

2023 Summary

COOK INLET SPORT FISH MANAGEMENT AREAS Northern Cook Inlet, Northern Kenai Peninsula, and Lower Cook Inlet

Northern Cook Inlet Management Area



Greater Susitna River/ Knik Arm Area

Below average escapements since 2012 have resulted in preseason and inseason restrictions and closures on the Susitna and Little Susitna River drainages. This year marked the fourth year of king salmon management under four stock-based goals set on the Susitna River drainage (Deshka, Yentna, Eastside, and Talkeetna rivers). The preseason forecast for Deshka River king salmon was for a total run 7,243 king salmon. Given a forecast below the low end of the BEG and the BEG being missed in 2022, the Deshka River king salmon fishery started the 2023 season closed as did fisheries within the Talkeetna and Eastside Susitna areas. Catch-and-release fishing was allowed by emergency order on the Yentna River drainage and the Little Susitna River as the optimal escapement goal (OEG) on the Yentna River and the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) on the Little Susitna River were attained in 2022.

Westside Susitna Tributaries

The BEG for the Deshka River of 9,000 - 18,000 king salmon was not achieved in 2023 despite the sport fishery being closed throughout the season. The run was four days late relative to historical run timing. The final weir count was 3,741 king salmon. Aerial escapement surveys were conducted in late July on three streams contributing to the Yentna River king salmon stock: Lake Creek, Talachulitna, and Peters Creek. Assessment of the Yentna River OEG of 16,000 – 22,000 is pending data analysis; however, all three aerial counts were well below average. The age composition of the Deshka River king salmon run and forecast for the 2024 season is pending analysis of age data collected at the Deshka River weir.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2023, closed king salmon fishing in the Susitna River drainage, except in the Yentna River, which was restricted to catch-and-release only. Gear was restricted to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure.



Eastside Susitna and Talkeetna Tributaries

Management decisions for Eastside Susitna streams (Units 2, 3, 5, and 6) are based on postseason aerial surveys of eight streams used to estimate run size and escapement of the Eastside (Unit 2 streams along the Parks Highway) king salmon stock and the Talkeetna River stock, which are two stock goals in place since 2020. Counts were successfully conducted on Willow, Little Willow, North Fork Kashwitna, and Montana creeks that collectively contribute to the Eastside king stock and Clear and Prairie creeks that contribute to the Talkeetna stock. Assessment of the Eastside and Talkeetna stock goals is pending data analysis; however, counts on these systems were some of the lowest on record. A survey count of 494 on the Chulitna River was well below the SEG of 1,200 – 2,900 fish.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2023, closed king salmon fishing on Eastside Susitna (Unit 2) and the Talkeetna River (Unit 5). Gear was restricted to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure.

Knik Arm

The SEG for the Little Susitna River is 2,100 - 4,300 king salmon as assessed by weir and 700 - 1,500 fish as assessed by post season aerial survey. This weir-based goal is the primary goal used for assessing escapement unless flooding or some other event results in an incomplete weir count. Use of video at this site has enabled fish to be counted even during periods of high spring runoff when water clarity is poor as was the case throughout the majority of the 2023 season. Cold water temperatures likely impeding upstream migration of king salmon followed by flooding that occurred during the last 10 days of June made assessment of run strength using weir counts difficult. However, daily counts post recovery of the weir following the flooding were below past years in which the goal was achieved. In addition, reports of low fishing success from anglers, guides, and staff also indicated a much weaker run than in 2022 when the escapement goal was narrowly achieved. The sport fishery was closed by emergency order on July 6. The final weir count of 799 was incomplete.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2023, restricted king salmon fishing in the Little Susitna River drainage to catch-and-release only. In addition, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure was allowed in the waters normally open to king salmon fishing.
- On July 6, the Little Susitna was closed to sport fishing by Emergency Order.

West Cook Inlet

Sport fisheries on the Chuitna, Theodore, Lewis, and the Beluga rivers drainages are closed by regulation. An aerial survey was conducted on the Chuitna River in which 372 king salmon were counted, well below the SEG of 1,000 – 1,500 fish. The survey of the Theodore River was not completed in 2023.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2023, closed king salmon fishing on all West Cook Inlet streams not already closed by regulation.





Susitna Tributaries

A weir was operated to count sockeye salmon escapement into Larson Lake, which drains into the Talkeetna River via Larson Creek (Susitna drainage). Weirs on Chelatna Lake (Lake Creek) and Judd Lake (Talachulitna River) were not operated this year due to budget reductions. The sport fishery in Larson Creek, which occurs at the confluence of Larsen Creek and the Talkeetna River, is in relatively close proximity to the weir, allowing for timely inseason management of the fishery. Water levels were favorable toward consistent daily fish passage and fishing success throughout the season. The Larson Creek SEG of 15,000 - 35,000 sockeye salmon was achieved on August 1 with a final count of 38,069 fish.

A Susitna River personal use dip net fishery was implemented by the Board of Fisheries in 2020 to take place on the lower Susitna River from a point located approximately one mile below the old Susitna Station, downstream to the Alexander Creek turnoff/tip of Bell Island. This fishery is remote and only accessible by boat or short field performance aircraft capable of landing on gravel bars. The fishery is part of the Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery management plan and occurs each Saturday and Wednesday between 6:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m. from July 10 through July 31. This was the third year of this fishery. Fishing effort mostly mirrored last season with relatively low participation. Fishing success increased incrementally with each period through the end of July.

