

2019 Summary

COOK INLET SPORT FISH MANAGEMENT AREAS Northern Cook Inlet, Northern Kenai Peninsula, and Lower Cook Inlet

Northern Cook Inlet Management Area



Greater Susitna River/ Knik Arm Area

Emergency orders released preseason targeted a 100% reduction in king salmon harvest in the Susitna and Little Susitna rivers drainages through closure of fisheries. Typically, 5-year old fish constitute about half a given year's run and on the Deshka River for the second year in a row, sibling models suggested a potential weak run of 5-year old fish in 2019. There was also uncertainty in the forecast of 4-year old fish in 2019. The low forecast of 5-year old fish was due to low abundance of 4-year old fish on the Deshka River in 2018. Given the low abundance of 4-year old fish in 2018 was widespread throughout the Susitna drainage, it was assumed the low Deshka River forecast would be reflective of other areas of the Susitna River drainage during 2019. Also, most escapement goals were missed in 2017 while allowing restricted harvest to occur over much of the season. All escapement goals were missed in 2018 when catch-and-release was allowed. Given the potential for the 2019 Susitna River king salmon returns to be less than 2017 and 2018, total closure was warranted and the most conservative action implemented.

Westside Susitna Tributaries

The Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) for the Deshka River of 13,000-28,000 king salmon was not achieved. The final weir count was 9,711 king salmon. Water temperatures rose to 21 °C by June 20, 2019, around the midpoint of a typical run, stalling salmon migration. Waters progressively warmed as water levels dropped, resulting in negligible fish passage and a cumulative count of about 7,500 fish through a 20-day period. During this period, king salmon were likely holding in the cooler waters of the Susitna River downstream of the Deshka River mouth. Once stream conditions improved around July 11, about 2,000 more fish passed over a 7-day period. However, the number of fish holding was ultimately insufficient to achieve the escapement goal. Aerial escapement surveys were conducted postseason on four other westside streams. Escapement goals were achieved on the Talachulitna River, Lake Creek, and Peters Creek. The survey on Alexander Creek of 1,297 fish, although below goal, was the highest count since 2005. This stock is likely depressed by a combination of low marine survival and northern pike predation. Intensive pike suppression work conducted by ADF&G since 2010 may be improving freshwater survival of juveniles.



Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2019, closed king salmon fishing in Units 1-6 of the Susitna River drainages for the season. In addition, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure was allowed in the waters normally open to king salmon fishing in Units 1-6 of the Susitna River drainages. Sport fishing for other species was allowed seven days per week from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. including the waters in Unit 2 that are normally closed on certain days during the king salmon season.

Eastside Susitna Tributaries

Management decisions effecting Eastside Susitna streams (Units 2, 3, 5, and 6) are based upon postseason aerial surveys over eight streams, which have established escapement goals. Surveys provide an annual index of abundance. Three of six goals were achieved in this area of the Susitna River drainage in 2019. Willow, Montana, and Prairie creeks failed to meet their escapement goals, while goals on Little Willow and Clear creeks and Chulitna River were met. Sheep and Goose creeks were not counted as cloudy water conditions due to the semi glacial nature of these streams prevailed.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2019, closed king salmon fishing in Units 1-6 of the Susitna River drainages for the season. In addition, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure was allowed in the waters normally open to king salmon fishing in Units 1-6 of the Susitna River drainages. Sport fishing for other species was allowed seven days per week from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. including the waters in Unit 2 that are normally closed on certain days during the king salmon season.

Knik Arm

The Little Susitna River and the stocked terminal fishery at Eklutna Tailrace are the only Knik Arm streams open to the harvest of king salmon by regulation. The SEG for the Little Susitna River of 2,100-3,900 king salmon as assessed by weir and 900-1,800 fish as assessed by aerial survey. The majority of the fish counted through the weir this season were counted at night using video, even during a period of poor water visibility that lasted through the entire month of June. The weir was inundated by high flows for about a week during mid-June. However, it is not thought many fish escaped the weir undetected. The SEG was met by June 24, 2019, with a final count of 3,666 king salmon. The fishery was restored to special regulation on June 26. However, as the bulk of the run had already passed upstream of the weir, fishing success was low. The aerial survey was not conducted this year due to cloudy water conditions. Fishing at the Eklutna Tailrace was fair throughout the season.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2019, closed king salmon fishing in the Little Susitna River drainage. In addition, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure was allowed in the waters normally open to king salmon fishing in the Little Susitna River drainage. Sport fishing for other species was allowed seven days per week from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. each day.
- On June 26, 2019, the Little Susitna River reopened to king salmon fishing.



West Cook Inlet

Sport fisheries on the Chuitna, Theodore, Lewis, and the Beluga rivers drainages are closed by regulation. The SEGs on the Theodore and Lewis rivers were not attained in 2019. The SEG for the Chuitna River was met.



Susitna Tributaries

Weirs are operated to count sockeye salmon escapement into three lakes: Judd Lake (Talachulitna River) and Chelatna Lake (Lake Creek) on the Yentna River drainage and Larson Lake (Larson Creek) on the Susitna River. Sport fisheries on the Talachulitna River and Lake Creek are too far downstream of the weirs for timely inseason management. On Larson Creek, the sport fishery is in relatively close proximity to the weir, allowing for timely inseason management of the fishery. The SEGs for Chelatna and Judd lakes were attained. The Larson Creek SEG of 15,000-35,000 sockeye salmon was missed. Water level on Larson Creek was extremely low due to widespread drought conditions throughout Southcentral Alaska during July and August. Temperatures taken at the weir were relatively high. The result was low fish passage and an inability to effectively assess run strength using the weir. It became apparent that fish holding in the mouth area were susceptible to the sport fishery longer than a more typical water level year. Given this situation and a low cumulative count on August 10, 2019, the sport fishery was closed. The final count at Larson Creek was 9,522 sockeye salmon. Near the end of the season, staff surveyed the creek downstream of the weir to the creek's confluence with the Talkeetna River and counted 3,200 dead fish in prespawning condition.

