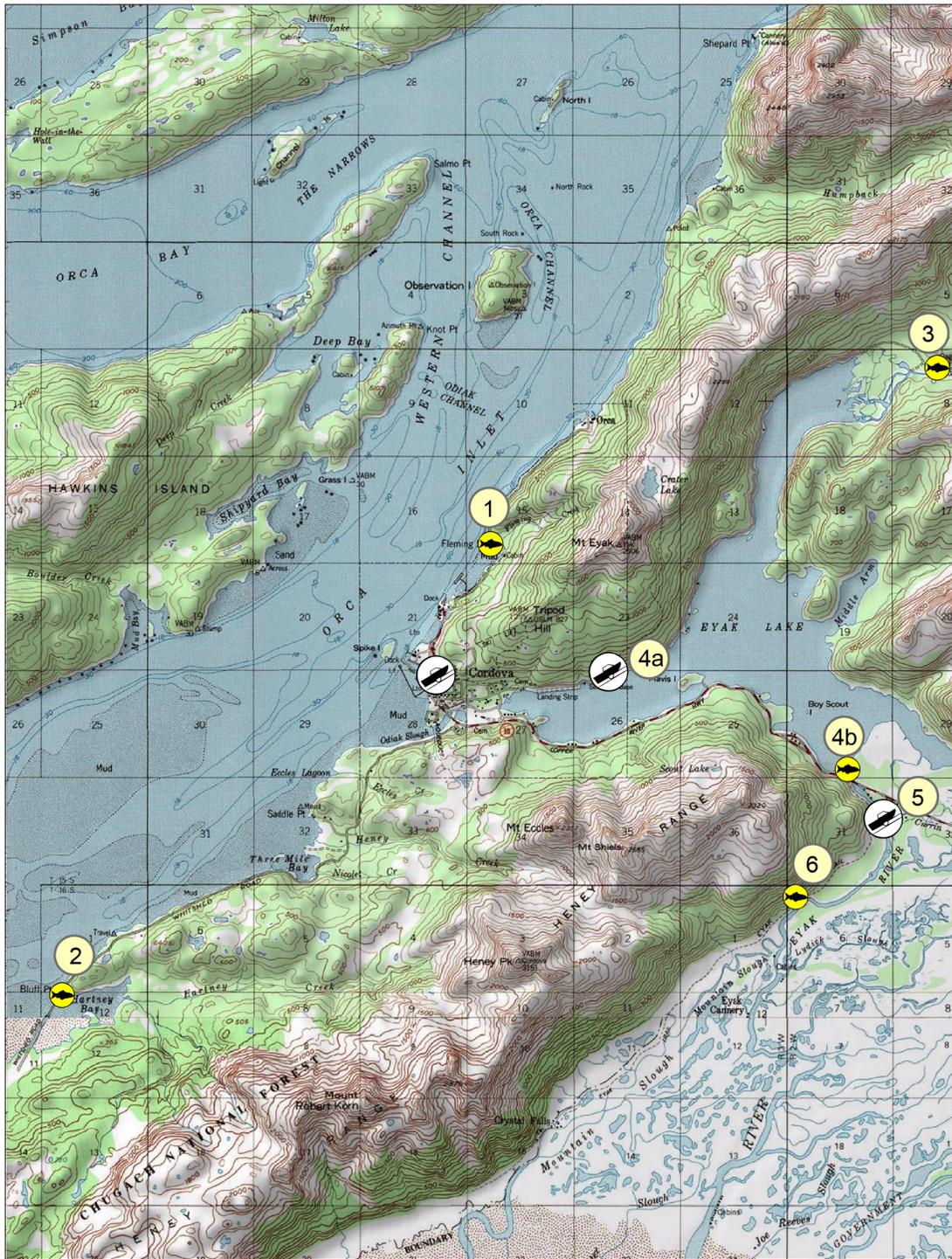
#### Cutthroat Trout

Prince William Sound is the most northern and western extent of the natural range for cutthroat trout, and so the populations are small and scattered. However, in Cordova, cutthroat trout can be found in numerous locations including the Pipeline and McKinley lakes and Alaganik Slough.

