

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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Date Issued: October 6, 2017

2017 Lower Cook Inlet Commercial Salmon Fishery Season Summary

The preliminary estimate of the 2017 Lower Cook Inlet Area commercial salmon harvest, based on current preliminary fish ticket data, was 2.5 million salmon. The total harvest was composed of 662 Chinook, 292,713 sockeye, 13,714 coho, 1,993,857 pink, and 199,108 chum salmon (Table 1). The harvest included 2.3 million (91.9%) commercial common property fishery (CPF) harvested fish, and 203,000 (8.1%) hatchery cost recovery fish. The preliminary estimated exvessel value of the 2017 common property harvest of approximately \$4.5 million was above the previous 10-year average annual exvessel value of \$2.3 million. The preliminary 2017 hatchery cost recovery exvessel value of \$1.5 million was above the previous 10-year average of \$1.2 million.

Salmon ear bones (otoliths) sampled from the 2017 commercial harvest will be examined for hatchery thermal marks. In 2016, sockeye salmon otoliths sampled from the set gillnet commercial fishery were 29.3% hatchery marked. Pink salmon otoliths sampled in the 2016 purse seine fishery in the Southern District were 91.7% hatchery marked, and sockeye salmon otoliths sampled from this district and gear type were 49.6% hatchery marked¹.

Southern District

The 2017 preseason commercial common property harvest forecast for the Southern District, based on the previous 5-year average commercial harvest, was 58,800 sockeye and 117,400 pink salmon, with an additional 24,000 hatchery produced sockeye salmon available in special harvest areas (SHAs) and in the Port Graham Subdistrict. The commercial salmon fishing season in the Southern District began on Thursday, June 1. The preliminary purse seine harvest estimate for the 2017 season was 163 Chinook, 61,710 sockeye, 3,387 coho, 348,476 pink, and 3,888 chum salmon. This compares to a previous 10-year average harvest of 57 Chinook, 36,681 sockeye, 729 coho, 58,755 pink, and 736 chum salmon. The preliminary set gillnet harvest estimate was 435 Chinook, 36,687 sockeye, 9,353 coho, 43,904 pink, and 9,248 chum salmon. The previous

¹ 2016 LCI Annual Management Report, appendices F22, F24, and F25. ADF&G, Fishery Management Report, Anchorage. www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FMR17-26.pdf

10-year average harvest for this gear type was 292 Chinook, 26,835 sockeye, 1,114 coho, 7,471 pink, and 3,119 chum salmon. In addition, 37,638 sockeye, and 111,675 pink salmon were harvested by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) from the Tutka Lagoon Special Harvest Area (SHA) for cost recovery purposes. The preliminary passage estimate at the English Bay River weir was 20,751 sockeye salmon, which exceeded the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 6,000–13,500 for this system. There are seven streams in the Southern District that have a total of 8 SEGs. Of those goals, six are for pink salmon, one is for chum and one is for sockeye salmon. Escapement for both the chum and sockeye salmon goals was above the SEG range for those systems. However, one stream, China Poot Creek, did not achieve its pink salmon SEG and two streams, Tutka Creek and Barabara Creek, exceeded the upper end of their pink salmon SEG.

Kamishak Bay District

The 2017 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Kamishak Bay District, based on the previous 5-year average commercial harvest, was 27,500 sockeye, 61,200 pink, and 4,200 chum salmon. CIAA forecasted a run of 13,020 sockeye salmon to the Kirschner Lake remote release site. Total preliminary estimated common property harvest was 104,218 sockeye, 185 coho, 249,767 pink, and 34,279 chum salmon. This compares to a previous 10-year average of 63,086 sockeye, 118 coho, 24,594 pink, and 20,529 chum salmon harvested in the common property fishery. In addition, 22,593 sockeye salmon were harvested by CIAA from the Kirschner Lake SHA for cost recovery purposes. There are 12 systems in the Kamishak District that have a total of 13 SEGs. Of those goals, seven are for chum, three are for sockeye, and three are for pink salmon. Escapement for sockeye salmon was within SEGs at two systems, Mikfik Lake, and Amakdedori Creek, and exceeded the SEG at Chenik Lake. Chum salmon escapement was within the SEG at four systems, Little Kamishak River, McNeil River, Cottonwood Creek, and Iniskin River. The chum salmon SEG was exceeded at the Big Kamishak River, Bruin River, and in Ursus Cove. Pink salmon escapement was within the SEG range at Sunday Creek, and in the Bruin River. The pink salmon SEG was exceeded at Brown's Peak Creek. Escapement levels for salmon in the Kamishak District may have been underestimated due to poor weather conditions that prevented regular aerial surveys of that area.

