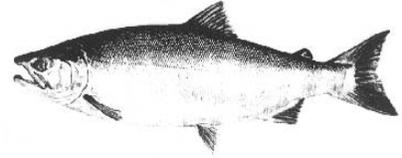


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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2011 LOWER COOK INLET SALMON FISHERY OUTLOOK

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has completed its annual salmon forecast and outlook for the Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) management area. This news release is intended to provide basic information for fishermen and processors in preparation for the 2011 season. Salmon management strategies in LCI are designed to insure continued health of the resource through adequate spawning escapements while providing for an orderly harvest of identifiable surplus.

Because salmon enhancement plays a major role in LCI fisheries, hatchery cost recovery has become an integral component of the management strategy. Cost recovery revenue goals for the private nonprofit (PNP) organizations have been finalized, and management schemes to attain them are published in the Annual Management Plans (AMP's) for Trail Lakes, Tutka Bay and Port Graham Hatcheries. Outlines of the anticipated management strategies for the SHA's can be found in the **GENERAL INFORMATION** section on page 4. Though the regulatory Trail Lakes Hatchery Management Plan expired on May 1, 2011, hatchery run strength, revenue goals and resultant cost recovery harvest will again be major factors in LCI salmon management during the 2011 season.

The overall 2011 LCI commercial total salmon harvest is projected to total about 1.34 million fish, or nearly three times the actual harvest taken during 2010. It should be noted that the forecast figure represents only the potential harvestable surplus, with no consideration given to market conditions, tender availability, weather and other similar influences on fishing activity. Enhancement efforts and resulting production are expected to contribute about two-thirds of the area wide commercial sockeye salmon harvest this season, while no hatchery pink salmon production will contribute to LCI harvest. Hatchery cost recovery is anticipated to once again account for a significant portion of the sockeye salmon harvests. The following table summarizes the projected harvest by species in numbers of fish:

	Natural	Enhanced	Total
Chinook salmon	a	a	1,100 ^a
Sockeye salmon	89,900 ^b	199,800 ^c	289,700
Coho salmon	a	a	12,800 ^a
Pink salmon	949,300	0	949,300
Chum salmon	89,000 ^d	0	89,000
Total	1,128,200	199,800^d	1,341,900

^a Commercial harvest forecasts of Chinook and coho salmon are average harvests since 1980 and are comprised of a combination of naturally-produced fish as well as fish produced from enhancement programs in LCI; no attempt is made to separate the two components.

^b Forecasts for naturally-produced sockeye are average annual commercial harvests since 1980.

^c Includes common property plus cost recovery harvests.

^d Forecasts for chum salmon are most recent 10-year average annual commercial harvests.

The preceding numbers include the following natural and enhanced components:

ENHANCED RUNS	
SOCKEYE SALMON	PINK SALMON
Kirschner Lake	11,800
Leisure Lake	5,000
Hazel Lake	2,900
Tutka Lagoon	33,000
Bear Lake / Res. Bay	143,000
English Bay Lakes	NA
Port Graham Hatchery	4,100
Total	199,800

NATURAL RUNS			
SOCKEYE SALMON^a		PINK SALMON	
Southern District ^b	40,000	Southern District	8,300
Outer District	19,200	Outer District	491,300
Eastern District	6,000	Eastern District	0
Kamishak Bay District	24,700	Kamishak Bay District	449,700
Total	89,900	Total	949,300

^a Numbers for natural sockeye harvests are not forecasts but are 1980-2010 average commercial catches.

^b Incidental harvest of fish not originating from the Southern District.

SUMMARY BY SPECIES

Sockeye Salmon

The forecasted 2011 LCI sockeye salmon harvest of 289,700 fish is approximately 3 times greater than the 2010 catch of 93,100 fish and close to the most recent 10-year average catch of 303,300. Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) anticipates a total return of 199,800 sockeye salmon to its enhancement sites and has established a sockeye salmon revenue goal of \$1.62 million for Trail Lakes Hatchery in 2011. Assuming an average weight of 4.27 lbs per fish and an average price of \$2.25 per pound, a total of 169,000 sockeye salmon would need to be harvested for cost recovery purposes to achieve this goal. CIAA has forecasted a return of 143,000 enhanced sockeye salmon to Resurrection Bay all of which excluding the 700 – 8,300 required to meet the Bear Lake SEG, are anticipated to be harvested by the CIAA for cost recovery and broodstock (4,920) purposes. Cost recovery harvest of returning Bear Lake sockeye salmon should account for approximately 80% of the revenue goal. The remaining 20% will be harvested from returns to special harvest areas (SHAs) at other remote release sites. SHAs of these sites may be opened to commercial common property seining for sockeye salmon in 2011 if the Trail Lakes Hatchery revenue goal is achieved or its attainment can be projected.