The cutthroat gets its name from its distinctive red slash underneath the jaw. Both resident and sea-run cutthroat trout are present near Cordova, and range 9" to 18" long.

Small spinners or spoons, single eggs, and nymph-type flies, all fished deep, are popular for catching cutthroat trout.

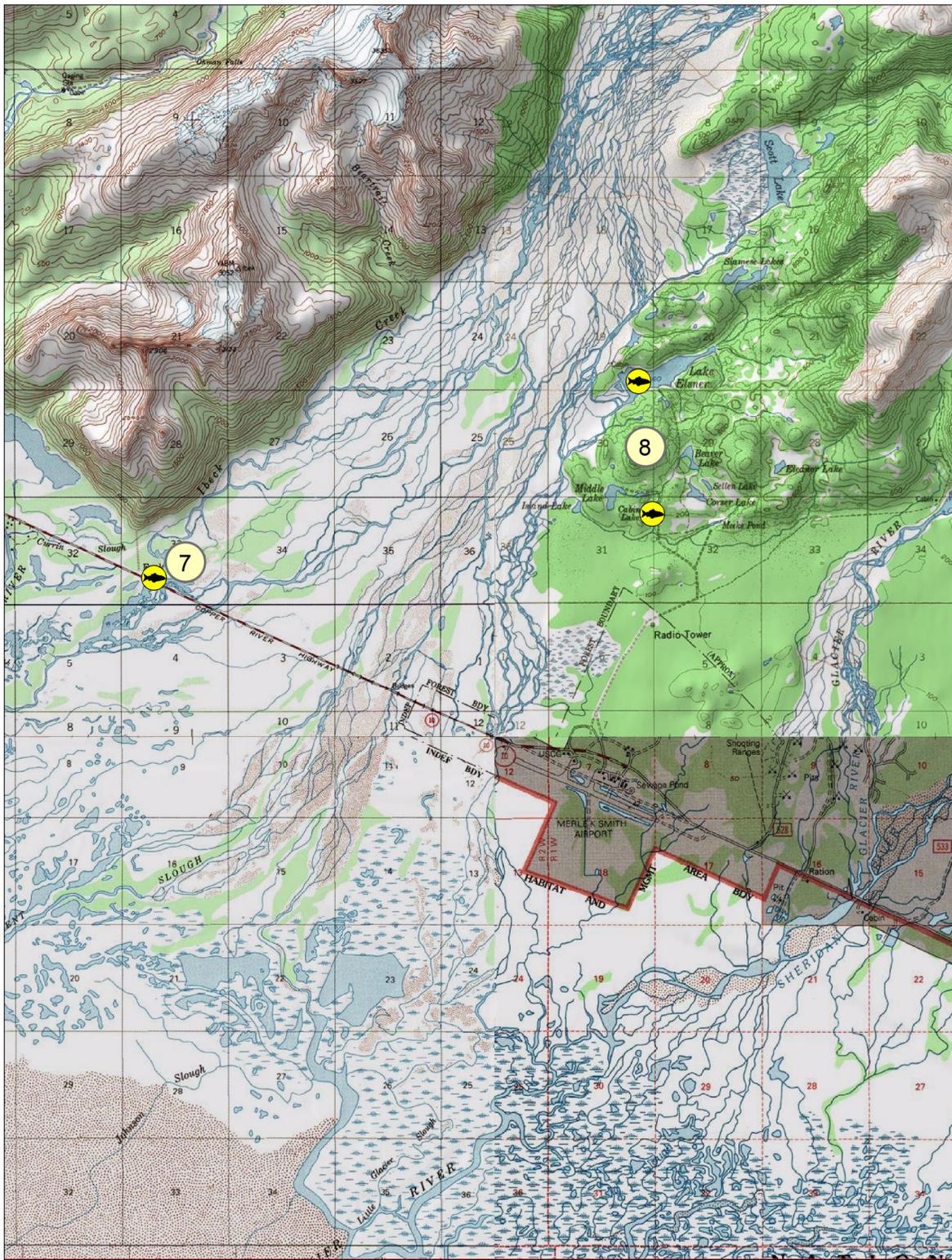
To help protect spawning cutthroat trout, the season is closed to retention April 15th through June 14th in all waters of Prince William Sound, and bait may not be used in fresh water during this time.