Management Actions

- No management actions were implemented during the 2023 season.

Knik Arm

A weir is operated on Fish Creek to assess escapement and as a tool to manage the personal use dip net fishery. The SEG for Fish Creek is 15,000 - 45,000 sockeye salmon. By management plan, a personal use dip net fishery may be opened by emergency order between July 15 and July 31, if the escapement can be projected to be above 35,000 fish. The dip net fishery was opened on July 22 for 10 days. Positive dipnetting reports combined with a strong run suggests harvest estimates may be average to above average (5-yr mean harvest of 25,000 salmon; 22,500 sockeye salmon). The weir was successfully operated through the duration of the run, in which 44,960 sockeye salmon were counted, near the upper end of the SEG range of 15,000 – 45,000 fish.

Management Actions

- On July 22, the Fish Creek Personal Use Dip Net Fishery was opened for all salmon species, except king salmon through July 31.
- On August 1, sport fishing was allowed 7 days a week and the bag limit increased to six per day and six in possession on Fish Creek targeting sockeye salmon.





Susitna Tributaries

Funding was secured to operate the Deshka coho weir through the entirety of the season. Flooding prevented counting fish during the outset of the season through July 27. However, post flood weir indicated far fewer fish missed than needed to project achievement of the SEG of 10,200 – 24,100 fish. Further, reports by guides and anglers and observations by staff indicated below average fishing success on the Deshka and across other Susitna River drainage streams. An emergency order was issued mid-August to close the Deshka River to the retention of coho salmon and reduce the bag limit to one coho salmon and prohibit the use of bait in all other waters of the Susitna River drainage. Another more severe flood was experienced late in the season, ending the weir project on August 25, about 90% through the historical run. A final count of 1,817 is considered to be incomplete; however, it is unlikely the SEG would have been achieved.

Management Actions

- On August 14, the bag limit for coho salmon was reduced to one fish and bait prohibited in the Susitna River drainage.
- On August 17, the Deshka River was closed to the retention of coho salmon and bait prohibited.

Knik Arm

The Little Susitna weir was inundated by flood waters at the outset of the season. However, as the weir was again functional starting July 24, it is unlikely many coho salmon were missed. Initially, weir counts were favorable and produced an upward trending projection that peaked near the upper end of the SEG range by August 4, near the quarter point of the historical run. Bait went into effect on August 6 per regulation. Weir counts fell off as much as a week early relative to historical run timing, indicating an early weak run. Overall fishing success was reportedly low. By mid-August, emergency orders prohibited the use of bait, followed by closure of the sport fishery to the retention of coho salmon. Additional flooding later in the season resulted in losing the count after August 25 or by the 80th percentile of the average historical run. A weir count of 3,726 fish is considered incomplete; however, it is likely the SEG of 9,200-17,700 was missed in 2023.

Fish Creek weir was funded to operate for the full coho salmon season. The SEG of 1,200 – 6,000 fish was attained on August 16, with a final count of 1,534 fish. The run was eight days early based on the midpoint of the average historical run.

Jim Creek weir was funded to operate this season. A weak showing of coho salmon prompted closing the sport fishery to salmon fishing by mid-August at about the quarter point of the historical run. The weir count was ultimately lost to flooding that inundated the weir starting August 28 or at about the 70% point of the historical run. The SEG for Jim Creek of 250 - 700 coho salmon is assessed post season by a foot survey of McRoberts Creek, a small spawning tributary within the Jim Creek system. A survey conducted on September 26 counted 378 coho salmon, within the goal range.

Management Actions

- On August 12, bait use was prohibited on the Little Susitna River.
- On August 17, the bag and possession limit was reduced to one coho salmon on the Little Susitna River.
- On August 19, the Little Susitna River was closed to the retention of coho salmon.



- On August 19, Jim Creek was closed to salmon fishing.

West Cook Inlet

Coho salmon escapement is not monitored on West Cook Inlet (WCI) area streams and ADF&G must rely on trends in harvest and angler effort taken from the Statewide Harvest Survey and reports from anglers and guides when assessing these stocks. Sport fishing success as reportedly good this season in tributaries of WCI.

- No management actions were implemented during the 2023 sport fishing season.



Northern Kenai Peninsula Management Area



Kenai River - Early Run

The outlook for the early-run of Kenai River king salmon in 2023 was below average, with a large fish (>75 cm mid eye to tail fork length or approximately >34 inches in total length) forecast of 2,914 fish. The 2023 forecasted total run was less than the optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 3,900 – 6,600 large fish which starts the sport fishery closed. The total estimated passage through June 30, 2023 at the river mile 14 sonar was 1,975 large king salmon and the preliminary spawning escapement estimate and total inriver run estimate was 1,975 large early-run king salmon.. The run exhibited generally low abundance across all age classes and is preliminarily the second lowest run in the historical data set. The mid-point of the run occurred on June 18 which is 6 days late when compared to the historical mid-point.

Preliminary age composition estimates from length groups show a noticeable low presence of 2-ocean fish but overall, there was a low abundance of all age classes.

Neither the OEG nor the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) were achieved in 2023. The SEG has been achieved or exceeded in four of the last seven years. The OEG has been achieved or exceeded in three of the last seven years.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2023, king salmon fishing was closed from the Kenai River mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake until June 30.
- Netting (preliminary)
 - Approximately 51% were large fish or ≥ 75 cm in total length.
 - Sex ratio of large fish ≥ 75 cm was 61% male and 39% female.
 - King salmon of all sizes sampled were predominately by ocean-age 3 fish (39%), ocean-age 1 (29%), ocean-age 4 fish (20%), and ocean-age 2 fish (12%).



