



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF SPORT FISH

LOWER COOK INLET SPORT FISHERIES 2007 MANAGEMENT OUTLOOK

Issued May 4, 2007

The Lower Cook Inlet Management Area

This outlook covers the Lower Cook Inlet Management Area (LCI), which includes the freshwater drainages on the west side of the Kenai Peninsula south of the Kasilof River drainage to Gore Point, the freshwater drainages on the west side of Cook Inlet from the south end of Chisik Island to Cape Douglas, and the marine waters of Cook Inlet bounded by these landmarks. Summer recreational fishing opportunities range from bank fishing in small clearwater streams, to saltwater trolling and jigging for salmon and bottomfish, and clam digging. Popular major drainages include the Ninilchik River, Deep Creek, and Anchor River. The Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon on the Homer Spit is also a popular saltwater destination.

General

This is a preseason advisory only. Anglers are advised to carefully consult a regulation summary booklet before fishing. Daily and annual bag limits, size limits and permitted gear vary from place to place in Lower Cook Inlet, so please take the time to familiarize yourself with the regulations. The 2007 Southcentral Alaska regulation booklets have been released.

Inseason Regulation Changes

Sport fishing regulations are subject to inseason changes by emergency order. A 24-hour telephone hotline recording for Lower Cook Inlet emergency orders can be reached by dialing **907-235-6930**. Anglers can also check our Emergency Orders and News Releases website at www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us The Department generally tries to avoid disrupting sport fisheries as much as possible, but the seasonal variability of fish stocks, mandates of regulatory management plans, and priorities established by state law require us to issue emergency orders nearly every year. Inseason restrictions and liberalizations are imposed only after extensive internal review, and only with the goal of conserving fisheries for the future.

KING (CHINOOK) SALMON

The king salmon runs to Anchor River and Deep Creek may be lower than average because the strongest component of the return were eggs incubating in the gravel when the severe 2002 floods on the southern Kenai Peninsula occurred, thus mortality may have been high. Adult king and silver salmon escapement into the Anchor River will be counted with a combination of sonar and weir in 2007; this is the fifth year for this project. The Anchor River will be closed within 50 feet of the sonar and 300 feet of the weir, once it is installed. By Emergency Order, the Department will open the Ninilchik River seven days per week below the regulatory marker to sport fishing for hatchery kings salmon beginning Saturday, May 26, 12:01 a.m. until

Sunday July 15, 11:59 p.m.. Harvest of wild fish will be allowed only on Memorial Day weekend, the next two weekends and the Mondays following those weekends. Only one single hook will be allowed from May 26 to July 15. The use of bait will be allowed. The king salmon bag and possession limits in the Ninilchik River remain 2 per day, only one king salmon harvested daily may be a wild fish. King salmon 20 inches or greater count towards the five fish annual limit and must be recorded. Wild king salmon may be recognized by the presence of the small fleshy adipose fin immediately in front (towards the fish's head) of the tail; hatchery king salmon are recognized by the missing adipose fin and a healed fin scar on the back where the fin was removed. This year department personnel will net king salmon in the Ninilchik River one day per week in mid-week to assess the weekly proportion of hatchery fish in the river. We expect an average run of hatchery produced king salmon to the Ninilchik River.

COHO (SILVER) SALMON

Currently, there is insufficient data available to predict the 2007 silver salmon run to the Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River because the escapement of the 2003 parent year is unknown and escapement strength can vary widely from year to year. In 2006, there was little evidence of impacts to coho salmon abundance from the 2002 flood. Future impacts to the runs from flood-related habitat change are possible.

SOCKEYE (RED) SALMON

Red salmon released by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) for the commercial harvest are expected to arrive in early-July to Tutka Bay Lagoon and China Poot Bay. CIAA will conduct a cost recovery operation at both locations. The red salmon run this year will be the first to Tutka Bay Lagoon from the release there in 2005 and approximately 8,000 fish are expected to return. Anticipate an emergency order for Tutka Bay Lagoon to prohibit sport fishing near CIAA's net pens. The expected return to China Poot Bay is 82,000 red salmon. Please avoid commercial vessels so they can conduct their operations safely and efficiently.

SALTWATER STOCKED FISHERIES

Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon

The early runs of kings and silvers to the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon (NDFL) are expected to be average; about 3,000 and 8,000, respectively. Kings begin returning to the NDFL in mid-May. Beginning in mid-August, the late-run silver salmon return to the NDFL is expected to be 18,000 to 24,000 fish. The State, municipality of Homer, English Bay Corporation, Friends of the Fishing Hole, private individuals, and local businesses contribute \$25,000 that is matched by the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) to stock 100,000 late-run silver salmon smolts. In 2006, 250,000 extra late run silver smolts were stocked that will return this year.

Halibut Cove Lagoon and Seldovia Harbor

The early king runs begin returning to Halibut Cove Lagoon and Seldovia in mid-May. The runs are expected to be average with a return of approximately 1,500 kings to each location. Approximately 8,000 silvers are expected to return to Seldovia beginning in mid-August.