Map created with TOPO! 8 ©2003 National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com/topo)

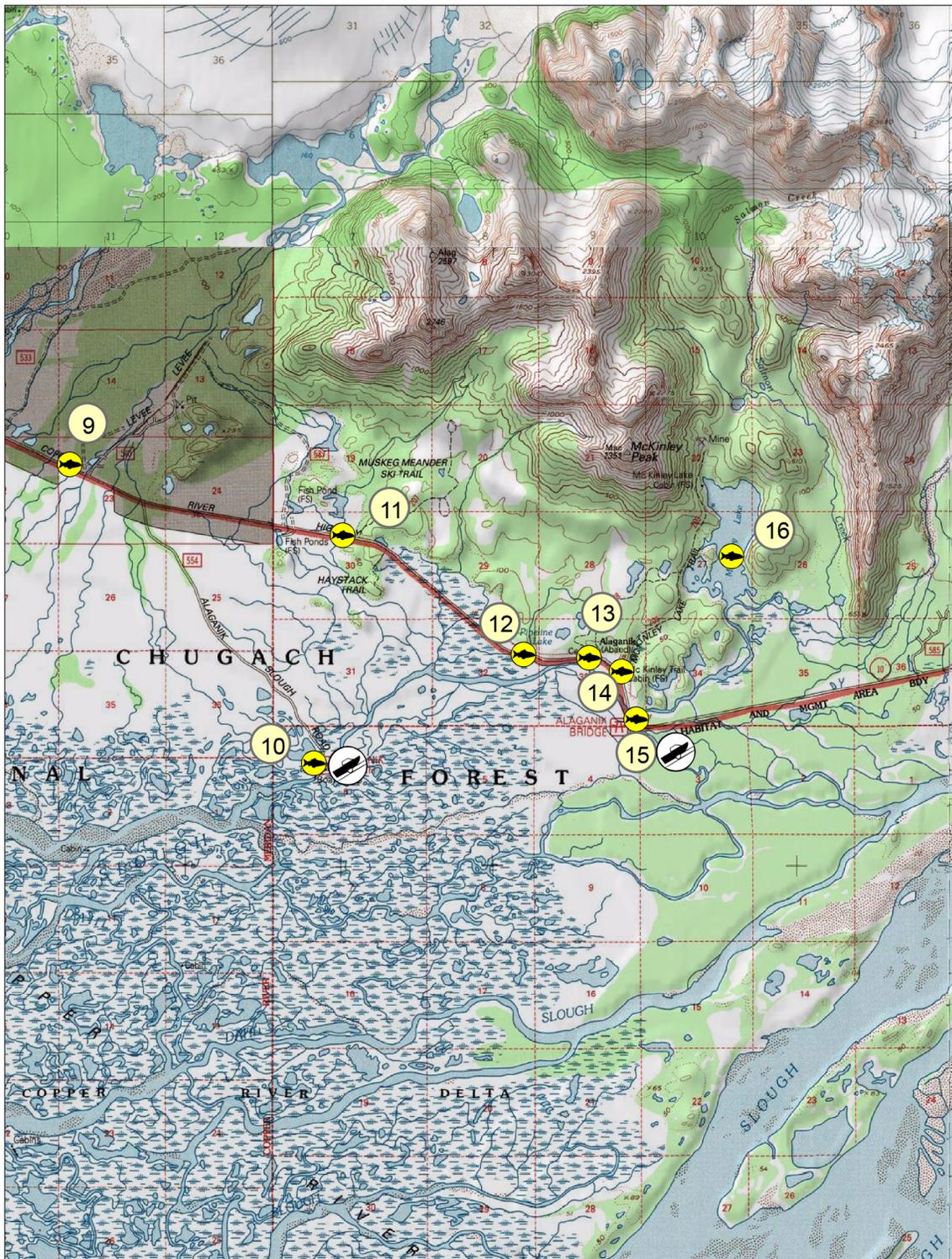
### Outline of Sport Fishing Areas Near Cordova