Management Actions

- On August 10, 2019, sport fishing for all salmon species closed in the Larson Creek drainage and within a one-quarter mile radius of its confluence with the Talkeetna River.

Knik Arm

A weir is operated on Fish Creek to assess escapement and as a tool to manage the personal use dip net fishery. The SEG for the Fish Creek is 15,000-45,000 sockeye salmon. A personal use dip net fishery may open based upon an escapement projection in excess of 35,000 fish between July 15 and July 31. A final count of 76,264 fish was above the SEG range.

Management Actions

- On July 26, 2019, the Fish Creek Personal Use Dip Net Fishery was opened for all salmon species, except king salmon, through July 31.
- On August 9, 2019, the salmon limits, excepted king salmon, were increased to six fish per day and in possession in all waters of Fish Creek opened to salmon fishing. However, only two fish per day and possession may be coho salmon. In addition, sport fishing was allowed seven days per week from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. each day.



Susitna Tributaries

The final coho salmon count on the Deshka River was 10,445 fish (SEG 10,200-24,100). Extreme water temperatures as high as 28 °C were experienced on the Deshka River this season due to



widespread drought conditions throughout Southcentral Alaska during July and August. Water levels were record low in many area streams. The combination of high stream temperatures and low water were the likely cause of prespawning mortalities observed in Bachatana Slough and Montana Bill Creek in the West Cook Inlet area and other streams in the Matsu area, including Cottonwood, Wasilla, and Jim creeks. No mortalities were observed on the Deshka River and a reasonable explanation is that enough cold water refugia exists along the Deshka mainstem from muskeg seepages. However, as is common on the Deshka River under similar, but usually less severe stream conditions, stream conditions resulted in the stalling of coho salmon passage for about three weeks during historical peak of the sport fishery. The cumulative weir count held at around 3,000 fish during this period and eventually the sport fishery was closed due to the low count and uncertainty in numbers holding near the mouth. As waters gradually began to rise late in August, fish holding in the Susitna River near the Deshka River mouth began to move upstream. About 6,500 salmon passed the weir over about a 10-day period at the close of the season, the goal was achieved on September 5, 2019. Throughout the season, anglers reported consistent slow fishing success across the Susitna and Yentna rivers drainages, with some good days in which limits were taken.

Management Actions

- On August 21, 2019, coho salmon fishing was closed in the Deshka River drainage including all waters within a one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River. In addition, the use of bait was prohibited.

Knik Arm

Weirs were operated on the Little Susitna River, Fish Creek, and Jim Creek. The SEG on the Little Susitna River is 10,100-17,700 fish. Widespread drought across Southcentral Alaska during July and August resulted low water and high stream temperatures throughout the Knik Arm area. Prespawning mortalities were observed by staff. Several hundred coho salmon in Wasilla Creek and less than 100 coho salmon in Jim Creek were observed dead prior to spawning, likely a direct result of warm water and low stream conditions. Record low water conditions in the Little Susitna River created a situation where coho salmon began holding in pools suitable for refugia throughout the lower 30 miles of river and upstream migration all but ceased beginning around August 10, 2019. The sport fishery was eventually closed on August 21, due to a low cumulative count and uncertainty in what remained of the run downstream of the weir and inlet. Migration had not resumed prior to the weir being pulled on August 3 as waters remained very low. The final count of 4,228 fish is considered to be incomplete. The Fish Creek SEG of 1,200-4,400 coho salmon was met August 12 and the final weir count was 3,025 fish. At Jim Creek, prespawning mortalities due to warm water conditions were observed early in the season. The SEG for Jim Creek of 450-1,400 coho salmon is assessed post season by a foot survey of McRoberts Creek, a small spawning tributary within the Jim Creek system. The survey conducted on September 26 counted 162 coho salmon, below the goal. A count of 632 fish on Upper Jim Creek, another spawning tributary, was average. A total of 3,736 coho salmon were counted through the weir. The low count on McRoberts Creek may, at least in part, be due to the late arrival of fish to Jim Creek that may not have migrated into the index area by the time of the survey. Fishing was reported to be average and good early in the season through about the first week of August. Fishing success became slow throughout the Knik Arm area during the rest of the season.

Management Actions

- On August 14, 2019, the use of bait was prohibited on the Little Susitna River.



- On August 21, 2019, coho salmon fish was closed on the Little Susitna River and the use of bait continued to be restricted.

West Cook Inlet

Coho salmon escapement is not monitored on West Cook Inlet area streams and ADF&G must rely on trends in harvest and angler effort taken from the Statewide Harvest Survey and reports from anglers and guides when assessing these stocks. The combination of high stream temperatures and low water were the likely cause of prespawning mortalities observed in Bachatana Slough and Montana Bill Creek in the West Cook Inlet area. Several thousand coho salmon were reported dead in these shallow streams, likely a direct result of low water and high stream temperatures. In general reports from anglers fishing West Cook Inlet streams was good throughout the season.

- No management actions were implemented during the 2019 sport fishery season.