Table 1. Summary of preliminary catch, harvest, and escapement, Kenai River early-run king salmon (≥ 750 mm) fishery, 2023.

Escapement Goal Range	3,900 – 6,600 large king salmon (≥ 75 cm)
Total Catch ^a	0
Total Harvest ^a	Below sonar =0; Above sonar =0; Total =0
Sonar Estimate In-River	1,975
Preliminary Escapement	~ 1,975

^aLower River (below Soldotna Bridge).

Kenai River - Late Run

The outlook for the late-run of Kenai River king salmon in 2023 was well below average, with a large king salmon (>75 cm mid eye to tail fork length) forecast of approximately 13,630 fish. The 2023 forecasted total run was less than the optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 fish and the fishery started closed. The total estimated passage through August 27, 2023, at the river mile 14 sonar was 13,922 large king salmon and the preliminary escapement is 14,502 large fish. The mid-point of the run occurred on July 27 which is on the mean historical mid-point.

The predominate age classes for all sizes of fish are the ocean-age 4 (38%), ocean-age 3 (24%), ocean-age 1 fish (21%), ocean-age 2 (16%), and ocean-age 5 (1%). The low abundance of both predominate large fish age classes (ocean-age 3 and 4) indicates poor production from 2017 and 2018 parent years and corresponds with the overall low abundance of the 2023 return.

The OEG was not achieved and the SEG was achieved in 2023. The SEG has been achieved in four of the last seven years. The lower bound of the OEG has not been achieved since it was created in 2020.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective July 1, 2023, king salmon fishing was closed from the Kenai River mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake.
- On August 1, 2023 bait and multiple hooks were prohibited from the mouth of the Kenai River upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake to reduce incidental catches of king salmon while fishing for other species.
- On August 16, 2023 the prohibition of bait and multiple hooks was extended from the mouth of the Kenai River upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake to reduce incidental catches of king salmon while fishing for other species.
- Netting (preliminary)
 - Approximately 56% of king salmon were ≥ 75 cm in total length.
 - Sex ratios for large fish >75 cm was 51% male and 49% female.
 - King salmon of all sizes sampled were predominately ocean-age 4 fish (38%) followed by ocean-age 3 fish (24%), ocean-age 1 fish (21%), ocean-age 2 (16%) and ocean-age 5 (1%).



Table 1. Summary of preliminary catch, harvest, and escapement, Kenai River late-run king salmon (≥ 75 cm) fishery, 2023.

Escapement Goal Range	15,000 – 30,000 large king salmon (≥ 75 cm)
Total Catch ^a	0
Total Inriver Harvest ^a	Below sonar =0; Above sonar =0; Total =0
Sonar Estimate In-River	13,922
Preliminary Escapement ^b	Approximately 14,502

^a Lower River (below Soldotna Bridge).

^b Includes estimate of king salmon that spawn downstream of sonar.

Kasilof River

In June 2023, approximately 91,801 king salmon smolt were stocked into Crooked Creek to augment natural production and enhance recreational sport fishing opportunity in the Kasilof River. The wild component of the Crooked Creek early-run king salmon return is managed to achieve a SEG of 700 – 1,400 king salmon. The estimated escapement of wild (naturally-produced) king salmon was 500 fish. The egg take goal for future stocking of Crooked Creek was 33 pairs of naturally-produced king salmon of which 22 pairs were spawned in 2023.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2023, the early-run king salmon bag and possession limits were restricted to two hatchery-produced fish, 20 inches or greater in length in the Kasilof River drainage. The retention of naturally-produced king salmon was prohibited. The use of bait and multiple hooks was prohibited downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge until May 16 when bait is allowed by regulation. Multiple hooks continued to be prohibited.
- On July 1, 2023, the bag and possession limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length was one hatchery-produced fish only, and bait and multiple hooks were prohibited from the mouth of the Kasilof River upstream to the Sterling Highway Bridge.



Kenai River

The 2023 Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) sockeye salmon forecast projected a total run of 5.12 million fish: 2.82 million fish to the Kenai River, 1.13 million fish to the Kasilof River, with the remaining fish being comprised of Susitna River, Fish Creek, and unmonitored systems. Based on the preseason forecast, the sockeye salmon run was managed on the middle tier for runs of 2.3 - 4.6 million Kenai River sockeye



salmon, with an inriver goal of 1.1 – 1.4 million sockeye salmon. On July 27, 2023, ADF&G projected the total Kenai River sockeye salmon run to be 3.4 million fish and the department continued to manage for the middle tier with an inriver goal of 1.1 – 1.4 million sockeye salmon. The preliminary inriver sonar passage estimate was 2,351,009 sockeye salmon. Subtracting the recent 10-year average harvest upstream of the sonar (304,570 fish) produces a preliminary escapement estimate of 2,046,439 sockeye salmon, which exceeds the sockeye salmon SEG 750,000–1.30 million fish. Final estimates will be available when the 2023 Statewide Harvest Survey is completed in the fall of 2024.

Management Actions

- On July 21, 2023, the sockeye salmon bag and possession limits were increased to six per day and twelve in possession.