1. Flemming Spot: Saltwater bay and lagoon fishing for King Salmon, Silver Salmon and Pink Salmon. Closed to snagging June 1 - September 30.
2. Hartney Bay and Creek: Coho, pink and chum salmon, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden. **Salmon fishing closed above bridge.**
3. Power Creek: Dolly Varden, and cutthroat trout. **Salmon fishing closed.**
4. (a) Eyak Creek boat ramp for **launching** small boats. (b) Eyak Lake and weir, red salmon, coho salmon, Dolly Varden, and cutthroat trout. **Fly fishing only section at weir. Salmon fishing closed outside of fly fishing section in the lake.**
5. Eyak River boat ramp: Launch point for the river, coho salmon, red salmon, Dolly Varden, and cutthroat trout available.
6. Eyak River trail end: Good coho and red salmon hole. Dolly Varden, cutthroat trout, & rainbow trout.

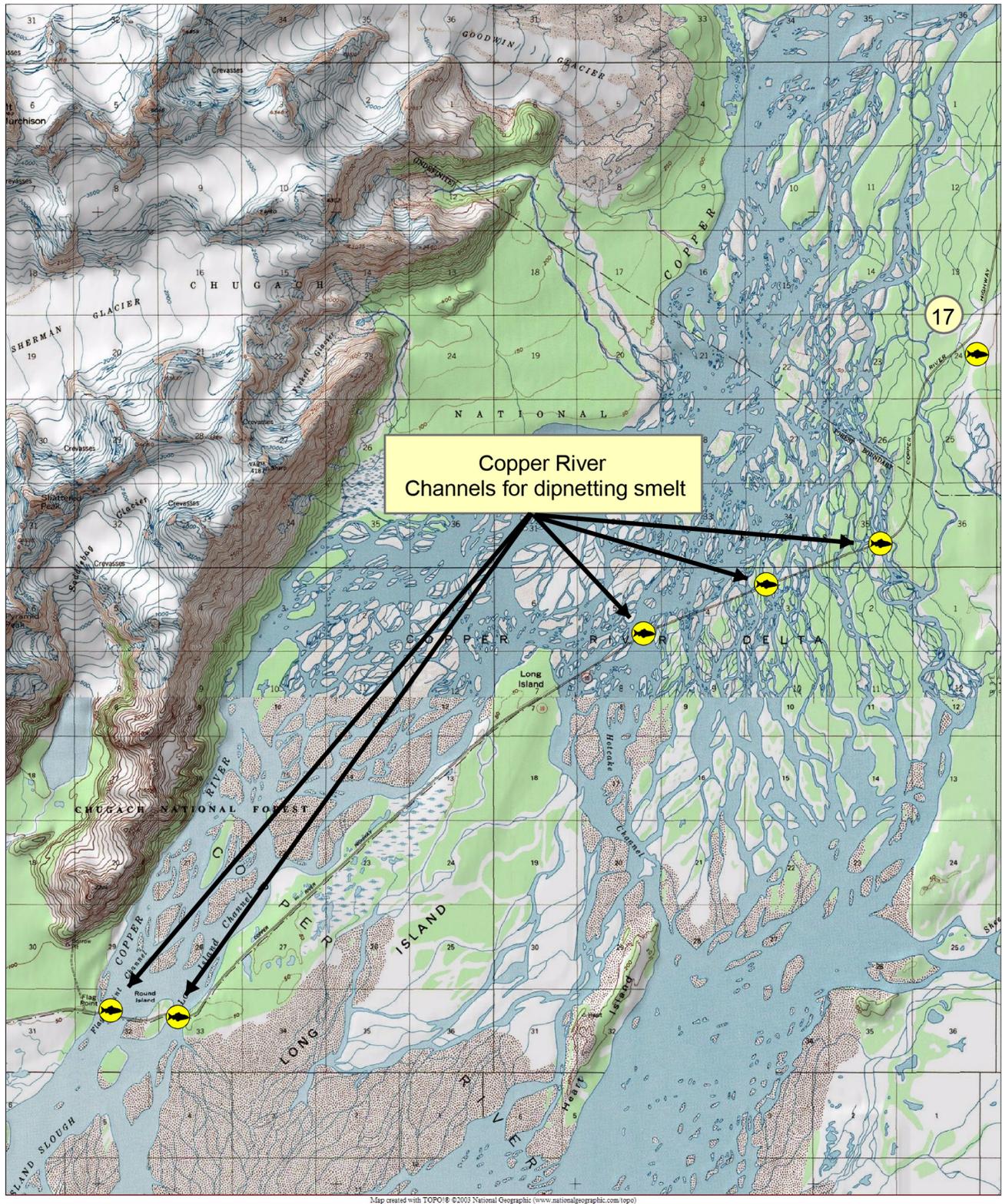


7. Ibek Creek: Coho salmon, Dolly Varden, smelt.

8. Cabin Lake: Coho salmon, Dolly Varden, & cutthroat trout. Access of trail to Elsner Lake, coho and red salmon, cutthroat trout and Dolly Varden.



9. Small Creek cutthroat trout and coho salmon.
10. Alaganik Slough: **Boat Launch**, coho salmon, red salmon, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout and Dolly Varden.
11. Small Creek cutthroat trout and coho salmon.
12. Small Creek cutthroat trout and coho salmon.
13. Small Creek cutthroat trout and coho salmon.
14. Small Creek cutthroat trout and coho salmon.
15. Upper Alaganik Slough: **Canoe and small boat launch (dirt & sand ramp)**. Red & coho salmon, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, Dolly Varden and hooligan.
16. McKinley Lake: Coho & red salmon, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout and Dolly Varden.