Northern Kenai Peninsula Management Area



Kenai River - Early Run

The outlook for the early-run of Kenai River king salmon in 2019 was below average, with a large fish (>75 cm mid eye to tail fork length or approximately >34 inches in total length) forecast of 3,168 fish. The 2019 forecasted total run of large king salmon was less than the Optimal Escapement Goal (OEG) of 3,900-6,600 fish which prevented the fishery from opening without restrictions. The run-timing to the river mile 14 sonar for large king salmon was on time at the quarter point of June 4, 2019, and one day early on June 10 at the average mid-point of June 11. The estimated preliminary total in-river run of 4,188 fish was larger than the forecast but remained well below the historical average.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2019, prohibited the retention of early-run king salmon in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake through June 30. The retention of king salmon continued to be prohibited from July 1 through July 31, from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek upstream to the outlet of Skilak lake. In addition, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure was allowed in waters restricted to catch-and-release.
- On July 4, 2019, king salmon fishing reopened in the Kenai River from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream of the mouth of Slikok Creek upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake to the retention of king salmon under general regulations.



Inseason Sampling

- Netting
 - Approximately 59% were ≥ 750 mm in total length.
 - Sex ratio all-sized king salmon was 33% male and 67% female.
 - About 91% of king salmon sampled were two to five ocean fish (14% 700 mm-899 mm, 65% 500 mm-699 mm, 12% 900 mm-1,099 mm, and 1% > 1100 mm).
- Harvest
 - Zero king salmon were harvested in the early-run sport fishery.

Table 1. Summary of preliminary catch, harvest, and escapement, Kenai River early-run king salmon (≥ 750 mm) fishery, 2019.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Escapement Goal Range | 3,900-6,600 large king salmon (≥ 750 mm) |
| Total Catch ^a | 79 |
| Total Harvest ^a | Below sonar = 0; Above sonar = 0; Total = 0 |
| Sonar Estimate In-River | 4,186 |
| Preliminary Escapement | Approximately 4,173 |

^aLower River (below Soldotna Bridge).

Kenai River - Late Run

The outlook for the late-run of Kenai River king salmon in 2019 was well below average, with a large king salmon (> 75 cm mid eye to tail fork length) forecast of approximately 21,746 fish. Although the forecasted total run of large fish approximated the mid-point of the large fish Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) of 13,500-27,000 fish, historical harvest data indicated the SEG would not be met without restricting fisheries. Based on the estimated mean of the mid-point for 2013-2018 runs of July 26, the 2019 run was four days early. The preliminary inseason estimate of the total run of large king salmon is 14,020 fish. The preliminary escapement estimate is 11,671 large king salmon.

Management Actions

- On July 1, 2019, bait was prohibited on the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek. Anglers were allowed to harvest king salmon on the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek. This restriction was in conjunction with the Kenai River early-run king salmon sport fishing restrictions prohibiting the retention of king salmon of any size from ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek, upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake.

Inseason Sampling

- Netting
 - Approximately 60% were ≥ 750 mm in total length.
 - Sex ratios for fish > 500 mm was 35% female and 65% male.
 - About 94% of king salmon sampled were two- to five- ocean fish (22% 500 mm-699 mm, 44% 700 mm-899 mm, 27% 900 mm-1,099 mm, and 1% > 1100 mm).
- Harvest
 - 47% of the harvest was comprised of large (≥ 750 mm) king salmon.
 - 49% of the king salmon ≥ 750 mm harvested were female.



Table 1. Summary of preliminary catch, harvest, and escapement, Kenai River late-run king salmon (≥ 750 mm) fishery, 2019.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Escapement Goal Range | 13,500-27,000 large king salmon (≥ 750 mm) |
| Total Catch ^a | 890 |
| Total Harvest ^a | Below sonar = 265; Above sonar = 507; Total = 772 |
| Sonar Estimate In-River | 11,868 |
| Preliminary Escapement | Approximately 11,671 |

^a Lower River (below Soldotna Bridge).

Kasilof River

This spring, approximately 126,600 king salmon smolt were successfully stocked into Crooked Creek to augment natural production and enhance recreational fishing opportunity in the Kasilof River. The natural component of the Crooked Creek early-run king salmon return is managed to achieve SEG of 650-1,700 king salmon. The estimated escapement of wild (naturally-produced) king salmon was 1,444 fish. The egg take goal for future stocking of Crooked Creek was 32 pairs of naturally-produced king salmon of which 45 pairs were spawned in 2019.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2019, restricted the early-run king salmon limits to one hatchery fish, 20 inches or greater in length, in the Kasilof River drainage. The retention of naturally-produced king salmon was prohibited. In addition, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure was allowed.
- On July 1, 2019, bait and multiple hooks were prohibited in the Kasilof River drainage.



Kenai River

The Upper Cook Inlet sockeye salmon forecast projected a total run of 6.0 million fish: 3.8 million fish in the Kenai River, 873,000 fish in the Kasilof River, with the remaining 1.3 million fish comprised of Susitna River and unmonitored systems. Based on the preseason forecast, the sockeye salmon run was managed on the middle tier for runs of 2.3-4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, with an inriver goal of 1.0-1.3 million sockeye salmon. On July 26, 2019, ADF&G projected the total Kenai River sockeye salmon run would be between 2.3-4.6 million fish. The preliminary inriver Kenai River sonar passage estimate was 1,849,054 sockeye salmon.

Management Actions

- On July 28, 2019, the sockeye salmon limits were increased to six fish per day and twelve fish in possession from the mouth of the Kenai River to Skilak Lake.

Russian River - Early Run

The escapement goal for Russian River early-run sockeye salmon is a Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) of 22,000-44,000 fish. The weir count on July 14, 2019, was 125,942 sockeye salmon, significantly exceeding the upper end of the BEG.