Russian River - Early Run

The escapement goal for Russian River early-run sockeye salmon is a biological escapement goal (BEG) of 22,000 – 42,000 fish. The weir count on July 14, 2023, was 66,818 sockeye salmon and exceeded the BEG.

Management Actions

- On June 14, 2023, the Russian River Sanctuary Area opened early for sport fishing.
- On June 18, 2023, the sockeye salmon bag and possession limits were increased to six per day and twelve in from Skilak Lake upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately 300 yards upstream of the public boat launch at Sportsman's Landing (including the Russian River Sanctuary Area) and the Russian River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G marker located approximately 600 yards downstream from the Russian River Falls.
- On June 24, 2023, the sockeye bag and possession limits were increased to nine per day, eighteen in possession from Skilak Lake upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately 300 yards upstream of the public boat launch at Sportsman's Landing (including the Russian River Sanctuary Area) and the Russian River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G marker located approximately 600 yards downstream from the Russian River Falls.

Russian River - Late Run

The escapement goal for Russian River late-run sockeye salmon is an SEG of 44,000 – 85,000 fish. The final Russian River weir count on September 10, 2023, was 160,430 sockeye salmon and exceeded the SEG.

Management Actions

- On August 9, 2023, the bag and possession limits for sockeye salmon were increased to six per day and twelve in possession from Skilak Lake upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately 300 yards upstream of the public boat launch at Sportsman's Landing (including the Russian River Sanctuary Area) and the Russian River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G marker located approximately 600 yards downstream from the Russian River Falls.



Kasilof River

The forecast for Kasilof River sockeye salmon was 1,126,000 fish. Kasilof River sockeye salmon are managed for a BEG of 140,000 – 320,000 salmon, and an OEG of 140,000 – 370,000 fish. The sockeye salmon sonar enumerated salmon passage through August 27, 2023, with a preliminary estimate of 932,896 fish.

Management Actions

- On June 30, 2023, sockeye salmon limits were increased in all portions of the Kasilof River open to salmon fishing to six per day and twelve in possession.



Kenai River

Kenai River coho salmon are not monitored for abundance in season and are managed through angler reporting, observations, and conservative general regulation. Angler reports indicate that coho salmon were showing up in the harvest during the last week of July and catches were reported as fair to good through August and fair into September. September reports generally indicated a mix of angler success from day to day.

Management Actions

- On August 1, 2023, bait and multiple hooks were prohibited in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to Skilak Lake to minimize incidental catch of late-run king salmon and was effective through August 15.
- On August 16, 2023, bait and multiple hooks were prohibited in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to Skilak Lake to minimize incidental catch of late-run king salmon and was effective through August 30.



Kasilof River and Kenai River

Harvest and participation information for the 2023 season are currently being compiled and will be available this coming winter. The Kasilof River set gill net personal use fishery was closed by emergency order to reduce mortality of Kenai River bound king salmon. The Kasilof River dipnet fishery was open by regulation from June 25 through August 7, 2023. The area open to dipnetting was expanded for the Kasilof fishery on June 25. The Kenai River dipnet fishery opened by regulation on July 10 through July 31, with no retention of king salmon allowed by emergency order.



Harvest Reports

- Beginning in 2022 harvest reporting was required to be done online by August 15. Reminder letters were mailed to permit holders who have not yet returned their harvest record. Estimates of total harvest will be available in January 2024.

Management Actions

- On June 15, 2023, the Kasilof River personal use set gillnet fishery was closed.
- On June 25, 2023, the Kasilof River personal use dipnetting area was expanded. Dipnetting from the shore was allowed from ADF&G markers on Cook Inlet beaches upstream to the Sterling Highway Bridge and dipnetting from a boat was allowed from ADF&G markers located on Cook Inlet beaches upstream to ADF&G markers at approximately river mile 3 of the Kasilof River.
- On July 10, 2023, retention of king salmon in the Kenai River personal use dipnet fishery was prohibited.



Lower Cook Inlet Management Area



Anchor River

The 2023 preseason inriver forecast of 3,659 king salmon was below the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 3,800-7,600 fish. Given the uncertainty with recent annual runs, preseason restrictions were issued to close the fishery. King salmon escapement was monitored on the South and North forks of Anchor River beginning in early-May and continued throughout the run. The preliminary escapement estimate was 2,348 fish, which did not achieve the SEG. The cumulative run-timing mid-point (July 6) was 23 days late compared to the historical average mid-point of June 14.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order closed the Anchor River and Deep Creek to all sport fishing through July 15.

Ninilchik River

No preseason forecast was estimated for the 2023 wild Ninilchik River king salmon run. Hatchery king salmon are stocked in the Ninilchik River to support the inriver sport fishery. The fishery occurred for the three 3-day weekends with preseason restrictions that prohibited the retention of wild king salmon but liberalized the hatchery bag and possession limits from one to two fish 20" or longer. The use of multiple hooks and treble hooks were also prohibited with preseason restrictions, but bait was allowed. Effort generally increased over the weekend fisheries but declined through the continuous hatchery-only fishery that began on June 16. Fishing success was described as fair over the weekend fisheries and anglers consistently harvested hatchery king salmon. Harvest was poor to fair in the continuous fishery. The SEG of 750-1,300 wild king salmon was not achieved in 2023 for the second year in a row.