Runs of adult sockeye salmon to CIAA enhancement projects at Leisure and Hazel Lakes in the Southern District are expected to total just over 7,900 sockeye salmon. This is less than the recent 10-year average harvest of 106,000 fish. CIAA anticipates harvesting all sockeye salmon returning to the Leisure/Hazel enhancement sites for cost recovery purposes. Sockeye salmon total runs to the Tutka Bay Hatchery in Kachemak Bay are anticipated to be 30,000 fish, all of which is anticipated to be required by CIAA to meet cost recovery and broodstock requirements. At English Bay Lakes, where runs have contributed to Southern District commercial harvests in some recent years, opportunities for commercial sockeye harvest are questionable due to the lack of a preseason forecast. However, runs to this system have been stronger than anticipated during the last five seasons and have been sufficient to support limited commercial and subsistence harvest opportunities despite uncertain preseason predictions.

Total hatchery runs to Kirschner Lake on the west side of Cook Inlet in the Kamishak Bay District, is anticipated to be 11,800 fish, all of which may be required to meet corporate cost recovery goals. After eight successive seasons of relatively strong runs, as well as targeted commercial harvests during the past seven years, the naturally produced sockeye salmon run to Chenik Lake in the Kamishak Bay District is questionable but could once again provide harvest opportunities in 2011. Natural production from systems in the Outer, Eastern, and Kamishak Bay Districts, plus incidental harvest of fish not originating from the Southern District, in combination could provide up to 90,000 sockeye salmon for harvest (based solely on historical averages) as a result of natural production.

Pink Salmon

Harvestable surpluses of pink salmon in LCI during 2011 are anticipated to total approximately 949,000 fish, and for the fourth consecutive year the entire return will be the result of natural production. The 2011 pink salmon projected harvest figure represents almost 3.5 times the 2010 commercial catch of only 278,200 fish and about 81% of the recent 10-year average. Natural pink salmon spawning escapement levels in most major systems were considered good to excellent in 2009, contributing to the reasonably optimistic harvest projection. Outer District systems are expected to have the greatest potential for harvest with a combined total of around 491,000 pink

salmon, returning primarily to Port Dick, while Windy and Rocky Bays hold potential for lesser amounts. Bruin Bay, Ursus Cove, and Rocky Cove in the Kamishak Bay District are anticipated to contribute significant harvest opportunities, with a cumulative projected total of about 450,000 pink salmon in that district. However, it may be worth noting that Bruin Bay escapement in 2009 was significantly above the SEG for this system of 87,200 with an index count of 1.07 million pink salmon. Since 1960 similar escapements to this system have occurred twice: in 1986 (1.2 million) and 2002 (1.6 million). In both of these cases returns from these parent years were diminished and may have been the result of overescapement to this system. Given that pink salmon production at Tutka Bay Hatchery ended in 2004, no Cook Inlet hatchery produced pink salmon will be returning to LCI facilities in 2011.

