



Fishing for King Salmon in Seldovia



Getting to Seldovia

There are lots of options for getting to Seldovia with most trips beginning in Homer. You can take your own boat, a water taxi, passenger ferry, or the Alaska Marine Highway Ferry from the Homer Harbor to the Seldovia Harbor. For those that want to take their own boat from the Homer Harbor, the Seldovia Harbor provides free moorage for up to four hours. You can also get there by air, a couple different air charters fly from Homer and Anchorage.

Seldovia is a picturesque small fishing town located across Kachemak Bay from Homer. Seldovia provides a unique opportunity to fish for Chinook salmon in a remote, beautiful, and surprisingly accessible corner of Alaska. Chinook salmon return to the Seldovia Slough from mid-May through late June, providing sport fishing opportunities from shore, a small boat, or by trolling in Seldovia Bay before they enter the slough.

Since 1987, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has annually stocked approximately 100,000 Chinook salmon smolt in the slough each summer. The Seldovia stocking program is considered to be a terminal fishery which means there is no spawning habitat for king salmon, so smolt have to be stocked every year to produce annual runs of Chinook salmon. The Chinook salmon smolt are reared and stocked by ADF&G's William Jack Hernandez Sport Fish Hatchery in Anchorage.

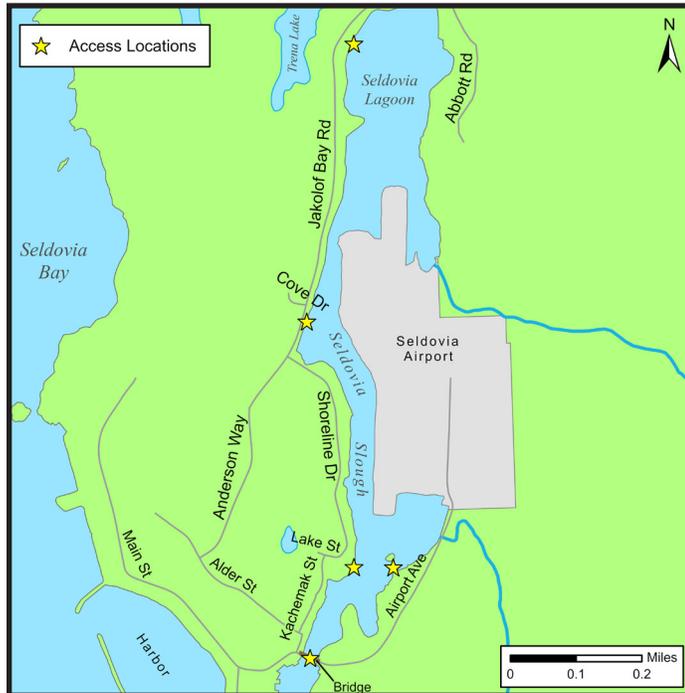
The broodstock used for this stocking program are from the Niniilchik River. The smolt are directly released into the upper Seldovia lagoon annually once a year. Stocking typically occurs between late May and mid-June. These Chinook salmon return to Seldovia after spending one to four years in the ocean, with the majority of the Chinook salmon primarily returning after spending two or three years in the ocean. These fish can weigh up to 30 lbs. but are mostly in the 8-17 lbs. range.



Besides boating right to Seldovia, there is a road that connects the town to Jakolof Bay dock, where water taxis regularly drop off and pick up passengers headed to and from town. The Seldovia Harbor also provides fish cleaning tables for those lucky enough to catch a Chinook



salmon. If you didn't remember to purchase your sport fishing license and king salmon stamp before heading to Seldovia, anglers can purchase a license and king stamp in Seldovia at the harbor master's office.



Where to Fish

Once in Seldovia, there's a variety of access locations to fish for Chinook salmon that are all in easy walking distance of the harbor or airstrip. Most of the lands above the high tide line along the slough and lagoon are privately owned and public access from shore is limited to several specific locations.

Starting in town, the best access to the slough for fishing is at the bridge. From the harbor, head south (right) on



Main Street for 250 feet then walk left to Airport Avenue for 600 feet. On the northwest side of the bridge is a set of stairs for getting down to the water. If the tide isn't too high, anglers can stand under or near the bridge to fish the incoming tide.

Sight fishing from the bridge is an ideal setup for catching newly arriving fish and is the most popular fishing spot. There are a couple other locations where you can access the slough from the bank. Be mindful of the private property along the west side of the slough. On the east side of the slough, prior to the airport, there is some public property with an angler trail to provide access to the shore.