King salmon escapement was fully enumerated just above the fishery at approximately two miles upstream from the mouth. An instream video weir was operated from mid-May to early-August at this location, and the count was 550 wild king salmon and 993 hatchery king salmon. The mid-point of the wild and hatchery runs to the lower weir were June 20 and June 24, respectively.

The broodstock collection weir, located approximately five miles upstream from the mouth, was used to monitor escapement in regard to meeting the current SEG of 750 - 1,300 wild king salmon. The broodstock collection weir location also used instream video and was operated from mid-May through mid-August. After accounting for the removal of broodstock, the escapement was 328 wild king salmon, which did not meet the SEG. Based on weir counts at both locations, 66% of the wild king salmon and 68% of the hatchery king salmon counted through the lower weir also reached the broodstock collection weir.



Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order restricted the harvest of wild fish and increased the bag and possession limits of hatchery king salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, from one to two fish. The use of multiple hooks and treble hooks was also prohibited.

Deep Creek

No preseason forecast was estimated for the 2023 Deep Creek king salmon run. The sport fishery was closed with preseason restrictions based on management actions for the Anchor River. Deep Creek has a SEG of 350 king salmon and is assessed post-season via a single aerial survey. No survey was conducted in 2023 due to a lack of funding.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order closed the Anchor River and Deep Creek to all sport fishing through July 15.

Marine Fisheries

Sport fishing for king salmon in Cook Inlet was popular in the Winter (September 1-March 31) and the Summer (April 1-August 31) fisheries. The summer fishery north of Bluff Point began with preseason restrictions to protect king salmon returning to Cook Inlet drainages. The performance of these fisheries are only assessed post season with the Statewide Harvest Survey and charter logbook data, and harvest estimates will not be available until 2024. In the winter fishery, anglers found good success in January, but fishing success was lower in February and March. The summer fisheries were with poor success from April through mid-May when Upper Cook Inlet salt waters closed by preseason restrictions. From mid-May through early-August, small numbers of king salmon were caught throughout lower Cook Inlet and fishing improved in offshore locations throughout the remainder of the season.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 16, 2023, closed king salmon fishing in the Cook Inlet saltwaters north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.) through July 31.
- A preseason emergency order effective May 16, 2023, reduced the king salmon bag and possession limits from 2 to 1 fish in the Cook Inlet saltwaters south of the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.) through July 31.



Freshwater Fisheries

There are no preseason forecasts and no escapement goals for any lower Kenai Peninsula roadside stream (Anchor and Ninilchik rivers, Deep and Stariski creeks) coho salmon stocks. Weirs were operated on the Anchor River to enumerate escapement. The preliminary escapement count was 1,494 fish when the weirs were pulled on August 26 for the season due to flooding. The run was near the midpoint of the run when the



weir operation ended. The total escapement was projected to be 3,200 fish.

Sport fishing effort was low throughout August on all streams and was further reduced towards the end of August with flooding stream levels. The Statewide Harvest Survey estimates harvest for these fisheries and will not be available until 2024.

Marine Fisheries

Sport fishing for coho salmon in Cook Inlet was popular from late-July through early-September. Most effort was concentrated in offshore locations. The Statewide Harvest Survey estimates for this fishery will not be available until 2024.

Management Actions

- No management actions were implemented during 2023 for freshwater and marine coho salmon fisheries season.

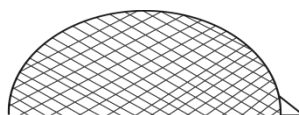


Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon

In 2023, the stocking goals were met for Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon (NDFL) on the Homer Spit with approximately 315,000 king salmon smolt and 120,000 coho salmon smolt. This year's king salmon stocking was the sixth consecutive year with a 30% increase over historical king salmon stockings. The Statewide Harvest Survey estimates harvest for these fisheries will not be available until 2024. Overall, the king and coho salmon fisheries were likely similar to the harvest trends in recent years. There were several hundred king salmon harvested by anglers during the period open to snagging. During the period open to snagging for coho salmon, anglers harvested a couple hundred fish but was not as successful as the king salmon period open to snagging.

Management Actions

- Snagging was allowed in the NDFL from July 1 through July 4 to harvest the remainder of the king salmon milling in the lagoon prior to coho salmon returning.
- Snagging was allowed in the NDFL from August 16 through December 31 to harvest the remainder of the coho salmon run.



Personal Use Dip Net Fisheries

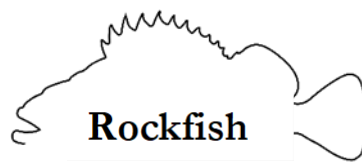


China Poot Creek

The China Poot Creek personal use dip net fishery does not require a permit for participation so there is no harvest and effort data available for 2023. The Commercial Fish Division conducts weekly foot surveys to count sockeye and pink salmon. There was a large build-up of over 500 sockeye salmon in the creek before the fishery opened on July 1, 2023. Success through most of July was fair to good. The success in this fishery is most likely attributed to changes in commercial fishing and cost recovery operations associated with the stocking. A stream survey was conducted on August 3 and over 500 sockeye salmon remained in the creek so the fishery season was extended for another week through August 13. Effort was low during the extension period but success was high for those that participated.

Management Actions

- The China Poot Personal Use Dipnet Fishery season was extended by 7 days and closed on August 13.