Management Actions

- On June 12, 2019, the Russian River Sanctuary area opened early for sport fishing.
- On June 14, 2019, the sockeye salmon limits were increased to six fish per day and twelve fish in possession for the Russian River and a section of the mainstem Upper Kenai River. The section of the mainstem Upper Kenai River includes the area that extends from Skilak Lake upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately 300 yards upstream of the public boat launch at Sportsman’s Landing (this includes the Russian River Sanctuary Area) and the Russian River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G marker located approximately 600 yards downstream from the Russian River Falls.
- On June 19, 2019, the sockeye salmon limits were increased to nine fish per day and eighteen fish in possession for the Russian River and a section of the mainstem Upper Kenai River. The section of the mainstem Upper Kenai River includes the area that extends from Skilak Lake upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately 300 yards upstream of the public boat launch at Sportsman’s Landing (this includes the Russian River Sanctuary Area) and the Russian River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G marker located approximately 600 yards downstream from the Russian River Falls.

Russian River - Late Run

The escapement goal for Russian River late-run sockeye salmon is a SEG of 30,000-110,000 fish. Due to the Swan Lake Fire, the Russian River field camp and weir was evacuated and subsequently pulled on August 18, 2019. The weir count on August 18 at approximately 12:00 p.m. was 64,585 sockeye salmon.

Management Actions

- No management actions were implemented during the 2019 sport fishery season.

Kasilof River

The forecast for Kasilof River sockeye salmon was 873,000 fish. Kasilof sockeye salmon are managed for a BEG of 160,000-340,000 salmon, and an OEG of 160,000-390,000 fish. The sockeye salmon sonar quit enumerating salmon passage on August 12, 2019, with a preliminary estimate of 378,416 fish.

Management Actions

- On July 24, 2019, the sockeye salmon limits were increased to six fish per day and twelve fish in possession; however, no more than two fish per day and in possession could be coho salmon, in all portions of the Kasilof River open to salmon fishing.



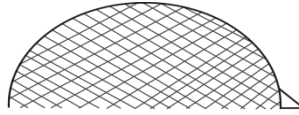
Kenai River

Freshwater guide logbook reports were discontinued in 2019. These guide logbook reports were used in the past to gauge Kenai River coho salmon sport catch, harvest, and angler effort. Angler reports indicate that coho salmon were showing up in the harvest during the last week of July and catches were reported as good through August and slowed in September.



Management Actions

- On August 6, 2019, bait and multiple hooks were prohibited in the in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to Skilak Lake to minimize incidental catch of late-run king salmon.



Personal Use Dip Net Fisheries

Kasilof River and Kenai River

Final results from the 2019 season have not been compiled, but preliminary information indicates 21,180 Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use permits were issued electronically. The number of paper permits and total permits issued is not yet known. Typically, about 80% of the Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use permits have some Kenai River harvest reported on them. The Kasilof River dipnet fishery was open by regulation June 25-August 7 with expanded fishing area allowed on July 24, 2019. The Kenai River dipnet fishery opened by regulation on July 10 and personal use fisherman were allowed to fish 24 hours a day beginning on July 27, 2019.

Harvest Reports

- The total number of Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use permits issued for the 2019 season is not yet known. Nonetheless, 8,241 Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use permits have been returned to date via online reporting, an initial return rate of 39%. A reminder letter will be mailed to permit holders who have not yet returned their harvest record. Typically, permit returns from the reminder letters brings the total permit returns to approximately 83%. Harvest data will be keypunched by the end of October and estimates of total harvest will be available in January 2020.

Management Actions

- On July 10, 2019, the retention of king salmon in the Kenai River personal use fishery was prohibited.
- On July 24, 2019, the Kasilof River dipnetting area was expanded. Dipnetting from the shore was allowed from ADF&G markers on Cook Inlet beaches upstream to the Sterling Highway Bridge and boat dipnetting was allowed from ADF&G markers located on Cook Inlet beaches upstream to ADF&G markers at approximately river mile 3 of the Kasilof River.
- On July 27, 2019, the Kenai River personal use fishery was opened 24 hours per day.

Lower Cook Inlet Management Area



Anchor River

The 2019 preseason inriver forecast of 5,356 king salmon fell within the Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) of 3,800-7,600 fish; however, the second-poorest escapement ever recorded in 2018 prompted preseason restrictions to the sport fishery. King salmon escapement was monitored on the South and North forks of Anchor River beginning in early-May and continued through early-August. The SEG



was met with a preliminary escapement estimate of 5,691 fish. The cumulative run-timing to both forks (June 23) was 11 days late compared to the average mid-point of June 14. The sport fishery occurred on three three-day weekends but was closed on Wednesdays and gear was restricted to one unbaited single-hook, artificial lure throughout the season.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective April 1, 2019, prohibited fishing for king salmon in the Anchor River on the first and fifth opening weekend and the five Wednesday openings in May and June 2019.
 - Closure dates were: May 18-20, May 22, May 29, June 5, June 12, June 15-17, and June 19.
 - Open dates were: May 25-27, June 1-3, and June 8-10.
- A preseason emergency order effective April 1, 2019, restricted fishing gear to one, unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure in the Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River drainages.
- A preseason emergency order effective April 1, 2019, combined the annual limit of two king salmon between the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, and all saltwaters between Bluff Point and the Ninilchik River.

Ninilchik River

No preseason forecast was estimated for the 2019 wild Ninilchik River king salmon run. Hatchery king salmon are stocked in the Ninilchik River to support the inriver sport fishery. The fishery occurred with preseason restrictions that limited gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure and prohibited the retention of wild king salmon. The harvest of hatchery king salmon was allowed during both the three 3-day weekends and the hatchery only season.