17. Clear Creek: Medium sized stream, good Dolly Varden fishing above Carbon Mountain Bridge. No road access, you will need a boat to get across due to the road being washed out. Often turbid from Copper River overflows. Look for clear water sloughs below bridge for salmon and char.

## Saltwater Species



### Halibut

Halibut spawn in deep offshore waters from November through March. After hatching, the larvae drift with the ocean currents, feeding on plankton and eventually larger and larger fish and shellfish. The larvae start life in an upright position, like other fish, with an eye on each side of their head. When the larvae are about six months old, the left eye migrates over the snout to the right side of the head, and the coloration on the left side of the body fades, and the halibut become flat fish.

Halibut are found throughout eastern Prince William Sound waters, on or near the bottom over mud, sand, or gravel banks, and below steep drop offs. The most popular bait includes using herring or fish heads on a circle hook or large white jigs with a heavy enough weight to keep the bait at the bottom. Average weight of harvested fish ranges from eight to 75 pounds, although halibut as large as 350 pounds and over are sometimes caught.

Halibut are federally managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Consult NOAA's regulations for bag and possession limits, size restrictions, and possible closure dates for unguided or guided (chartered) halibut fishing regulations. Please contact NOAA Fisheries Alaska region at (907) 586-7228 or visit [alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/sport-halibut](http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/sport-halibut).