Marine Fisheries

The harvest of rockfish has increased steadily since 2013, and sustainable levels of rockfish harvest are currently unknown. The sport fishery is monitored with harvest data from SWHS and Charter Logbook program and biological data from port sampling program in the Homer Harbor. Preliminary stock assessment work was reviewed in spring 2023 and changes in the biological data along with the increased harvest are indicators of a possible change in the population structure of rockfish in this area. The 2022, rockfish harvest in Cook Inlet salt waters was over 60,000 fish which is the largest documented annual harvest. The 2023 harvest will not be finalized until fall 2024.

Management Actions

- Effective May 15 – December 31, 2023, the bag and possession limit for rockfish was reduced to 3 per day, 6 in possession.

Razor Clams

East

All East Cook Inlet beaches remained closed to sport and personal use clamming for the start of 2023 until abundance surveys could be conducted in the spring. Surveys were conducted in April and May at both Clam Gulch and Ninilchik area beaches. Abundances of adult-sized razor clams at Clam Gulch were below the threshold outlined in the management plan to open the fishery. Abundances of adult-sized razor clams at Ninilchik were above the threshold outlined in the management plan to open the fishery for the first time since 2013. The sport and personal use fisheries were restricted to bag and possession limits of 15 and a season from July 1 through July 4. The area opened was from three miles north of the Ninilchik River to the tip of the Homer Spit. A creel census was conducted to monitor harvest and effort during low tide for all days the fishery was open at the primary access locations from the Ninilchik River south to Whiskey Gulch area. The preliminary effort estimate is 5,417 digger days for the entire survey area with 1,542 diggers days



on Ninilchik South beach. Total harvest was 22,886 adult razor clams and the beach with the highest harvest was Ninilchik North (7,773 adult clams). Based on this harvest and the spring abundance estimate, the harvest rate of adult clams was 2.3% at Ninilchik South, which was well below the maximum harvest rate of 10% outlined in the management plan.

Management Actions

- An inseason emergency order opened the Ninilchik Management area beaches within East Cook Inlet to personal use and sport clamming from 3 miles north of the Ninilchik River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit from July 1 through July 4.

West

The West Cook Inlet beaches remained open to sport, and personal use clamming in 2023. Harvest estimates for the sport fishery are not available yet, but clambers report good success at Polly Creek and Crescent River Bar areas with larger clams being found at Crescent River Bar.

Management Actions

- No management actions were implemented during the 2023 sport and personal use fisheries season.



Tanner Crab

Cook Inlet Tanner Crab

No trawl surveys were conducted in 2022 so the limited fishery was implemented for the 2022-2023 season. The sport and subsistence fisheries occurred from October 1, 2022, through February 28, 2023. The preliminary combined sport and subsistence Tanner crab harvest in the Cook Inlet & North Gulf Coast area was 7,739 male Tanner crabs. During the 2022-2023 season, 2,477 sport and subsistence permits were issued. Of these, 86% reported and will be eligible to receive a permit for the upcoming season. In total, 347 individuals did not report and are ineligible to receive a permit for the 2022-2023 season. Permits are only available through ADF&Gs online store.

Management Actions

No management actions were implemented for the 2022-2023 fishery season.



Table 1 – Select Southcentral Region Salmon Escapement Goals and Escapements for king salmon, 2014 to 2023 (preliminary).

