

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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Date Issued: April 17, 2012
Time: 2:00 p.m.

2012 LOWER COOK INLET SALMON FISHERY OUTLOOK

General Information

This outlook is provided to assist the commercial salmon industry in planning for the 2012 season in the Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) Management Area. Preseason forecasts and previous five year commercial common property harvest averages are the basis for the information provided. Forecasts for LCI can be found on ADF&G's web site:

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

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) manages the Trail Lakes Hatchery, and the Tutka Lagoon Hatchery. Hatchery forecasts can be found through the CIAA web site:

<http://www.ciaa.net.org>

Inseason modifications to harvest projections, season opening dates, and strategies for weekly fishing periods may occur as fisheries develop. Hatchery Annual Management Plans (AMP) are used to provide guidelines to the department when managing enhanced fisheries to achieve cost recovery and broodstock objectives. CIAA AMPs underwent Regional Planning Team (RPT) review on April 6, and have been submitted for the commissioner's signature.

The forecasts for commercial common property fishery (CCPF) harvests by species are summarized in Table 1. The pink salmon forecast is derived from a spawner-recruit analysis, whereas run projections for other species and districts are based on average historical production. Projected returns of hatchery originated salmon are provided by CIAA. These projections of hatchery and wild stock returns will provide the basis for early season management in all districts with other management tools such as aerial survey estimates, weir counts, remote video monitoring and anticipated harvest being used as the season progresses.

Management of the LCI commercial salmon fisheries is based in the Homer area office. All emergency order announcements of fishery openings and closures are broadcast on VHF channel 10. As was done last year, fishery announcements from the Homer ADF&G office will routinely occur at 2:00 PM or earlier if possible. Announcement recordings will be available for commercial fisheries at 907-235-7307. Emergency order announcement information is also transmitted by FAX and email to all registered processors, local radio stations, news media and interested members of

the public. Harvest information and fisheries announcements are located on the ADF&G web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyarealci.salmon>

In addition, interested individuals may sign up to receive email announcements: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

The first announcement is anticipated to be released at 2:00 PM, Thursday, May 17 and concerns CIAA cost recovery harvest.

The preliminary CIAA annual corporate budget for fiscal year 2012 incorporates an overall cost recovery goal of 1.55 million dollars. Based upon current market conditions, and an average weight of 5.8 pounds per fish, CIAA anticipates harvesting approximately 145,000 sockeye salmon to achieve this goal. The majority of these will likely come from returns to Resurrection Bay releases where 216,000 sockeye salmon are anticipated to return. The remainder will be harvested from Tutka Bay Lagoon where 28,000 sockeye salmon are anticipated to return.

The overall commercial common property harvest from Lower Cook Inlet is anticipated to be 642,000 salmon. Of those, 104,000 sockeye salmon are anticipated to be of hatchery origin with the remaining salmon of wild origin. Total anticipated harvest by species is shown on Table 1.

Set Gillnet Fishery

The **Southern District** is anticipated to open for the 2012 season on June 1 at 6:00 AM for a 24-hour period. Following periods will likely be 48-hours in length beginning at 6:00 AM on Monday and Thursday as specified in regulation. The 5-year harvest averages for this area and gear are 160 Chinook, 700 coho and 1,700 chum salmon. The 5-year commercial harvest average for the wild sockeye salmon harvested in the English Bay Section is 1,943 fish. Harvests for 2012 are anticipated to be similar to the historic average. The department's preliminary pink salmon forecast estimated a harvestable surplus of 62,000 fish from the Southern District; which is to be shared by commercial set gillnet and purse seine permit holders. Sockeye salmon returns to subdistricts outside of the English Bay Section are comprised significantly of fish returning to hatchery release sites at Leisure Lake, Hazel Lake, and Tutka Bay Lagoon. Returns to Leisure and Hazel lakes from the 2009 release (2008 brood year) of 3.2 million sockeye salmon is anticipated to be 6,500 fish. Fishing time in the Port Graham Subdistrict will be closely linked to escapement levels to English Bay Lakes. Management priority will be to provide for the subsistence needs of those immediate communities at the level prescribed in the Customary and Traditional Use finding in 5 AAC 01.566(d) of 4,800 – 7,200 salmon. The Port Graham Subdistrict is anticipated to remain closed to commercial harvest until escapement is tracking to meet the overall spawning escapement goal (6,000 – 13,500) and hatchery broodstock goals (1,022 fish). In addition, CIAA anticipates 2,000 sockeye salmon will return to the waters just offshore of Port Graham where 112,000 smolt were released in 2009 (2008 brood year). These fish were taken from English Bay Lakes broodstock, reared and thermally marked at the Trail Lakes Hatchery, and released near the Port Graham Hatchery. Further information regarding previous year's hatchery releases and commercial harvests may be found in Annual Management Reports for this area at:

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

Purse Seine Fishery

Portions of the **Southern District** are anticipated to open to purse seine harvest in mid-June coinciding with enhanced returns to Leisure and Hazel lakes. Historically this return peaks from July 15-21 (week 29). CIAA anticipates a return of 6,500 sockeye salmon to Leisure and Hazel

lakes combined, as well as 28,000 sockeye salmon to Tutka Bay. All hatchery returns to Tutka Bay are anticipated to be used by CIAA for cost recovery and broodstock purposes.