SHELLFISH

Hardshell clams

Hardshell clam stocks throughout most of Kachemak Bay are healthy. Low littleneck (steamer) clam abundance has been found in Department surveys of the two gravel bars favored by diggers at the entrance to China Poot Bay and on the shoreline from Mallard Bay to Glacier Spit. The decline is thought to have resulted from an environmental influences because the decline greatly exceeds the harvest from these locations.

Razor clams

Razor clams dug on eastern Cook Inlet beaches from the Clam Gulch access road to the south about 15 miles are small, with an average length of less than 4 inches. The smaller clam size indicates a recent spawning event occurred and that small clams are replenishing the area while older clams have died off. Adult-sized razor clams are abundant elsewhere along the Eastside beaches.

Crab and shrimp

Fisheries for king crab, Dungeness crab and Tanner crab, as well as for shrimp in Cook Inlet remain closed. Department surveys find little evidence that king crab and shrimp stocks are recovering.

In Kachemak Bay, adult Tanner crab numbers are rebounding but stocks are not large enough yet to support a harvest. Catches of juvenile Tanner crab in Department surveys outside of Kachemak Bay in 2001 to 2006 present a hopeful sign for the future.

Survey catches of Dungeness crabs in 2006 were higher than average but more years of high catches are needed before a fishery can be opened.

SPINY DOGFISH

Anglers fishing for halibut and other bottomfish can probably expect high catches of dogfish again this year, beginning in mid- to late July. Spiny dogfish travel in large packs, so be prepared to release a few or pick up and move rather far to avoid them. Remember that it is illegal to intentionally waste or destroy any species of sport-caught fish, including dogfish. The bag limit for all shark species is one fish per day and two per year, and they must be recorded immediately on a fishing license or harvest card. If you keep a dogfish caught on sport gear, you may use the head, tail, fins, and viscera for bait.

HALIBUT

The daily bag limit for halibut is two fish of any size in Southcentral Alaska. Halibut anglers should expect a season similar to last year in terms of the availability and sizes of fish. Halibut growth rates in Southcentral Alaska continue to be low compared to historical rates, resulting in an abundance of smaller, older fish. Overall the halibut population is expected to decline slightly over the next few years due to lower than average recruitment. Guides are reminded that an emergency order was issued to prohibit skipper and crew from retaining fish while paying clients are on board the vessel, and the maximum number of fishing poles fishing may not exceed the number of paying clients. This emergency order is effective beginning May 1, 2007, through December 31, 2007.

OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

Division of Sport Fish Office in Homer

For additional information you may stop by the Homer office or call us at **907-235-8191**. For in-season regulatory advisories and emergency order restrictions/liberalizations, call our recorded message at **907-235-6930**. Additional information can be found on our web sites at the addresses listed at the end of this outlook. The Division of Sport Fish Homer office physical and mailing address is 3298 Douglas Place, Homer, AK, 99603.

Fishing Guides and Businesses Registration

Guides must write down in their logbook harvest and release information for individual paying and nonpaying (**Comped**) clients INCLUDING halibut. Logbook pages must be turned in weekly. Your validated 2007 registration **MUST** be in your possession before you accept clients. Saltwater charter boats must have a logbook on board. Renewal forms were mailed out to those who were registered in the 2006 season. Forms for new sport fishing guides and businesses are available at ADF&G offices, or on the web. Contact Dora Sigurdsson in Anchorage at 907-267-2390, or email her at dora_sigurdsson@fishgame.state.ak.us for more information.

ADF&G WEB SITES

The ADF&G web site is a rich source of fisheries information, including weekly in-season fishing reports, fishery informational and research publications, trip planning tips, regulations, in-season Emergency Orders, and even recipes. We regularly update our web pages so please visit our sites often. Anglers can even buy their licenses and king stamps online.

Department of Fish and Game home page; all divisions: www.adfg.state.ak.us

Sport Fish Home Page:

www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us

Southcentral Region Sport Emergency Orders:

www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/eonr/index.cfm?region=Region%202%2DSouthcentral

Lower Cook Inlet Area general information and important links:

www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/Region2/areas/homer/homhome.cfm

Weekly Lower Cook Inlet updates for in-season information:

www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/Region2/weekly/update.cfm?area_key=8

License and king salmon tag purchases:

www.admin.adfg.state.ak.us/license

Sport Fishing Regulations:

www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/reghome.cfm

Information for Sport Fish Business Owners and Guides:

www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/guides/Guide.cfm

Southcentral fishing information brochures:

www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/region2/pubs.cfm

Division of Sport Fish Strategic Plan

www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/stratplan/sphome.cfm

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If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire further information please write to ADF&G, P.O. Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811-5526; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4040 N. Fairfield Drive, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 or O.E.O., U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240.

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