Don W. Collinsworth, Commissioner

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Alaska Department of Fish & Game NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE DECEMBER 19, 1989

ARCTIC CHAR ARE ON THE BITE AT HARDING LAKE

In the fall of 1988, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game began an experimental Arctic char stocking program in an attempt to develop new fishing opportunities for Interior Alaska sportsmen. By November of 1989, a total of 92,000 catchable and sub-catchable char had been stocked in Harding Lake.

While sampling efforts by Department biologists last summer indicated that survival rates were good, anglers had little success catching these deeper dwelling fish during the ice-free months. During the last several weeks however, reports from fishermen coupled with sampling efforts by Department biologists indicate that char are biting well and that an excellent winter fishery is developing at this 2,500 acre lake located approximately 40 miles southeast of Fairbanks.

Fishermen report that they are catching limits (10 fish per day) of the delicately flavored fish ranging in size from about 8 inches to 16 inches in length and weighing up to two pounds. Anglers having the best success are fishing near the bottom in water ranging from 15 to 25 feet in depth with bait and a variety of lures, especially bright fluorescent jigs or spoons jigged near the bottom.

The best approach to the lake is at the old landing in the southeast corner which is accessible from Salcha Drive. At present, the ice is about two feet thick and the snow is wind-blown and hard packed making it possible to drive to most good fishing areas with four wheel drive vehicles or passenger cars.

The Sport Fish Division staff in Fairbanks is interested in collecting as much information as possible regarding fishing success and successful fishing tactics as this new fishery develops. If you participate in this fishery, feel free to stop by the Fairbanks ADF&G office (at 1300 College Rd.) or call and let the staff know how your trip went and what your thoughts and recommendations are regarding the future of this promising new fishery.

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Alaska Department of Fish & Game
NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE JUNE 1, 1990

HARDING LAKE FISHERY STUDIES

Harding Lake, located approximately 40 miles southeast of Fairbanks, is the site of an intensive effort by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to develop a major recreational fishery. Currently, this 2,500 acre lake supports whitefish, northern pike, burbot, and small numbers of lake trout. Past attempts to stock this lake with rainbow trout, coho salmon and other species have been largely unsuccessful.

Encouraged by recent successes with Arctic char, biologists with the Sport Fish Division working cooperatively with Clear Hatchery personnel and the University of Alaska Cooperative Research Unit are constructing floating net pens which will become home to approximately 200,000 juvenile fish this spring and summer. Studies will focus on growth and survival rates of lake trout, rainbow trout, sockeye salmon, Arctic grayling, and Arctic char in the pens; the fish will be released into the lake in September. Possible advantages of pen reared fish are better growth rates, greater survival and adaptability to the lake environment, and potential expansion of hatchery production by freeing up race-way space.

In other states, such pens have been used successfully but the technique has not yet been attempted in Alaska. It is hoped that knowledge gained from this project will allow the development of a major recreational fishery at Harding Lake.

In addition to these studies, the Department is doing research on the harvest and abundance of Harding Lake northern pike and will be evaluating the survival of Arctic char and sockeye salmon releases in 1988 and 1989.

For additional information about the study or to arrange for a tour of the facility, contact Jerry Hallberg at 456-8819.

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