Chum Salmon

Based on the most recent 10-year average harvest, the anticipated LCI commercial chum salmon harvest is 89,000 fish. Given that chum salmon production at Tutka Bay Hatchery ended in 1989, no Cook Inlet hatchery-produced chum salmon will be returning to LCI facilities in 2011.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1) The Trail Lakes Hatchery Sockeye Salmon Management Plan, established in 2009 by the Alaska Board of Fisheries, but expired from regulation May 1, 2011 as a result of an included sunset clause. As a result, management of fisheries targeting CIAA-enhanced runs will be directed through appropriate current regulations and the public process of the Cook Inlet Regional Planning Team (CIRPT), and subsequently outlined in hatchery Annual Management Plans (AMPs). Management of these fisheries in 2011 is anticipated to be similar to the previous two seasons, which were directed by the Trail Lakes Hatchery Sockeye Salmon Management Plan. The forecasted harvestable surplus for Resurrection Bay/Bear Lake in 2011 is approximately 130,000 sockeye salmon. Because CIAA has indicated that all forecasted sockeye salmon returning to Resurrection Bay/Bear Lake will be utilized to meet hatchery and escapement objectives in 2011, no common property opening to target these fish in Resurrection Bay is expected. Waters of the Bear Lake SHA (marine waters north of the latitude of Caines Head) will open only to hatchery cost recovery fishing beginning Monday, May 23, on a schedule of five days per week, from 6:00 a.m. Monday until 10:00 p.m. Friday. Closed waters during the hatchery fishing periods will be the same as during the past 12 seasons for seine permit holders and will include those waters along the west shore of Resurrection Bay west of a line from the old military dock pilings north of Caines Head to a regulatory marker near the Seward airport. Hatchery seine catches, as well as escapement at the Bear Creek weir, will be continuously monitored to assess the progress of the run and proportion of the hatchery revenue goal achieved. Management considerations will be taken into account to assure adequate escapement to Bear Lake for both hatchery broodstock (5,620 fish) as well as an SEG of 700 – 8,300 fish for wild stock escapement to the lake directly. Accurate and timely catch reporting and escapement counts will be critical in order to achieve the intent of the annual management plan. Waters of Resurrection Bay will only be opened to commercial common property seining for sockeye salmon in 2011 if the Trail Lakes Hatchery revenue goal is achieved or its attainment can be projected. Anyone fishing as a hatchery agent or commercially is also reminded that, by regulation, Chinook and coho salmon may not be legally taken in waters of Resurrection Bay.

- 2) The Kamishak Bay District commercial salmon seine season opens by regulation on Wednesday, June 1. At that time, all areas, with the exception of the Chenik Subdistrict and waters of the Kirschner Lake SHA, will open by emergency order on a fishing schedule of seven days per week. Waters of the Kirschner Lake SHA will open to fishing for hatchery cost recovery by authorized agents of CIAA beginning on June 27. However, this SHA may be opened to commercial seining if a portion of the returning sockeye salmon is not required for cost recovery purposes. Additional and more detailed information concerning hatchery cost recovery and SHA management can be found in the 2011 Trail Lakes Hatchery Annual Management Plan.

Fishermen are advised that fishery openings in Chenik Subdistrict will be based upon observed inseason sockeye salmon run strength and estimated escapement. Similar to the last eight seasons, the Paint River Subdistrict will open to fishing on June 1 and likely will remain open for the entire month of June. Beginning at the end of June or first of July, both the McNeil River and Paint River Subdistricts will be closed in order to afford maximum protection to chum salmon returning to McNeil River and, potentially, sockeye salmon returning to Chenik Lake. The seven day per week fishing schedule for open areas in the Kamishak Bay District could be restricted on relatively short notice inseason based on effort levels and escapement rates.

- 3) In the Southern District, guidelines for management of the enhanced sockeye salmon returns to China Poot, Neptune, and Tutka Bays are included in the Trail Lakes Hatchery Annual Management Plan. As was the case for the last two seasons, the formerly separate SHA's for the Leisure and Hazel Lakes sockeye salmon runs are now combined into a single China Poot and Hazel Lake SHA, which also includes those waters formerly closed to all seining along McKeon Flats. Waters of this SHA will open to hatchery cost recovery fishing seven days per week beginning June 27. A common property opening to target these runs is dependent on the inseason status of the Trail Lakes Hatchery revenue goal and would only occur if the hatchery revenue goal is achieved or its attainment can be projected. As in recent years, a Dungeness crab sanctuary at the head of China Poot Bay will remain closed to all seining for the duration of the season. Additional and more detailed information concerning hatchery cost recovery and SHA management can be found in the 2011 Trail Lakes Hatchery Annual Management Plan.