Commercial fishing time in late July through early September will be correlated to pink salmon escapement at Humpy Creek, Seldovia Bay, Port Graham and other locations in this district. Given the present lack of pink salmon returns to hatcheries in Lower Cook Inlet since 2008, overall seine harvest for the Southern District is anticipated to be diminished. Harvest in 2011 was 512 pink salmon (and 9,900 sockeye salmon) by five purse seine permit holders.

Hatchery sockeye salmon returns to the **Eastern District** are forecast by CIAA to be 216,000 fish. This is greater than last year's forecasted return of 143,000 Trail Lakes Hatchery produced fish, where the actual estimated total return was 249,000 sockeye salmon. This district is anticipated to open on May 21 to cost recovery harvest with common property fishing occurring in early June after cost recovery is completed. Wild stock harvest from the Eastern District will be linked to aerial survey observations of wild sockeye and pink salmon escapement to Aialik Lake and other spawning systems in this district.

Portions of the **Outer District** are anticipated to open to commercial harvest in mid-July focusing on sockeye returns to McCarty Fjord lakes. Escapement to these systems is monitored by aerial survey (Desire and Delusion lakes) as well as a weir at the outlet of Delight Lake. In addition, waters in the western portion of this district are also anticipated to open at this time and later focusing on pink and chum salmon returns to Port Dick, as well as Windy and Rocky bays. There are numerous other smaller systems in the Nuka Passage area that are also monitored for returning chum and pink salmon. In the far west end of this district, systems with the latest return timing: Dogfish Bay, Chugach Bay and Port Chatham will be evaluated for chum and pink salmon harvest potential from August to early September. The previous 5-year harvest average for this district is 16,700 sockeye and 36,800 chum salmon. The department has forecast a harvestable surplus of 256,000 pink salmon from this district.

Portions of the **Kamishak Bay District** open by regulation to commercial harvest on June 1. Previous 5-year average harvests for this district (excluding the Kirchner Subdistrict) are 98,300 sockeye and 36,900 chum salmon with the majority of the sockeye salmon harvest attributed to Chenik Lake runs and the chum salmon harvest spread throughout the district. Due to poor pink salmon escapement in 2011, the department has forecast that there will not be a significant commercial harvest of pink salmon from this district. Returns of hatchery released sockeye to the Kirchner Lake outfall remote release site are anticipated to be 10,200 fish. This is similar to last years anticipated harvest, where 11,800 were forecasted, with 12,732 actually harvested from July 15-22. These hatchery produced fish may be available for common property harvest if cost recovery goals can be achieved using Resurrection Bay and Tutka Bay sockeye salmon returns. The department tracks salmon escapement in this district using remote video monitoring sites at Chenik and Mikfik lakes, as well as regular aerial survey observations of index streams.

Table 1.-Projected harvest of salmon for Lower Cook Inlet, 2012.

SOCKEYE SALMON		Total anticipated harvest =		246,800
Natural stocks , (5-yr average commercial harvest)				
Southern District, (English Bay Section only)				1,900
Eastern District, (Aialik Bay)				25,700
Outer District				16,700
Kamishak Bay District, (excluding Kirchner Lake Subdistrict)				98,300
	Total return	Hatchery Harvest^b	Commercial Harvest	
Hatchery Stocks^a				
Resurrection Bay	216,000	130,500	85,500	
Leisure and Hazel lakes	6,500	0	6,500	
Tutka Bay Lagoon	28,000	28,000	0	
Kirchner Lake	10,200	0	10,200	
Port Graham Bay	2,000	0	2,000	
PINK SALMON , ADF&G Preliminary Pink Salmon Forecast ^c		Total anticipated harvest =		318,000
Southern District (combined gear)				62,000
Eastern District				0
Outer District				256,000
Kamishak Bay District				0
CHUM SALMON - 5-year average harvest		Total anticipated harvest =		75,540
Southern District (purse seine)				70
Southern District (set gillnet)				1,700
Eastern District				70
Outer District				36,800
Kamishak Bay District				36,900
COHO SALMON - 5-year average harvest		Total anticipated harvest =		1,630
Southern District (purse seine)				800
Southern District (set gillnet)				700
Eastern District				0
Outer District				30
Kamishak Bay District				100
CHINOOK SALMON – 5-year average harvest		Total anticipated harvest =		196
Southern District (purse seine)				31
Southern District (set gillnet)				160
Eastern District				0
Outer District				2
Kamishak Bay District				2
Total LCI anticipated commercial common property harvest- all salmon species =				642,165

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

^b Includes hatchery cost recovery, broodstock and natural spawning escapement.

^c Available online at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyarealci.salmon#/forecasts>