

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



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2015 LOWER COOK INLET SALMON FISHERY OUTLOOK

General Information

This outlook is provided to assist the commercial salmon industry in planning for the 2015 season in the Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) Management Area. Preseason forecasts and recent 5 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 (TLH), Port Graham Hatchery (PGH), and Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery (TBLH). 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.

The forecasts for commercial common property fishery (CCPF) harvests by species are summarized in Table 1. The wild stock pink salmon forecast is derived from a spawner-recruit analysis, whereas run projections for other wild stock species are based on recent 5-year average historical production. Projected runs of hatchery-origin salmon are provided by CIAA. These projections of hatchery and wild stock runs 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 used as the season progresses.

Management of the LCI commercial salmon fisheries is based in the Homer area office. All emergency order (EO) 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 on Fridays 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 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, Friday, May 1.

CIAA anticipates a total of 445,137 hatchery produced sockeye and 1.5 million pink salmon to return to LCI release sites in 2015. The 2015 CIAA cost recovery goal is 4.1 million dollars. The majority of the cost recovery harvest is anticipated to come from Resurrection Bay with allowances made for some harvest during broodstock collections at Tutka Bay Hatchery if needed. As in past years, CIAA anticipates beginning cost recovery harvest in Resurrection Bay and expanding it to other areas until the goal is met. The overall commercial common property harvest from Lower Cook Inlet is anticipated to be 2.0 million salmon. Of these, 72.6% of the salmon are anticipated to be of hatchery origin (Table 1).

Set Gillnet Fishery

The **Southern District** is anticipated to open for the 2015 season on Monday, June 1 at 6:00 AM for a 48-hour period. Following periods will likely be 48-hours in length beginning at 6:00 AM on Monday and Thursday, as specified in regulation. Harvests for 2015 are anticipated to be similar to the historic average. The 5-year average harvest for this area and gear are 154 Chinook, 800 coho and 2,500 chum salmon. The 5-year commercial harvest average for the wild sockeye salmon is 23,800 fish. The department's preliminary pink salmon forecast estimated a harvestable surplus of 26,000 fish from the Southern District; which is to be shared by commercial set gillnet and purse seine permit holders. 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 subsistence needs (4,800–7,200 salmon). The Port Graham Subdistrict is anticipated to remain closed to commercial harvest until English Bay River escapement is tracking to meet the overall spawning escapement goal (6,000–13,500) and hatchery broodstock goals. CIAA anticipates 10,200 sockeye salmon returning to the Port Graham Hatchery SHA. 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 12–18 (week 29). CIAA anticipates a return of 27,944 sockeye salmon to Leisure and Hazel lakes combined, as well as 48,160 sockeye salmon to Tutka Bay, and 10,200 to Port Graham.

Commercial fishing time after mid-July will be correlated to pink salmon escapement at Humpy Creek, Seldovia Bay, Port Graham and other locations in this district. A total of 1.5 million hatchery produced pink salmon are anticipated to return to release sites in the Southern District.

Hatchery sockeye salmon returns to the **Eastern District** are forecast by CIAA to be 322,737 fish, all of which may be required for cost recovery and broodstock purposes. Wild stock harvest opportunity in the Eastern District will be linked to aerial survey observations of wild sockeye and pink salmon escapements to Aialik Lake and other spawning systems in this district. In addition, surveys of chum salmon index systems in Resurrection Bay and Day Harbor will be flown weather and time permitting.

Portions of the **Outer District** may 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 may be open by this time 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 14,800 sockeye and 41,700 chum salmon. The department has forecast a harvestable surplus of 370,000 pink salmon from this district. The parent year harvest of pink salmon in this district was 2.0 million fish.

While portions of the **Kamishak Bay District** typically open by regulation to commercial harvest on June 1, portions of this district may open on Monday, May 25 targeting sockeye salmon returns to Mikfik Lake. This may occur if significant numbers of returning sockeye are observed in this area at that time. Last year sockeye salmon were observed in the lower Mikfik River on May 22 with over 600 fish counted entering the lake by June 1. The final escapement to this lake of 18,062 exceeded the SEG range of 3,400–13,000 fish. The Mikfik Creek–McNeil Lagoon Salmon Fishery Management Plan directs fishery managers to prosecute the commercial fishery outside of the McNeil/Mikfik Lagoon to the maximum extent possible. Previous 5-year average harvests for this district (excluding the Kirschner Subdistrict) are 37,900 sockeye and 16,800 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 2013, the department has forecast there will not be a large commercial harvest of pink salmon from this district. Returns of hatchery released sockeye salmon to the Kirschner Lake outfall remote release site are anticipated to be 39,500 fish. 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 commercial common property harvests and hatchery returns for Lower Cook Inlet, 2015.

SOCKEYE SALMON				Total anticipated harvest =	215,600
Natural stocks, (5-yr average commercial harvest)					
Southern District, (purse seine, excluding hatchery SHAs)					16,900
Southern District, (set gillnet)					23,800
Eastern District, (Aialik Bay)					0
Outer District					14,800
Kamishak Bay District, (excluding Kirschner Lake Subdistrict)					37,900
					Commercial common property harvest
Sockeye salmon hatchery stocks^a	Hatchery return	Broodstock harvest	Cost recovery harvest		
Resurrection Bay	322,737	12,558	310,179	0	
China Poot and Hazel lakes	27,944	0	0	27,944	
Tutka Bay Lagoon	48,160	5,200	0	42,960	
Kirschner Lake	39,500	0	0	39,500	
Port Graham Bay	5,100	0	0	5,100	
English Bay Lakes	1,696	0	0	1,696	
PINK SALMON, ADF&G Preliminary Pink Salmon Forecast^b				Total anticipated harvest =	1,738,000
Southern District (combined gear)					26,000
Eastern District					0
Outer District					370,000
Kamishak Bay District					0
					Commercial common property harvest
Pink salmon hatchery stocks^a	Hatchery return	Broodstock harvest	Cost recovery harvest		
Tutka Bay Lagoon	1,533,000	191,000	0	1,342,000	
Port Graham Bay	2,820	2,820	0	0	
CHUM SALMON - 5-year average harvest				Total anticipated harvest =	62,230
Southern District (purse seine)					1,000
Southern District (set gillnet)					2,500
Eastern District					230
Outer District					41,700
Kamishak Bay District					16,800
COHO SALMON - 5-year average harvest				Total anticipated harvest =	1,540
Southern District (purse seine)					600
Southern District (set gillnet)					800
Eastern District					0
Outer District					40
Kamishak Bay District					100
CHINOOK SALMON – 5-year average harvest				Total anticipated harvest =	216
Southern District (purse seine)					56
Southern District (set gillnet)					154
Eastern District					0
Outer District					4
Kamishak Bay District					2
Total LCI anticipated commercial common property harvest- all salmon species =					2,012,586

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

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