## Rockfish

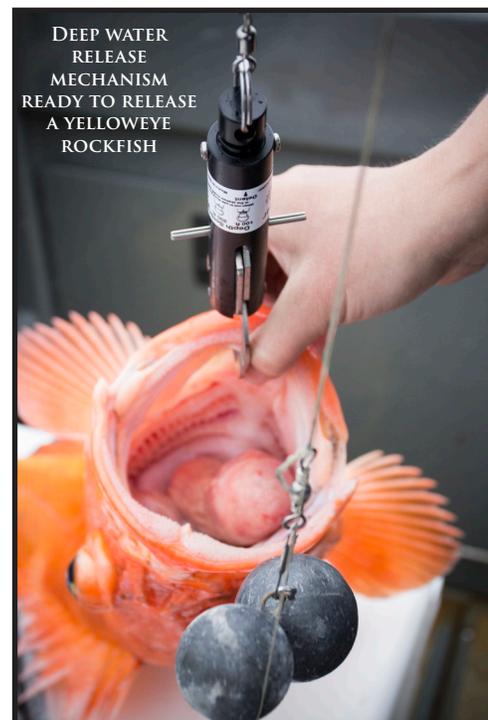
Alaskan waters are home to roughly 43 different types of rockfish, but only about a dozen species are regularly caught in the sport fishery. These species are classified for regulatory purposes as either pelagic (mid-water) or demersal/non-pelagic (bottom-dwelling). Rockfish are found throughout Cordova area salt waters.

Pelagic species travel in schools and are most often found near rocky reefs or pinnacles. Pelagic species are usually uniformly gray, black or brownish in color, and include black, dark, dusky, and yellowtail rockfish.

Non-pelagic rockfish are typically found singly or in pairs on or near the bottom, near rocky reefs or pinnacles. They are usually brightly colored and vividly marked. The most commonly caught species include yelloweye, quillback, canary, China, copper, silvergray, and tiger rockfishes.

Compared to most fishes, rockfish grow slowly and live a very long time. Many do not reach sexual maturity until age 15 or older, and some can live over 100 years. Rather than laying and fertilizing eggs in the open waters, like most fish, rockfish mate internally, then give live birth to as many as 2.5 million tiny larvae. Survival of these larvae is usually very poor, depending on predation levels and ocean conditions. Because of the high mortality of larval rockfish, relatively few offspring reach adulthood.

Also, rockfish have a closed swim bladder system, which just about assures that a rockfish pulled up from over 65 feet will have difficulty re-submerging unassisted if not quickly released at depth of capture. If a swim bladder is punctured, and the fish released, infection is likely to occur, and the fish could die. Rockfish can be released safely with the use of a deep water release mechanism.



These devices are available for purchase in most sporting good stores in Alaska. For more information on how deep water release works, check out our rockfish page which includes a helpful deep water release video: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingRockfish.main>. Please note, effective 2020, all anglers must carry a deepwater release device onboard their vessel when sport fishing in salt water and use the device to release rockfish that are not harvested, at depth of capture or 100 feet. As a result of their unique biology, all Pacific rockfishes are highly susceptible to overharvest. Regulations are very conservative, and fisheries managers also ask that you limit your harvest of these fish to what you will actually consume. The best way to minimize catching rockfish is to avoid rockfish habitat while targeting other species.

Anglers targeting rockfish and their tasty white fillets use a medium stout rod and level-wind reel loaded with 200-400 yards of 30-80 pound test line. Some anglers use lighter gear to enhance the fishing experience. Commonly used terminal tackle includes silvery lures or jigs aggressively jigged to attract nearby fish. Use of herring as bait also works well. Pelagic rockfish can also be caught on fly-fishing gear.



## Lingcod

Lingcod are also found throughout the Cordova area and like rockfish, have special fishing regulations. Lingcod spawn from December through March with the males guarding nests through June. Without this protection, other fish and shellfish would eat all the lingcod eggs within days. Males are very defensive during this time, and will snap at anything, thus making them more vulnerable to overharvest.

