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Advisory Announcement

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2026 Lower Cook Inlet Commercial Salmon Fishery Outlook

This outlook is provided to assist the commercial salmon industry in planning for the 2026 season in the Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) Management Area. Information regarding the forecasts used to create this document will soon be available on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) web site:

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

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) manages the Trail Lakes Hatchery, Port Graham Hatchery, and Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery. Hatchery forecasts can be found by contacting CIAA directly.

Inseason modifications to harvest projections, season opening dates, and strategies for weekly fishing periods may occur as fisheries develop. Fishery announcements from the Homer office may occur on Fridays at 2:00 p.m., and at other times as required. Interested individuals may sign up to receive email announcements here: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>. Recorded commercial fisheries announcements will be available at 907-235-7307. Harvest information and fisheries announcements are located on the ADF&G web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyarealci.salmon>. The next advisory announcement is expected to be released at 2:00 p.m., Friday, April 24.

The commercial harvest from LCI is forecast to be 446,980 salmon, of which 39,800 fish (9%) are anticipated to be of hatchery-origin harvested from special harvest areas (SHAs) (Table 1). Additional hatchery-origin fish are harvested incidentally with wild fish outside of SHAs. Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association forecasts a total of 274,000 hatchery-produced sockeye and 9,200 pink salmon to return to LCI release sites in 2026. Of those, CIAA projects to harvest 234,200 sockeye (85%) for cost recovery and broodstock, and 9,200 pink salmon (100%) for broodstock.

Set Gillnet Fishery

The Southern District is expected to open for the 2026 season on Monday, June 1 at 6:00 a.m. for a 48-hour period. Subsequent commercial fishing periods will likely be 48 hours in duration beginning at 6:00 a.m. on Mondays and Thursdays, as specified in regulation. Harvest projections for this district and gear are 27,000 sockeye, 8,600 pink, 1,900 chum, 170 coho, and 130 Chinook salmon. The Port Graham Subdistrict is anticipated to open to commercial set gillnet harvest on June 1 and remain on a schedule concurrent with other areas in the Southern District for this gear. Fishing time in the Port Graham Subdistrict will be closely linked to escapement levels in English Bay and Port Graham rivers.

Purse Seine Fishery

Portions of the Southern District will open to purse seine gear in mid-June, coinciding with hatchery-produced runs to Leisure and Hazel lakes. Historically, these runs peak in mid-July. Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association forecasts a run of 23,100 sockeye salmon to Leisure and Hazel lakes combined, as well as 145,500 sockeye salmon to Tutka

Bay. Of those, 20,800 (90%) of the fish returning to Leisure and Hazel lakes, and 117,300 (81%) of the sockeye salmon returning to Tutka Lagoon will be used for cost recovery and broodstock purposes. A total of 9,200 hatchery-produced pink salmon are forecast to return to the Tutka Bay Lagoon release site, all of which will be used for broodstock. Pink salmon escapement in the Southern District has been depressed in recent years. Commercial fishing opportunity may be reduced in this district in the late season to minimize interception of this species.

Hatchery sockeye salmon runs to the Eastern District are forecasted by CIAA to be 84,000 fish of which CIAA has identified 76,800 (91%) for cost recovery and broodstock purposes. Wild stock harvest opportunity in the Eastern District will be linked to aerial survey observations of wild sockeye and pink salmon escapements. The department anticipates commercial purse seine fishing opportunity to occur in late June and/or early July in the Eastern District targeting the sockeye salmon run to Aialik Lake. Commercial salmon deliveries from the Aialik Subdistrict last occurred 20 years ago in 2006.

Portions of the Outer District may open to commercial harvest in early to mid-July focusing on sockeye salmon runs to McCarty Fjord lakes. In recent years, escapement to McCarty Fjord systems (Delight, Desire, and Delusion lakes) have been monitored by aerial survey and weir. Due to a lack of funds, the weir at Delight Lake will not be operated in 2026. Consequently, escapement monitoring for this system will be done via aerial surveys.