King salmon escapement was fully enumerated just above the fishery for the first time at approximately two miles. An instream video weir operated from mid-May to early-August at this location, and the count was 1,664 wild king salmon and 1,719 hatchery-reared king salmon. The mid-point of the wild and hatchery-reared runs to the lower weir were within one week of each other, on June 18, 2019, and June 23, respectively.

The broodstock collection weir, located approximately five miles upstream from the mouth, was still used to monitor escapement in regards to meeting the current SEG of 750-1,300 wild king salmon. The broodstock collection weir location also used instream video and was operated from mid-May through mid-August. The wild weir count was 1,296 king salmon and the hatchery-reared weir count was 1,171 king salmon. After accounting for the removal of broodstock, the escapement was 1,185 wild king salmon, which met the SEG. Based on weir counts at both locations, 78% of the wild king salmon and 68% of the hatchery-reared king salmon counted through the lower weir also reached the broodstock collection weir.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective April 1, 2019, reduced the king salmon limits to one hatchery king salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, in the Ninilchik River drainage.
- A preseason emergency order effective April 1, 2019, restricted fishing gear to one, unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure in the Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River drainages.



- A preseason emergency order effective April 1, 2019, combined the annual limit of two king salmon between the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, and all saltwaters between Bluff Point and the Ninilchik River.

Deep Creek

No preseason forecast was estimated for the 2019 Deep Creek king salmon run. The fishery began with preseason restrictions based on management actions for the Anchor River and forecasted poor runs throughout Cook Inlet. Deep Creek has a Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) of 350 king salmon and was assessed post-season via a single aerial survey. The 2019 survey occurred on July 22, and 751 king salmon were counted, which achieved the SEG. The 2019 king salmon escapement was also fully enumerated using an ARIS sonar and underwater video weir located approximately 2.5 miles upstream from the mouth. The preliminary escapement estimate is 3,495 king salmon with the mid-point of the run on June 27.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective April 1, 2019, restricted fishing gear to one, unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure in the Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River drainages.
- A preseason emergency order effective April 1, 2019, combined the annual limit of two king salmon between the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, and all saltwaters between Bluff Point and the Ninilchik River.

Marine Fisheries

Sport fishing for king salmon in Cook Inlet was popular in both the Winter (September 1-March 31) and the Summer (April 1-August 31) fisheries. The summer fishery in north of Bluff Point began with preseason restrictions to protect king salmon returning to Cook Inlet drainages. Statewide Harvest Survey harvest estimates for these fisheries and will not be available until 2020. In general, fishing was good and angler effort was high in the fall months of the winter fishery. Effort was low in Upper Cook Inlet during the summer fishery.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective April 1, 2019, combined the annual limit of two king salmon between the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, and all saltwaters between Bluff Point and the Ninilchik River.

Razor Clams

Eastside

All Eastside Cook Inlet beaches remained closed to sport and personal use clamming in 2019 due to the continued historical low abundances of mature-sized razor clams at Clam Gulch and Ninilchik. The affected area runs from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit. Little recruitment of new juvenile clams was detected at the Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beaches during the spring abundance surveys. Abundance of juvenile clams is still well above historical average and are expected to start recruiting to the adult size in 2020.



Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective January 1, 2019, closed all Eastside Cook Inlet beaches to clamming for all species from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit for 2019.

Westside

The Westside Cook Inlets beaches remained open to commercial, sport, and personal use clamming in 2019. Harvest estimates for the sport fishery are not available yet.

Management Actions

- No management actions were implemented during the 2019 sport fishery season.



Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon

In 2019, the stocking goals were met for Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon (NDFL) on the Homer Spit with approximately 315,000 king salmon smolt and 120,000 coho salmon smolt. This year's king salmon stocking was a 30% increase over recent annual stockings. Statewide Harvest Survey estimates harvest for these fisheries and will not be available until 2020. Overall, the king salmon fishery was likely below-average harvest and the coho salmon fishery was likely average.

Management Actions

- On July 4, 2019, snagging was allowed in the NDFL from July 4-7 to harvest the remainder of the king salmon milling in the lagoon prior to coho salmon returning.
- No management actions were implemented during the 2019 coho salmon sport fishery season.



China Poot Creek

The China Poot Creek personal use dip net fishery does not require a permit for participation so there is no harvest and effort data available for 2019. Participants reported consistently fair to good sockeye salmon harvest opportunity.

Management Actions

- No management actions were implemented during the 2019 personal use fishery season.



Cook Inlet Tanner Crab

The 2018-2019 season occurred from October 1, 2018, through February 28, 2019. The preliminary combined harvest was 8,319 based on permit-reported harvest. The Kachemak Bay Tanner crab trawl survey was conducted in late-May 2019. The survey estimated an abundance of 273,511 legal male



Tanner crab which is a 23% increase from 2018. The 2018-2019 sport and subsistence fisheries are scheduled to open on October 1, 2019. Permits are only available through ADF&Gs online store.