System	2023 Goal Range		Type	Initial Year											Preliminary	
	Lower	Upper			2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023		
KING SALMON																
Bristol Bay																
Nushagak River	55,000	120,000	SEG	2013	70,482	98,019	125,368	56,961	97,239	47,882	43,032	55,222	44,434	31,499		
Alagnak River	2,700		LB SEG	2007	NC	917	1,283	435	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC		
Kodiak/Alaska Peninsula																
Karluk River	3,000	6,000	BEG	2011	1,182	2,777	3,434	2,600	3,155	3,898	3,344	2,796	2,629	378		
Ayakulik River	4,800	8,400	BEG	2017	789	2,392	4,594	3,712	2,149	1,948	2,402	2,961	2,845	590		
Chignik River	1,300	2,700	BEG	2002	2,895	2,041	1,843	1,137	825	1,517	1,278	1,072	661	267		
Nelson River	2,400	5,000	BEG	2019	3,801	2,440	4,618	1,502	5,022	11,653	2,298	4,539	3,785	4,078		
Upper Cook Inlet																
Alexander Creek	1,900	3,700	SEG	2020	911	1,117	754	170	296	1,297	596	288	NC	NC		
Campbell Creek	380		LB SEG	2011	274	654	544	475	287	393	154	339	423	171		
Chuitna River	1,000	1,500	SEG	2002	1,398	1,965	1,372	235	939	2,115	869	806	NC	372		
Chulitna River	1,200	2,900	SEG	2020	1,011	3,137	1,151	NC	1125	2,765	845	1,535	NC	494		
Clear (Chunilna) Creek	eliminated (see Talkeetna Stock)			2020	1,390	1,205	NS	780	940	1,511						
Crooked Creek	700	1,400	SEG	2002	1,411	1,456	1,747	911	714	1,444	830	594	735	500		
Deshka River	eliminated (see Deshka Stock)			2020	16,335	24,316	22,874	11,383	8,544	9,711						
Deshka Stock	9,000	18,000	BEG	2020							10,638	18,674	5,440	3,741		
Eastside Susitna Stock	13,000	25,000	SEG	2020							14,995	15,208	7,654	Pending		
Goose Creek	eliminated (see Eastside Susitna Stock)			2020	232	NC	NC	148	90	NC						
Kenai River - Early Run (all fish)	eliminated ^a			2017	5,311	6,190	9,177									
Kenai River - Early Run (large fish)	2,800	5,600	SEG	2017												
	3,900	6,600	OEG	2017				6,726	2,910	4,128	2,439	4,045	2,047	1,975		
Kenai River - Late Run (all fish)	eliminated ^a			2017	17,451	22,642	18,790									
Kenai River - Late Run (large fish)	13,500	27,000	SEG	2017				20,615	17,289	11,638						
	15,000	30,000	OEG	2020							11,909	12,176	13,952	14,502 ^c		
Lake Creek	eliminated (see Yetna Stock)			2020	3,506	4,686	3,588	1,601	1,767	2,692						
Lewis River	eliminated			2020	61	5 ^u	0	0 ^b	0	0 ^b						
Little Susitna River (Aerial) ^c	700	1,500	SEG	2020	1,759	1,507	1,622	1,192	530	NC	NC	889	NC	NC		
Little Susitna River (weir)	2,100	4,300	SEG	2017				2,531	549 ^u	3,666	2,445 ^u	3,121	2,288	799 ^u		
Little Willow Creek	eliminated (see Eastside Susitna Stock)			2020	684	788	675	840	280	631						
Montana Creek	eliminated (see Eastside Susitna Stock)			2020	953	1,416	692	603	473	789						
Peters Creek	eliminated (see Yetna Stock)			2020	1,443	1,514	1,122	307	1674	1,209						
Prairie Creek	eliminated (see Talkeetna Stock)			2020	2,812	3,290	1,853	1,930	1194	2,371						
Sheep Creek	eliminated (see Eastside Susitna Stock)			2020	262	NC	NC	NC	334	NC						
Talachulitna River	eliminated (see Yetna Stock)			2020	2,256	2,582	4,295	1,087	1483	3,225						
Talkeetna Stock	9,000	17,500	SEG	2020							7,283	9,107	4,288	Pending		
Theodore River	500	1,000	SEG	2020	312	426	68	21	18	201	111	38	NC	NC		
Willow Creek	eliminated (see Eastside Susitna Stock)			2020	1,335	2,046	1,814	1,329	411	897						
Yetna Stock	16,000	22,000	OEG	2020							14,850	18,890	16,583	Pending		
Lower Cook Inlet																
Anchor River	3,800	7,600	SEG	2017	2,497	10,241	7,146	5,796	3,162	5,691	3,558	4,300	3,147	23,338		
Deep Creek	350		LB SEG	2017	601	535	NS	753	182	751	327	NC	NC	NC		
Ninilchik River	750	1,300	SEG	2017	891	874	572	855	979	1,185	833	772	687	330		

Note : NA = data not available; NC = no count; LB SEG = lower-bound SEG.

^a Kenai River king salmon all fish SEG's were eliminated and large fish goals were instituted

^b Lewis River mouth naturally obstructed.

^c Little Susitna River king salmon aerial survey goal is only used to assess escapement if weir count is not available.

^d Incomplete count because weir was pulled before end of run due to flood/fire evacuation, etc

^e Sonar assessment extended seven days, count August 20 was 13,257 large king salmon

Table 2 – Select Southcentral Region Salmon Escapement Goals and Escapements for sockeye and coho salmon, 2014 to 2023 (preliminary).