Waters in the western portion of the Outer District may be open by late-July, focusing on pink and chum salmon runs to Port Dick, as well as Windy and Rocky bays. There are numerous other smaller systems in the Nuka Passage area that are also monitored for chum and pink salmon. Dogfish Bay, Chugach Bay, and Port Chatham in the western portion of the district will be evaluated for chum and pink salmon harvest potential from August to early September. Harvest projections for the Outer District include 25,000 sockeye, 134,500 pink, and 17,700 chum salmon. Pink salmon harvest for the three most recent even years from this district are 1,563,893 (2020), 324,836 (2022), and 7,091 (2024). In 2024, the aggregate district escapement goal of 105,000–235,000 pink salmon was not achieved, with fewer than 52,000 fish estimated.

Portions of the Kamishak Bay District are anticipated to open to commercial harvest in early to mid-July targeting sockeye salmon returning to Chenik Lake. Additional areas may open based on escapement levels. Commercial harvest projections for wild stocks in this district are 46,200 sockeye, 1,000 pink, and 1,800 chum salmon. The majority of the sockeye salmon harvest is expected to come from Chenik Lake, while the chum salmon harvest has historically been spread throughout the district. The hatchery sockeye salmon run to Kirschner Lake is forecast to be 21,400 fish, of which 19,300 (90%) are expected to be required for hatchery cost recovery. The department tracks salmon escapement in this district using remote video monitoring sites at Chenik and Mikfik lakes, as well as regular aerial surveys of pink and chum salmon index streams. The department intends to monitor the Chenik run using satellite streamed video from the lake and will consider opening Chenik Lagoon once escapement into the lake is adequate.

Table 1.–Projected salmon harvests for Lower Cook Inlet, 2026. Hatchery cost recovery goals are preliminary.

SOCKEYE SALMON				
Total anticipated harvest =				241,800
Natural stocks, (area-wide commercial harvest)^a				
Southern District, (purse seine, excluding hatchery SHAs)				103,800
Southern District, (set gillnet)				27,000
Eastern District, (Aialik Bay)				0
Outer District				25,000
Kamishak Bay District, (excluding Kirschner Lake Subdistrict)				46,200
Sockeye salmon hatchery programs^b				
	Hatchery	Broodstock	Cost recovery	Commercial
Resurrection Bay	84,000	12,000	64,800	7,200
China Poot and Hazel lakes	23,100	0	20,800	2,300
Tutka Bay Lagoon	145,500	4,400	112,900	28,200
Kirschner Lake	21,400	0	19,300	2,100
Port Graham Bay	0	0	0	0
English Bay Lakes	0	0	0	0
Hatchery stocks (area-wide totals)	274,000	16,400	217,800	39,800
PINK SALMON				
Total anticipated harvest =				183,000
Natural stocks, (area-wide commercial harvest)^a				
Southern District (purse seine, excluding hatchery SHAs)				38,900
Southern District (set gillnet)				8,600
Eastern District				0
Outer District				134,500
Kamishak Bay District				1,000
Pink salmon hatchery programs^b				
	Hatchery	Broodstock	Cost recovery	Commercial
Tutka Bay Lagoon	9,200	9,200	0	0
Port Graham Bay	0	0	0	0
Hatchery stocks (area-wide totals)	9,200	9,200	0	0
CHUM SALMON - Wild production^a				
Total anticipated harvest =				21,600
Southern District (purse seine)				200
Southern District (set gillnet)				1,900
Eastern District				0
Outer District				17,700
Kamishak Bay District				1,800
COHO SALMON - Wild production^a				
Total anticipated harvest =				400
Southern District (purse seine)				160
Southern District (set gillnet)				170
Eastern District				0
Outer District				70
Kamishak Bay District				0
CHINOOK SALMON – Wild production^a				
Total anticipated harvest =				180
Southern District (purse seine)				30
Southern District (set gillnet)				130
Eastern District				0
Outer District				20
Kamishak Bay District				0
Total LCI anticipated commercial common property harvest- all salmon species =				446,980

^a Area-wide harvest forecasts for wild production were produced by ADF&G using trend forecast models based on historical harvests (<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyarealci.salmon#forecasts>).

^b Provided by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association, based on parent year releases and recent ocean survival.