Management Actions

- No management actions were implemented during the 2018-2019 tanner crab fishery season



Table 1 – Select Southcentral Region Salmon Escapement Goals and Escapements for king salmon, 2010 to 2019 (preliminary).

| System | 2019 Goal Range | | Type | Initial Year | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | Preliminary 2019 |
|--|-------------------------|---------|--------|--------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|----------------|---------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Lower | Upper | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| KING SALMON | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Bristol Bay</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nushagak River | 55,000 | 120,000 | SEG | 2013 | 56,088 | 102,258 | 167,618 | 107,602 | 70,482 | 98,019 | 125,368 | 56,961 | 97,239 | 47,882 |
| Alagnak River | 2,700 | | LB SEG | 2007 | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | 917 | 1,283 | 435 | NS | NS |
| <i>Kodiak/Alaska Peninsula</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Karluk River | 3,000 | 6,000 | BEG | 2011 | 2,917 | 3,420 | 3,197 | 1,824 | 1,182 | 2,777 | 3,434 | 2,600 | 3,155 | 3,898 |
| Ayakulik River | 4,800 | 8,400 | BEG | 2017 | 5,197 | 4,251 | 4,556 | 2,304 | 789 | 2,392 | 4,594 | 3,712 | 2,149 | 1,948 |
| Chignik River | 1,300 | 2,700 | BEG | 2002 | 3,845 | 2,490 | 1,404 | 1,185 | 2,895 | 2,041 | 1,843 | 1,137 | 825 | 1,517 |
| Nelson River | 2,400 | 4,400 | BEG | 2004 | 2,767 | 1,704 | 1,192 | 1,421 | 3,801 | 2,440 | 4,618 | 1,502 | 5,022 | 11,653 |
| <i>Upper Cook Inlet</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Alexander Creek | 2,100 | 6,000 | SEG | 2002 | 177 | 343 | 181 | 588 | 911 | 1,117 | 754 | 170 | 296 | 1,297 |
| Campbell Creek | 380 | | LB SEG | 2011 | 290 | 260 | NS | NS | 274 | 654 | 544 | 475 | 287 | 393 |
| Chuitna River | 1,200 | 2,900 | SEG | 2002 | 735 | 719 | 502 | 1,690 | 1,398 | 1,965 | 1,372 | 235 | 939 | 2,115 |
| Chulitna River | 1,800 | 5,100 | SEG | 2002 | 1,052 | 1,875 | 667 | 1,262 | 1,011 | 3,137 | 1,151 | NC | 1125 | 2,765 |
| Clear (Chumilna) Creek | 950 | 3,400 | SEG | 2002 | 903 | 512 | 1,177 | 1,471 | 1,390 | 1,205 | NS | 780 | 940 | 1,511 |
| Crooked Creek | 650 | 1,700 | SEG | 2002 | 1,088 | 654 | 631 | 1,103 | 1,411 | 1,459 | 1,747 | 911 | 714 | 1,444 |
| Deshka River | 13,000 | 28,000 | SEG | 2011 | 18,594 | 19,026 | 14,010 | 18,531 | 16,335 | 24,316 | 22,874 | 11,383 | 8,544 | 9,711 |
| Goose Creek | 250 | 650 | SEG | 2002 | 76 | 80 | 57 | 62 | 232 | NC | NC | 148 | 90 | NC |
| Kenai River - Early Run (all fish) | eliminated ^a | | | 2017 | 6,393 | 8,448 | 5,044 | 2,148 | 5,311 | 6,190 | 9,177 | | | |
| Kenai River - Early Run (large fish) | 3,900 | 6,600 | OEG | 2017 | | | | | | | | 6,553 | 3,000 | 4,173 |
| | 2,800 | 5,600 | SEG | 2017 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kenai River - Late Run (all fish) | eliminated | | | 2017 | 16,210 | 19,680 | 27,710 | 15,395 | 16,263 | 22,626 | 18,790 | | | |
| Kenai River - Late Run (large fish) | 13,500 | 27,000 | SEG | 2017 | | | | | | | | 20,731 | 16,957 | 11,671 |
| Lake Creek | 2,500 | 7,100 | SEG | 2002 | 1,617 | 2,563 | 2,366 | 3,655 | 3,506 | 4,686 | 3,588 | 1,601 | 1,767 | 2,692 |
| Lewis River | 250 | 800 | SEG | 2002 | 56 | 92 | 107 | 61 | 61 | 5 ^b | 0 | 0 ^b | 0 | 0 ^b |
| Little Susitna River (Aerial) ^c | 900 | 1,800 | SEG | 2002 | 589 | 887 | 1,154 | 1,651 | 1,759 | 1,507 | 1,622 | 1,192 | 530 | NC |
| Little Susitna River (weir) | 2,300 | 3,900 | SEG | 2017 | | | | | | | | 2,531 | 549 ^c | 3,666 |
| Little Willow Creek | 450 | 1,800 | SEG | 2002 | 468 | 713 | 494 | 858 | 684 | 788 | 675 | 840 | 280 | 631 |
| Montana Creek | 1,100 | 3,100 | SEG | 2002 | 755 | 494 | 416 | 1,304 | 953 | 1,416 | 692 | 603 | 473 | 789 |
| Peters Creek | 1,000 | 2,600 | SEG | 2002 | NC | 1,103 | 459 | 1,643 | 1,443 | 1,514 | 1,122 | 307 | 1674 | 1,209 |
| Prairie Creek | 3,100 | 9,200 | SEG | 2002 | 3,022 | 2,038 | 1,185 | 3,304 | 2,812 | 3,290 | 1,853 | 1,930 | 1,194 | 2,371 |
| Sheep Creek | 600 | 1,200 | SEG | 2002 | NC | 350 | 363 | NC | 262 | NC | NC | NC | 334 | NC |
| Talachulitna River | 2,200 | 5,000 | SEG | 2002 | 1,499 | 1,368 | 847 | 2,285 | 2,256 | 2,582 | 4,295 | 1,087 | 1483 | 3,225 |
| Theodore River | 500 | 1,700 | SEG | 2002 | 202 | 327 | 179 | 476 | 312 | 426 | 68 | 21 | 18 | 201 |
| Willow Creek | 1,600 | 2,800 | SEG | 2002 | 1,173 | 1,061 | 756 | 1,752 | 1,335 | 2,046 | 1,814 | 1,329 | 411 | 897 |
| <i>Lower Cook Inlet</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Anchor River | 3,800 | 7,600 | SEG | 2017 | 4,449 | 3,545 | 4,509 | 4,388 | 2,497 | 10,241 | 7,146 | 5,796 | 3,162 | 5,691 |
| Deep Creek | 350 | | LB SEG | 2017 | 387 | 696 | 447 | 475 | 601 | 535 | NS | 753 | 182 | 751 |
| Ninilchik River | 750 | 1,300 | SEG | 2017 | 605 | 668 | 555 | 571 | 891 | 874 | 572 | 855 | 979 | 1,185 |