Most anglers targeting lingcod use a medium stout rod and level-wind reel loaded with 200-400 yards of 30-80 pound test line with a 12-18 inch leader made of wire or heavy monofilament fishing line. Many anglers prefer to use the heavier weight line and leader, since it's possible to hook into a large halibut while fishing for lingcod. Terminal tackle usually consists of silvery lures or jigs aggressively "bounced" on or near the bottom. Many anglers also use bait, such as herring, attached to a size 5/0 or 6/0 J-hook. To avoid catching rockfish, reel up a few feet off the bottom.

Adult lingcod are often caught near steep rocky banks by anglers jigging for halibut. In eastern Prince William Sound, lingcod up to 30 pounds are harvested. Anglers can target lingcod only from July 1 through December 31. Please see the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet for bag and possession limits.

Halibut, rockfish, and lingcod can be found as close as Spike Island which is located just outside the boat harbor, and along the coastlines of the numerous islands in eastern Prince William Sound.

## Shellfish Species

### Shrimp

Prince William Sound has open seasons for shrimp and crab fishing. The Prince William Sound shrimp pot fishery is typically open from April 15 through September 15. Each year a Guideline Harvest Level is set for the noncommercial shrimp fishery and it is typically around 100,000 pounds and is nearly always harvested. While pot limits can be as high as 5 pots per vessel you need to check Emergency Orders each year for pot limits. You must get a Prince William Sound (subsistence or sport) shrimp permit to participate in this fishery and harvest reporting is required. Most harvesters get 1-3 gallons of shrimp per pot-day of effort.



### Crab

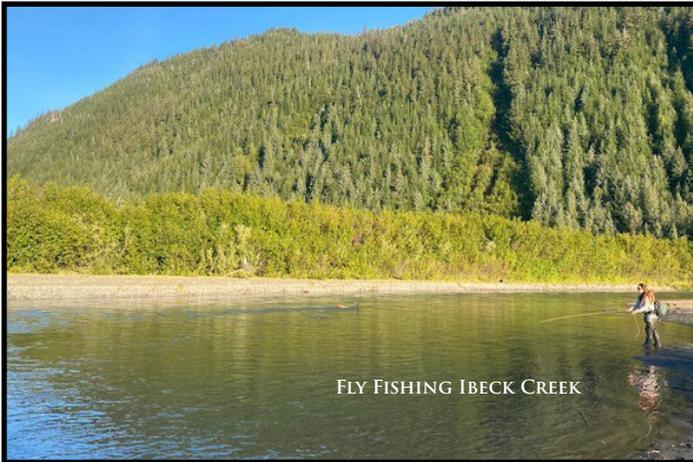
The sport Tanner crab season is only open by emergency order between October and March, check the Emergency Orders page on the ADF&G website for information. The subsistence Golden King and Tanner crab fisheries are open from October 1 through March 31 for Alaska residents only. All these fisheries require a permit which is available through ADF&G offices and the ADF&G online store.

### Other Shellfish

Razor clams are also available in PWS, as well as, a wide variety of hardshell clams such as littlenecks and butter clams. In waters east of the 146° W. Longitude and south of the line from the southernmost tip of Point Bentinck (Hinchinbrook Island) to the southernmost tip of Point Whitshed, only razor clams 4.5 inches or longer may be taken, and a permit is required. Permits are available at the Cordova ADF&G office.

As always, consuming harvested shellfish is at your own risk. Diggers are reminded that only clams harvested commercially are tested for Paralytic Shellfish Poison. For

additional information, contact the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) at (907) 269-7638 or visit the DEC 'Shellfish' web page at [www.dec.alaska.gov](http://www.dec.alaska.gov).