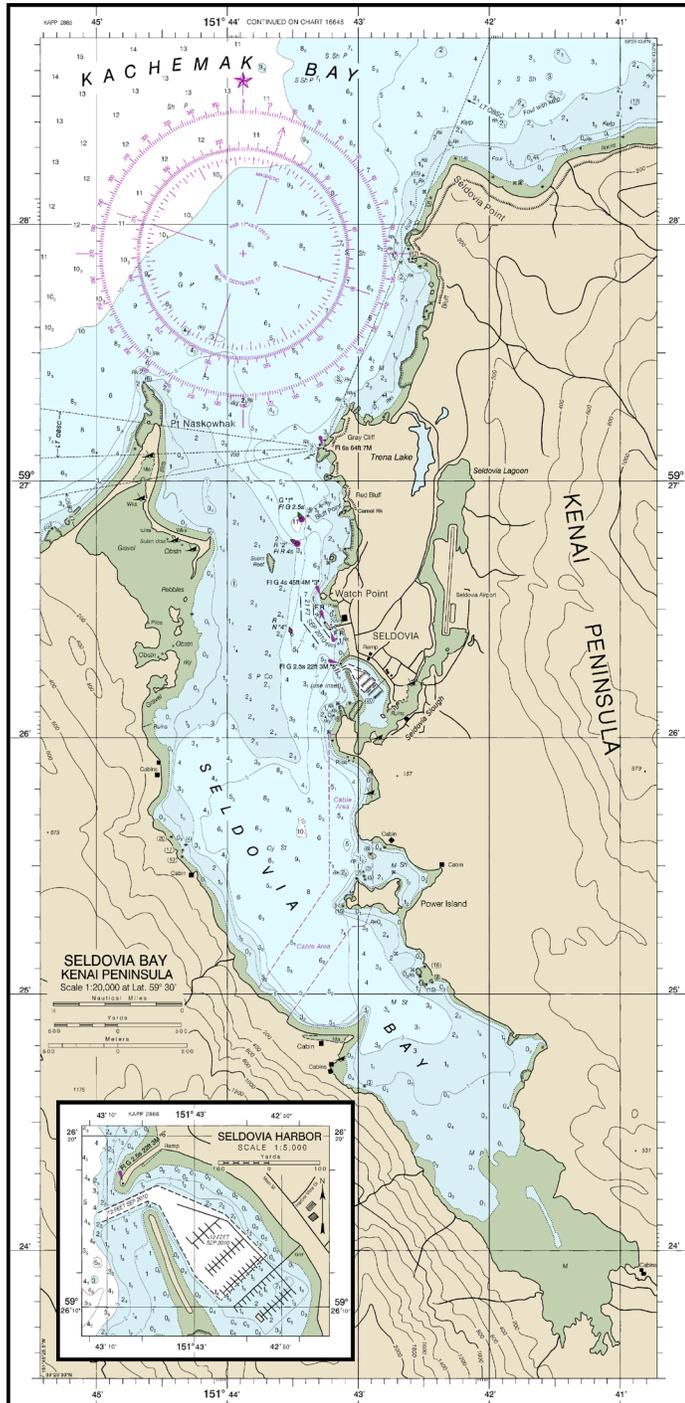


Access to the lagoon is more limited but local anglers use small boats to target king salmon cruising the shore with good success. From the harbor, you can use small boats or even paddle a kayak up the slough into the lagoon. For motoring up the slough consider waiting until near high tide and go slow since there are plenty of large rocks. When paddling, its best to use the tide, paddle up to the lagoon on the incoming tide and back to the harbor on the outgoing tide.

There's also access to the northwest corner of the lagoon from Jakobof Bay Road but is fairly shallow in this location. Your best chance to catch king salmon in the lagoon will be around high tide and the start of the outgoing tide.

Along the east side of the slough and lagoon is the Seldovia Airport. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations prohibit any kind of vehicle or foot traffic outside of aviation traffic on any of the airport surfaces or property including sport fishing. It is best to access sport fishing along the slough south of the airport property and at the bridge. When fishing in this area be cognizant that airport property begins above the ordinary high tide line.

You also can troll or cast for Chinook salmon from a boat outside of the harbor in Seldovia Bay. King salmon may be milling or feeding anywhere within Seldovia Bay. Trolling the eastern shore outside of the harbor wall from Watch Point to just south of the entrance to the harbor would be a likely place to find staging fish. Trolling near slack tide is often most effective.



When to Fish

Chinook salmon begin to show up in Seldovia Slough by late May, with the peak of the run in early to mid-June. The run wraps up by the end of June. Fishing in the slough on the incoming tide will allow you to target fresh Chinook salmon entering the slough. Fishing on the outgoing tide can also be just as effective. Chinook salmon tend to be more active just after sunrise which is a great time to fish with less competition. Make certain you are reading the tide book for Seldovia. Many anglers prefer to start fishing about two to three hours before and after the tidal changes.