System	2023 Goal Range		Type	Initial Year											Preliminary	
	Lower	Upper			2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023		
COHO SALMON																
Kodiak/Alaska Peninsula																
Buskin River	4,700	9,600	BEG	2014	7,345	3,363	2,513	5,559	1,066	5,537	630 ^a	7,919	2,526	NC		
Olds River	500		LB SEG	2019	1,320	1,357	1,634	10,54	1,000	NS	794	923	1,129	NA		
American River	400		LB SEG	2011	1,595	530	500	410	300	NS	279	297	360	NA		
Pasagshak River	1,200		LB SEG	2011	4,934	1,790	667	701	1,200	488	2,031	4,721	618	NA		
Upper Cook Inlet																
Fish Creek (Knik)	1,200	6,000	SEG	2020	10,283	7,912	2,484 ^a	8,966	5,022	3,025	4,555 ^a	6,424 ^a	NC ^a	1,534		
Jim Creek	250	700	SEG	2020	122	571	106	5,646	758	162	735	1,499	1,899	378		
Little Susitna River	9,200	17,700	SEG	2020	24,211	12,756	10,049	17,781	7,583	4,229	9,779 ^o	10,229 ^{ao}	2,792 ^{ao}	2,949 ^{ao}		
Deshka River	10,200	24,100	SEG	2017				36,869	12,962	10,445	5,368 ^a	3,431 ^a	3,137 ^a	1,817 ^a		
SOCKEYE SALMON																
Bristol Bay																
Kvichak River ^c	2,000,000	10,000,000	SEG	2010	4,458,540	7,341,612	4,462,728	3,163,404	4,398,708	2,371,242	4,030,968	4,703,520	4,224,882	3,751,686		
Alagnak River (Tower) ^d	210,000		LB SEG	2018	200,524	5,770,650	NA	2,041,825	1,581,426	820,458	2,386,518	3,236,904	1,668,222	1,099,050		
Alagnak River (Aerial) ^e	125,000		LB SEG	2016			696,400	629,200								
Naknek River	800,000	2,000,000	SEG ^f	2015	1,474,428	1,920,954	1,691,910	1,899,972	2,221,152	2,911,470	4,112,160	2,796,534	1,921,296	1,156,206		
Egegik River	800,000	2,000,000	SEG	2015	1,382,466	2,160,792	1,837,260	2,600,982	1,608,354	2,340,210	2,389,728	1,832,196	1,786,152	1,562,700		
Ugashik River	500,000	1,400,000	SEG	2015	640,158	1,564,638	1,635,270	1,186,446	1,167,792	1,547,748	1,745,940	2,859,930	1,436,784	1,128,896		
Wood River	700,000	1,800,000	SEG	2015	2,764,614	1,941,474	1,309,707	4,274,224	7,507,254	2,073,276	2,243,886	4,410,156	3,747,612	2,648,616		
Igushik River	150,000	400,000	SEG	2015	340,590	651,172	469,230	578,700	1,581,426	256,074	323,814	878,952	378,768	542,496		
Nushagak River	370,000	900,000	SEG	2015	618,477	796,684	680,513	2,852,308	1,164,701	709,349	1,228,059	4,697,299	3,455,272	1,914,555		
Kodiak/Alaska Peninsula																
Buskin River	5,000	8,000	SEG	2011	13,976	8,719	11,584	7,214	4,281	12,297	7,739	2,230	8,117	1,755		
Afognak River	20,000	50,000	BEG	2005	36,345	38,151	33,167	22,151	17,601	26,817	24,284	31,997	29,509	35,559		
Saltery River	15,000	35,000	BEG	2011	29,047	42,468	57,867	39,315	22,845	22,183	24,987	64,602	25,615	47,936		
Pasagshak River	3,000		LB SEG	2011	1,582	2,077	7,053	11,021	2,019	4,537	3,522	8,551	4,377	4,345		
Karluk River Early Run	150,000	250,000	BEG	2014	252,097	260,097	164,760	242,599	205,054	186,510	157,441	128,373	175,336	182,172		
Ayakulik River Early Run	140,000	280,000	SEG	2011	210,040	218,178	182,589	204,497	266,333	279,639	220,935	265,756	251,690	200,143		
Fraser River	75,000	170,000	BEG	2008	200,296	219,093	122,585	129,227	201,161	169,627	137,570	186,632	118,509	100,477		
Upper Cook Inlet																
Fish Creek (Knik)	15,000	45,000	SEG	2017	43,915	102,309	46,202	63,882	72,157	76,264	64,408	99,324 ^a	58,333 ^a	44,960		
Kasilof River	140,000	370,000	OEG	2020	439,977	470,679	239,981	358,724	394,309	378,416	545,654	521,859	971,604	932,896		
	140,000	320,000	BEG	2020												
Kenai River ^g	OEG eliminated			2017	1,218,342	1,400,047	1,119,988									
	750,000	1,300,000	SEG	2017				1,071,064	886,761	1,457,031	1,505,940	2,148,955	1,263,170	2,046,439		
	varies based on tier		Inriver					1,308,498	1,035,761	1,849,054	1,714,565	2,441,825	1,567,750	2,351,020		
Russian River - Early Run	22,000	42,000	BEG	2011	44,920	50,226	38,739	37,123	44,110	125,942	27,103	46,976	61,098	66,818		
Russian River - Late Run	44,000	85,000	SEG	2020	52,277	46,223	37,837	45,012	71,052	64,585 ^a	78,832	123,950	124,561	160,430		
Chelatna Lake	20,000	45,000	SEG	2017	26,212	69,750	60,792	26,986	20,438	26,303 ^a	NC	NC	NC	NC		
Judd Lake	15,000	40,000	SEG	2017	22,416	47,684	NA	35,731	30,844	44,145	31,220	49,250	38,442	NC		
Larson Lake	15,000	35,000	SEG	2017	12,040	23,214	14,333	31,866	23,444	9,699	12,018	21,987	17,436	38,069		
Lower Cook Inlet																
English Bay	6,000	13,500	SEG	2002	7,832	6,290	7,673	20,751	18,083	24,044	31,486	6,328	11,425	23,661		
Delight Lake	5,100	10,600	SEG	2017	22,289	3,220	5,110	5,380	13,428	17,410	12,299	7,525	22,717	6,901		
Desire Lake	4,800	11,900	SEG	2017	11,480	2,830	6,740	9,450	9,840	9,040	2,260	3,323	20,460	14,700		
Bear Lake	700	8,300	SEG	2002	9,090	9,560	9,011	9,207	10,568	9,185	8,212	11,318	9,962	7,975		

Note : NA = data not available; NC = no count; LB SEG = lower-bound SEG.

^a Incomplete count because weir was pulled before end of run due to flood/fire evacuation, etc

^b Preliminary escapement estimate uses weir count minus five year average harvest above the weir.

^c Prior to 2010 Kvichak River had a pre-peak/peak-cycle escapement goal of 6-10 million sockeye and an off-peak escapement goal of 2-10 million fish.

^d 2009 to 2015 Alagnak River sockeye salmon escapements for Alagnak River (Tower) escapement goal are expanded aerial surveys.

^e Alagnak River sockeye salmon aerial survey-based escapement goal will be used in years that the Alagnak River tower is not operated.

^f Naknek River has an OEG of 800,000-2,000,000 sockeye salmon when the Naknek River Special Harvest Area is open to fishing.

^g Kenai River sockeye salmon uses the best estimate of sport harvest upstream of sonar.

^h Weir not operational