Note: NA = data not available; NC = no count; NS = no survey; LB SEG = lower-bound SEG.
^a Kenai River early-run Chinook salmon (all fish) SEG was eliminated and OEG was revised by BOF.
^b Lewis River mouth naturally obstructed.
^c Little Susitna River Chinook salmon aerial survey goal is only used to assess escapement if weir count is not available.



Table 2 – Select Southcentral Region Salmon Escapement Goals and Escapements for sockeye and coho salmon, 2010 to 2019 (preliminary).

| System | 2019 Goal Range | | Type | Initial Year | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | Preliminary |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| | Lower | Upper | | | | | | | | | | | | 2019 |
| COHO SALMON | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Kodiak/Alaska Peninsula</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Buskin River | 4,700 | 9,600 | BEG | 2014 | 6,239 | 5,298 | 4,906 | 4,401 | 7,345 | 3,363 | 2,513 | 5,559 | 1,066 | NA |
| Olds River | 1,000 | | LB SEG | 2011 | NA | 1,003 | 624 | 2,145 | 1,320 | 1,357 | 1,634 | 10,54 | 1,000 | NA |
| American River | 400 | | LB SEG | 2011 | NA | 1,061 | 427 | 841 | 1,595 | 530 | 500 | 410 | 300 | NA |
| Pasagshak River | 1,200 | | LB SEG | 2011 | 1,971 | 1,083 | 3,132 | 1,648 | 4,934 | 1,790 | 667 | 701 | 1,200 | NA |
| <i>Upper Cook Inlet</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fish Creek (Knik) | 1,200 | 4,400 | SEG | 2011 | 6,977 | 1,428 ^d | 1,237 | 7,593 ^d | 10,283 | 7,912 | 2,484 | 8,966 | 5,022 | 3,025 |
| Jim Creek | 450 | 1,400 | SEG | 2014 | 242 | 229 | 213 | 663 | 122 | 571 | 106 | 5,646 | 758 | 162 |
| Little Susitna River | 10,100 | 17,700 | SEG | 2002 | 9,214 | 4,826 ^d | 6,779 | 13,583 | 24,211 ^e | 12,756 | 10,049 | 17,781 | 7,583 | 4,229 |
| Deshka River | 10,200 | 24,100 | SEG | 2017 | | | | | | | | 36,869 | 12,962 | 10,445 |
| SOCKEYE SALMON | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Bristol Bay</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kvichak River ^f | 2,000,000 | 10,000,000 | SEG | 2010 | 4,207,410 | 2,264,352 | 4,164,444 | 2,088,576 | 4,458,540 | 7,341,612 | 4,462,728 | 3,163,404 | 4,398,708 | 2,371,242 |
| Alagnak River (Tower) ^g | 320,000 | | LB SEG | 2007 | 1,187,730 | 883,794 | 861,747 | 1,095,950 | 200,524 | 5,770,650 | NA | 2,041,825 | 1,581,426 | 820,458 |
| Alagnak River (Aerial) ^h | 125,000 | | LB SEG | 2016 | | | | | | | 696,400 | 629,200 | | |
| Naknek River | 800,000 | 2,000,000 | SEG ⁱ | 2015 | 1,463,928 | 1,177,074 | 900,312 | 938,160 | 1,474,428 | 1,920,954 | 1,691,910 | 1,899,972 | 2,221,152 | 2,911,470 |
| Egegik River | 800,000 | 2,000,000 | SEG | 2015 | 927,054 | 961,200 | 1,233,900 | 1,113,630 | 1,382,466 | 2,160,792 | 1,837,260 | 2,600,982 | 1,608,354 | 2,340,210 |
| Ugashik River | 500,000 | 1,400,000 | SEG | 2015 | 830,886 | 1,029,853 | 670,578 | 898,110 | 640,158 | 1,564,638 | 1,635,270 | 1,186,446 | 1,167,792 | 1,547,748 |
| Wood River | 700,000 | 1,800,000 | SEG | 2015 | 1,804,344 | 1,098,006 | 764,202 | 1,183,348 | 2,764,614 | 1,941,474 | 1,309,707 | 4,274,224 | 7,507,254 | 2,073,276 |
| Igushik River | 150,000 | 400,000 | SEG | 2015 | 518,040 | 421,380 | 193,770 | 387,036 | 340,590 | 651,172 | 469,230 | 578,700 | 1,581,426 | 256,074 |
| Nushagak River | 260,000 | 760,000 | OEG | 2012 | 468,696 | 428,191 | 432,438 | 894,172 | 618,477 | 796,684 | 680,513 | 2,852,308 | 1,164,701 | 709,349 |
| <i>Kodiak/Alaska Peninsula</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Buskin River | 5,000 | 8,000 | BEG | 2011 | 9,800 | 11,982 | 8,565 | 16,189 | 13,976 | 8,719 | 11,584 | 7,214 | 4,281 | 12,297 |
| Afognak River | 20,000 | 50,000 | BEG | 2005 | 52,255 | 49,193 | 41,553 | 42,153 | 36,345 | 38,151 | 33,167 | 22,151 | 17,601 | 26,817 |