Because operations at Tutka Bay Hatchery were suspended in 2004, no hatchery-produced pink salmon returns will occur at that location in 2011. As a result, the Department will manage nearby waters for achievement of the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 6,500 to 17,000 pinks (natural production) into Tutka Creek. The management strategy to attain this objective will include opening waters of the Tutka Bay SHA, which now includes waters of Tutka Bay enclosed by the "offshore" seine restriction line that has been used in past years, to hatchery-only seining seven days per week beginning June 27. Pink salmon escapement into Tutka Creek will be monitored inseason, as will the hatchery's progress towards achievement of the sockeye salmon revenue goal. Once again, *CIAA has indicated that the entire harvestable surplus of sockeye salmon returning to Tutka Lagoon in 2011 (30,000 forecast) will likely be required for cost recovery and/or broodstock purposes, and therefore a common property seine opening to target these fish is not anticipated.*

- 4) Provided aerial surveys indicate adequate sockeye salmon escapement, the Nuka Bay Subdistrict in the Outer District may open to commercial salmon seining by emergency order in late June or early July. An opening in Aialik Subdistrict, possibly including Aialik Lagoon,

in the Eastern District also could be allowed in early July if the run appears strong. However, sockeye returns to the Aialik system have been marginal during the past several seasons.

- 5) No formal preseason forecast for sockeye salmon returning to English Bay Lakes was prepared for 2011. Because recent years' sockeye salmon runs to English Bay Lakes have been sufficient to achieve established escapement objectives, the restrictive management measures imposed on local subsistence fisheries may not be required this season. However, due to increased efficiency and harvesting power, the commercial set gillnet fishery will likely remain closed in waters of Port Graham Subdistrict at the start of the season until run strength can be adequately assessed. The system's desired inriver return range is 11,830 to 19,330 sockeye salmon (with the addition of broodstock requirements for Port Graham Hatchery and Trail Lakes Hatchery projects), and if inseason information suggests this range will be achieved, a commercial opening could be considered. The staff intends to closely monitor the escapement counts at the English Bay weir to assess run strength and determine potential inseason modifications to fishing schedules in the aforementioned fisheries. Because of the questionable run strength, the availability of broodstock for the English Bay Lakes and Trail Lakes projects remain unclear.

If a weak run to English Bay Lakes precludes a commercial set gillnet fishery in the Port Graham Subdistrict for the duration of the sockeye salmon season, this fishery in the Port Graham Subdistrict could remain closed for an undetermined length of time after the English Bay Lakes sockeye salmon run, in the absence of a hatchery produced return of pink salmon to Port Graham this season, in order to protect naturally-produced pink salmon returning to Port Graham River until that return can be assessed.

Port Graham Hatchery is expecting a modest return of 4,000 sockeye salmon to the facility in 2011 as a result of intermittent saltwater smolt releases. The Port Graham Hatchery sockeye salmon revenue goal for the 2011 season is \$126,000 while the sockeye salmon broodstock goal for English Bay Lakes is up to 1,500 fish.

- 6) With increasing prices and stronger markets for pink salmon in recent seasons, interest and effort targeting this species has increased. As a result, consistently productive pink salmon systems such as those in Port Dick of the Outer District are once again providing incentive to the fleet and to processors to escalate operations. In anticipation of increased effort and harvesting power in the Port Dick Subdistrict this season, a more conservative management approach than that employed in previous years is warranted to assure adequate escapement into area systems. Waters of Port Dick Subdistrict will be opened to commercial fishing by emergency order based on inseason assessment of pink salmon run strength, escapement, and anticipated fishing effort. Area waters will be closely monitored and modifications to sections open to seining and weekly fishing periods could occur on short notice inseason depending on these variables. The projected surplus at Port Dick in 2011 is slightly above the average catch for odd years since 1963, with a harvest forecast totaling about 239,000 pink salmon.

Elsewhere in the Outer District, other areas will be also open to commercial seining for pink salmon by emergency order based on inseason assessment of run strengths. Areas open to seining and weekly fishing periods will be modified inseason depending on run strength, efficiency of the fleet, and the observed escapement rates. Preseason forecasts for pink salmon suggest that harvestable surpluses in the Outer District could occur at Rocky and Windy Bay Subdistricts, but actual openings will be determined by inseason run strength assessment.