What Tackle to Use

There are a lot of different setups that can be effective when targeting Chinook salmon, including both bait and lures. For anglers traveling to Seldovia, a two piece spinning rod with a reel capable of holding a couple hundred yards of 20lb. test line would be ideal.

A quarter sized chunk of cured salmon roe under a slip bobber is arguably the most effective and popular way to fish from shore or the bridge. Spinners, spoons, and plugs will all work at times to catch these fish. There is some tackle available for purchase in Seldovia but it's worth bringing your favorite gear with you.

Slip bobbers are popular for quick and easy adjustment of the bait so it's suspended just off the bottom. Eggs can be secured to the hook with an egg-loop knot. A typical setup would use a 2/0 to 4/0 hook with an egg loop knot and a cluster of salmon roe about the size of a quarter



or silver dollar. Two size 4 split shots about 18 inches above the egg loop knot is a good place to start - adjust as needed to make sure your bait is near the bottom or near where the fish are holding in the water column. The leader should be about 24 inches long, with at least 30 lb. test line, and can be attached to the main line with a barrel swivel. A 1/2 ounce slip bobber is a good match for this amount of bait and split shot. Anglers are also successful using herring under a bobber. For more spin to entice a bite, cut plug the herring or rig it up in a plastic bait holder.



Healthy Bank Stewardship

Most people understand healthy river systems are important for strong and healthy salmon populations. However, it is important to ensure that clean, healthy rivers don't stop at the water's edge. In fact, protecting and managing healthy streambanks and adjacent riparian areas are critical components to the overall health of a river system.

Vegetation along streambanks helps keep river water clean by filtering out sediment and pollutants from surface and storm runoff, reduces peak flows during rain and runoff events, slows flood waters, stabilizes streambanks from excessive erosion, and helps moderate stream temperatures. Vegetated streambanks also provide food and nutrients to fish and other aquatic organisms, as well as provide critical habitat for rearing juvenile salmon. Any alteration to the streambank area reduces its ability to carry out these important functions; this includes repeat trampling of the vegetation while trying to get to your favorite fishing spot. While out on the river, please be respectful and follow any requirements landowners may have. By following the simple steps listed below, you can help maintain important habitat for salmon and be good stewards of the land.

- Use established trails to reach the river.
- Use established entry and exit points to get in and out of the river.
- Respect and abide by signs that close areas to fishing from the bank.
- Stand in the river to fish and don't place your pack or other gear on the vegetation.
- Pack out what you pack in, including discarded fishing line and tackle.
- Use the restroom in the provided facilities.



Pacific Salmon Identification

Chinook (king) Salmon



- Spots on back and both lobes of the tail
- Black mouth with a black gumline

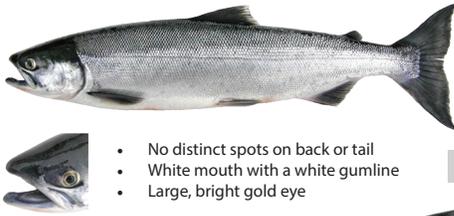
Coho (silver) Salmon



- Spots on back and upper lobe of the tail
- Black mouth with a white gumline

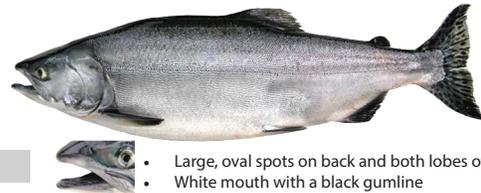
Marine Phase

Sockeye (red) Salmon



- No distinct spots on back or tail
- White mouth with a white gumline
- Large, bright gold eye

Pink (humpy) Salmon



- Large, oval spots on back and both lobes of tail
- White mouth with a black gumline

Chum (dog) Salmon



- No spots; calico bands on body (often faint in salt water)
- White mouth with a white gumline

Photographs courtesy of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Chinook (king) Salmon



- Spawning adults turn maroon or olive brown
- Spots on body and both lobes of the tail remain

Coho (silver) Salmon



- Males develop pronounced "kype" (hooked-nose)
- Spots on back and upper lobe of the tail remain
- Male and female turn dark maroon and have dark backs

Spawning Phase

Sockeye (red) Salmon



- Spawning adults develop dull-green heads
- Males develop hump on back
- Both female and male turn red

Pink (humpy) Salmon



- Spawners turn dull gray on their backs and upper sides
- Lower sides appear cream color or white
- Large, oval spots on back and both lobes of tail remain

Chum (dog) Salmon



- Spawners develop pronounced, vertical calico bands on sides
- Males exhibit large, canine-like teeth

Scan the QR code for Southcentral sport fishing regulations.

Find Ship Creek regulations under the "Anchorage Bowl"



Photographs by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.



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