FLY FISHING IBECK CREEK

## Fresh Waters-Cordova's Road System

Cordova's road system consists of a roughly 37-mile stretch of dirt and gravel road from town heading toward the 'Million Dollar Bridge,' which crosses the Copper River at Miles Lake. However, the 'Million Dollar Bridge' can no longer be accessed due to road washout at the 37 mile bridge. Alaganik Slough, Ibeck Creek, and Eyak River are just a few of the local freshwater streams that are easily accessible from the road to target sockeye salmon, coho salmon, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden. Most of the Prince William Sound and Cordova freshwaters are open year-round to salmon fishing. There are a few waters closed to salmon fishing, please check the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet.

## Party Fishing

Party fishing is when anglers will 'pool' their harvest to achieve a boat limit, and is illegal. A fish belongs to the person who originally hooked it. Under Alaska law, once your daily bag limit is reached, you cannot harvest more fish for the boat. Only under certain conditions, may an angler give someone their fish, but this does not allow the angler to harvest additional fish or start their daily bag and possession limits over. Sport caught fish can never be sold, bartered, or traded. Once an angler gives away their bag limit, they may not harvest additional fish of that species on the same day. Check the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet for the regulations on giving away fish.

## Fishing with Bears

Bears are numerous in the Cordova area and anglers are advised to be extremely cautious when fishing in salmon spawning areas. Anglers who fillet their catch along a river are encouraged to chop up the fish carcasses into pieces and throw the pieces into the fast flow current/water. Keep your camp and fishing site clean, make noise while walking through the brush, and give bears plenty of room. Some areas have special management plans in place to reduce conflicts between bears and humans.

## Catch-and-Release Practices

At one time or another, almost every angler accidentally foul-hooks or snags a fish. Snagging or trying to snag a fish is illegal in all fresh waters of Alaska. In some Alaskan fisheries, if you plan to release a fish, you may not remove it from the water, even to take a photo. These fish must be released immediately, and if released correctly, it will suffer little to no permanent injury and will spawn successfully. In some fisheries, once you remove a fish from the water (if you are legally allowed to) then that fish is counted toward your daily bag/possession limit. So check the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet, advisory announcements, and emergency orders carefully before you go fishing.



PWS CUTTHROAT TROUT

More anglers seem to be adopting a voluntary catch-and-release philosophy when fishing for specific species. This catch-and-release method can be applied to all resident species and salmon. If released correctly, these fish have a high probability of surviving. To effectively practice catch-and-release fishing, or to release a fish which has been snagged, please do the following:

1. Land the fish as quickly as possible. Playing the fish to complete exhaustion reduces its energy.
2. Keep the fish in the water while handling it. The longer the fish is out of the water, the lower the chance of survival.
3. Never squeeze a fish or hold them by their jaw, gills, gill plate, or eyes. Never hold a fish upside down by its tail, as this can dislocate its back and causes almost certain death.
4. If you handle a fish with your hands, make sure to wet them first. Dry and gloved hands can remove the slime layer off the fish. This is a protective layer on their skin which protects them from diseases and infections.
5. If you need to hold the fish, do so by gently placing one hand on the underside of the fish by the pectoral fins and the other hand near the base of the tail. This will help avoid injury to the internal organs.

6. Use flies or artificial lures. Hooking mortality in some fish is much lower if they are caught with flies or lures instead of bait. If the fish is hooked deeply, cut the leader and leave the hook in the fish. The hook will quickly dislodge or rust away.
7. Some fish have “soft” mouths that are easily torn and should never be allowed to hang vertically from a hook and line.
8. In flowing water, position the fish with its belly down and with the head facing into the current. Gently hold it there until its gills are working and it swims away on its own.



## 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.



Follow us on  
**Instagram**

@wefishak



Like us on  
**Facebook**

ADF&G - Sport Fishing Southcentral Alaska  
ADF&G - Ship Creek Fisheries Center  
ADF&G - wefishak



### Sport Fishing Series Produced By:

Southcentral Region  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Division of Sport Fish

333 Raspberry Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99518

Sport Fish Information Center  
(907) 267-2218  
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.