Seiners should take note that waters of Windy Bay and Port Chatham Subdistricts will be open to **subsistence set gillnet fishing** on a weekly fishing schedule of 132 hours per week, from Thursday 10:00 p.m. until Wednesday 10:00 a.m., up until August 1 (closed to subsistence fishing after August 1). Should these waters be simultaneously opened to commercial fishing, seiners are cautioned to remain alert for subsistence set gillnet gear in order to avoid potential gear conflicts.

- 7) Commercial set gillnetting in the Halibut Cove, Tutka Bay, Barabara Creek, and Seldovia Bay Subdistricts will open by Emergency Order beginning at **6:00 a.m. THURSDAY, JUNE 2** on the regular schedule of two 48-hour periods per week. As stated previously, commercial set gillnetting in Port Graham Subdistrict, including both the English Bay and Port Graham Sections, will remain closed at the start of the season.
- 8) Set gillnet permit holders are reminded that they **MUST REGISTER WITH ADF&G PRIOR TO FISHING IN WATERS OF COOK INLET**. Registrations can be completed in person at ADF&G offices in Homer, Soldotna, or Anchorage. Alternatively, set gillnet registration forms for “Greater Cook Inlet”, of which the Southern District is a part, are available on the ADF&G web site at:
- http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/commercial/mailin_registration_GCI.pdf.
These forms may be printed out, completed, and then mailed to the Department’s Homer, Soldotna, or Anchorage offices. At the time of registration, a valid CFEC permit number for the current fishing year must be known and entered onto the registration form. The permit holder need not be present at the time of registration. Mailing address for the Homer office is:
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Commercial Fisheries
3298 Douglas Place
Homer, AK 99603
- 9) Seiners are reminded that latitudes and longitudes for LCI announcements and emergency orders will be published in **DEGREES AND TENTHS OF MINUTES**. This conforms to established standards in the latest commercial salmon fishing regulations booklet.
- 10) Marine VHF channel 10 will be used to issue emergency order announcements and informational updates concerning the LCI area. In addition, the same information will be broadcast on SSB frequency 2512 kHz. Announcements are also relayed to public radio station KBBI. A 24-hour telephone recording in the Homer office may be reached by dialing (907) 235-7307 to obtain the most current information on the status of the fishery. **This recording will be updated whenever any new information becomes available or management action affecting the LCI fishery is taken.**

Announcements will be published in real time at the following web site:

<http://csfish.adfg.state.ak.us/newsrelease/select.php?year=2011&dist=HOM&species=400&submit=Go>

Each time a new announcement is issued, it will be made available to and can be viewed (along with other fishing area announcements) at this site. Fishermen should note this internet address as another source of LCI commercial salmon fisheries information.

The public can view preliminary inseason LCI catches on the internet as they become available. The web address for these catches is:

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

Whenever possible, the public is encouraged to frequently check this site for updated LCI catch information.

- 11) The Homer ADF&G staff once again emphasizes the importance of fish ticket catch reporting, especially the accuracy of the location/area of the catch. Such reporting has remained reasonably good during recent seasons, and continued cooperation from fishermen and processors is essential to effective management in LCI. Salmon management programs rely heavily on accurate and timely catch reporting in order to effect practical decisions, which ultimately benefit both the resource and the user groups. Fish ticket data are used by the staff to evaluate inseason run strength, attribute catches to various streams, evaluate enhancement projects, measure long-term production, establish and modify escapement goals, and generate forecasts.

Charts of the LCI fishing district and subdistrict boundaries, complete with a statistical numbering scheme identifying distinct bays and specific fishing areas, are available at the Homer ADF&G office. Fishermen, dock foremen, and tendermen are requested to accurately record the sub-statistical area on the fish ticket at the time of delivery, *showing where the catch actually occurred*. Additionally, including the name of the nearest bay or headland on the fish ticket will significantly improve catch records. *Please DO NOT merely record the location of the tender vessel where the catch was delivered*. If the catch from a particular delivery is from more than one area, please include each sub-statistical area on the fish ticket and provide the estimated catch from each area. If there are any questions concerning fish tickets and/or catch reporting, please do not hesitate to call the Homer ADF&G office at (907) 235-8191.

The ADF&G staff in Homer wishes to extend its appreciation to fishermen and processors for their past support and cooperation in the management of Lower Cook Inlet salmon fisheries, and we look forward to a successful season in 2011.