Outer District

The 2017 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Outer District was 14,300 sockeye, 194,000 pink, and 56,800 chum salmon. The commercial salmon fishing season began in this district on Monday, July 11. Preliminary total harvest estimates, from the 17 permit holders that participated, was 1 Chinook, 256 sockeye, 1.2 million pink, and 151,341 chum salmon. This harvest compares to previous 10-year averages of 11,180 sockeye, 956,481 pink, and 45,515 chum salmon. There are 11 streams in the Outer District that have a total of 15 SEGs. Of those goals, nine are for pink salmon, four are for chum and two are for sockeye salmon. Pink salmon escapement was above the SEG at Port Chatham and in Dogfish Bay, and below the SEG at South Nuka Island Creek with escapement within the SEG at the remaining systems. Chum salmon escapement was below the SEG at Island Creek, within the range at Port Dick Creek, and above the SEG at Dogfish Bay and in the Rocky River. Escapement levels for salmon in the Outer District may have been underestimated due to poor weather conditions that prevented regular aerial and ground surveys of that area.

Eastern District

Due to small runs in the last 10 years, no wild stock sockeye or pink salmon were forecast to be available for commercial common property harvest from the Eastern District in 2017. CIAA forecasted a total run of 120,583 sockeye salmon to Resurrection Bay facilities with all but 10,000 of these fish anticipated to be used for broodstock or cost recovery purposes. Total cost recovery harvest from this district was 25,914 sockeye salmon with 3,044 donated at the weir to members of the public. While portions of Resurrection Bay were open for commercial common property harvest from June 26 through July 14, no harvests were reported. Total sockeye salmon passage through the Bear Creek weir was 12,948 fish with 3,746 of these fish being harvested by CIAA for use as hatchery broodstock. This is fewer than the broodstock goal of 4,452 from this system. The remaining 9,202 fish were allowed to spawn naturally in Bear Lake. This was above the SEG range of 700–8,300 sockeye salmon for this system. The only other index system in the Eastern District is Aialik Lake sockeye salmon where the final escapement was within the SEG range.

Table 1. Lower Cook Inlet commercial salmon harvest based on preliminary fish ticket data, 2017.

District (or hatchery)	Permits	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Total
Southern District	18	163	61,710	3,387	348,476	3,888	417,624
Outer District	17	1	256	387	1,238,154	151,341	1,390,139
Eastern District	0						0
Kamishak Bay District	8		104,218	185	249,767	34,279	388,449
Purse seine preliminary total	18	164	166,184	3,959	1,836,397	189,508	2,196,212
Southern District	20	435	36,687	9,353	43,904	9,248	99,627
Set gillnet preliminary total	20	435	36,687	9,353	43,904	9,248	99,627
Commercial homepacks		59	653	201	192	110	1,215
Commercial common property preliminary total		658	203,524	13,513	1,880,493	198,866	2,297,054
Hatchery cost recovery preliminary harvests							
Tutka Lagoon SHA			34,709	44	110,152	13	144,918
China Poot SHA		4	2,929	154	1,523	200	4,810
Resurrection Bay SHA			24,257	3			24,260
Bear Lake SHA			1,657				1,657
Kirschner Lake SHA			22,593		1,689	29	24,311
donated - Bear Lake SHA			3,044				3,044
Hatchery preliminary total		4	89,189	201	113,364	242	203,000
LCI preliminary total harvest		662	292,713	13,714	1,993,857	199,108	2,500,054