| Saltery River | 15,000 | 35,000 | BEG | 2011 | 24,102 | 27,803 | 25,155 | 35,939 | 29,047 | 42,468 | 57,867 | 39,315 | 22,845 | 22,183 |
| Pasagshak River | 3,000 | | lower-bound SEG | 2011 | 4,800 | 8,100 | 2,600 | 9,750 | 1,582 | 2,077 | 7,053 | 11,021 | 2,019 | 4,537 |
| Karluk River Early Run | 150,000 | 250,000 | BEG | 2014 | 71,453 | 87,049 | 188,085 | 234,880 | 252,097 | 260,097 | 164,760 | 242,599 | 205,054 | 186,510 |
| Ayakulik River | 140,000 | 280,000 | SEG | 2011 | 201,933 | 177,480 | 213,501 | 214,969 | 210,040 | 218,178 | 182,589 | 204,497 | 266,333 | 279,639 |
| Fraser River | 75,000 | 170,000 | BEG | 2008 | 94,680 | 134,642 | 148,884 | 136,059 | 200,296 | 219,093 | 122,585 | 129,227 | 201,161 | 169,627 |
| <i>Upper Cook Inlet</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fish Creek (Knik) | 15,000 | 45,000 | SEG | 2017 | 126,836 | 66,678 | 18,813 | 18,912 | 43,915 | 102,309 | 46,202 | 61,469 | 71,556 | 76,031 |
| Kasilof River | 160,000 | 390,000 | OEG | 2011 | 293,765 | 243,767 | 372,523 | 487,700 | 438,238 | 470,677 | 239,981 | 358,724 | 394,288 | 378,416 |
| Kenai River ^j | OEG eliminated | | | 2017 | 1,038,302 | 1,280,733 | 1,212,921 | 980,208 | 1,218,342 | 1,400,047 | 1,120,717 | | | |
| | 700,000 | 1,200,000 | SEG | 2011 | | | | | | | | 1,055,091 | NA | 1,849,054 |
| Russian River - Early Run | 22,000 | 42,000 | BEG | 2011 | 27,074 | 29,129 | 24,115 | 35,776 | 44,920 | 50,226 | 38,739 | 37,123 | 44,110 | 125,942 |
| Russian River - Late Run | 30,000 | 110,000 | SEG | 2005 | 38,848 | 41,529 | 54,911 | 31,364 | 52,277 | 46,223 | 37,837 | 45,012 | 71,052 | 64,585k |
| Chelatna Lake | 20,000 | 45,000 | SEG | 2017 | 37,784 | 70,353 | 36,577 | 70,555 | 26,212 | 69,750 | 60,792 | 26,986 | 20,438 | 26,303 |
| Judd Lake | 15,000 | 40,000 | SEG | 2017 | 18,361 | 39,997 | 18,303 | 14,088 | 22,416 | 47,684 | NA | 35,731 | 30,844 | 44,145 |
| Larson Lake | 15,000 | 35,000 | SEG | 2017 | 20,324 | 12,413 | 16,708 | 21,821 | 12,040 | 23,214 | 14,333 | 31,866 | 23,444 | 9,699 |
| <i>Lower Cook Inlet</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| English Bay | 6,000 | 13,500 | SEG | 2002 | 12,253 | 9,920 | 3,444 | 10,891 | 7,832 | 6,290 | 7,673 | 20,751 | 18,083 | 24,044 |
| Delight Lake | 5,100 | 10,600 | SEG | 2017 | 23,775 | 20,190 | 10,887 | 5,961 | 22,289 | 3,220 | 5,110 | 5,380 | 13,428 | 17,410 |
| Desire Lake | 4,800 | 11,900 | SEG | 2017 | 6,320 | 9,630 | 8,840 | 8,400 | 11,480 | 2,830 | 6,740 | 9,450 | 9,840 | 9,040 |
| Bear Lake | 700 | 8,300 | SEG | 2002 | 8,880 | 9,608 | 8,031 | 8,999 | 9,090 | 9,560 | 9,011 | 9,207 | 10,568 | 9,185 |

Note: NA = data not available; NC = no count; NS = no survey; LB SEG = lower-bound SEG.

^d Incomplete counts for Fish Creek (Knik) coho salmon in 2011 and 2013 because weir was pulled before end of run.

^e Incomplete counts for Little Susitna River coho salmon in 2011 due to breach of weir and 2014 because weir was pulled before end of run.

^f Prior to 2010 Kvichak River had a pre-peak/peak-cycle escapement goal of 6-10 million sockeye and an off-peak escapement goal of 2-10 million fish.

^g 2009 to 2015 Alagnak River sockeye salmon escapements for Alagnak River (Tower) escapement goal are expanded aerial surveys.

^h Alagnak River sockeye salmon aerial survey-based escapement goal will be used in years that the Alagnak River tower is not operated.

ⁱ Naknek River has an OEG of 800,000-2,000,000 sockeye salmon when the Naknek River Special Harvest Area is open to fishing.

^j Kenai River sockeye salmon uses the best estimate of sport harvest upstream of sonar.

^k Weir evacuated August 18 (2 weeks early) due to swan lake fire, incomplete count

