



Advisory Announcement

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2021 Lower Cook Inlet Commercial Salmon Fishery Season Summary

The 2021 Lower Cook Inlet Area commercial salmon harvest was 2.3 million fish. The harvest was composed of 300 Chinook, 269,415 sockeye, 3,412 coho, 2.0 million pink, and 27,431 chum salmon (Table 1), of which 1.9 million (81.9%) were commercial harvest and 408,257 (18.1%) were hatchery cost recovery. The Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) cost recovery goal of \$4.3 million was not achieved with approximately \$1.8 million (41.5%) harvested. All data are considered preliminary.

Southern District

The 2021 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Southern District was 74,700 sockeye and 80,200 pink salmon with an additional 122,700 hatchery-produced sockeye and 1.0 million hatchery pink salmon available in special harvest areas (SHAs). The purse seine harvest estimate for the 2021 season was 32 Chinook, 74,535 sockeye, 1,725 coho, 41,650 pink, and 374 chum salmon with 14 permit holders reporting deliveries. This compares to a previous 10-year average harvest of 93 Chinook, 40,324 sockeye, 1,224 coho, 143,245 pink, and 1,213 chum salmon. In addition, 35,069 sockeye and 303,169 pink salmon were harvested by CIAA from SHAs in this district for cost recovery.

The 2021 set gillnet harvest estimate was 231 Chinook, 13,004 sockeye, 981 coho, 3,461 pink, and 2,231 chum salmon with 16 permit holders reporting deliveries. The previous 10-year average harvest for this gear type was 360 Chinook, 25,326 sockeye, 2,570 coho, 20,967 pink, and 4,249 chum salmon.

There are eight sustainable escapement goals (SEGs) in the Southern District: six for pink salmon, one for chum salmon, and one for sockeye salmon. An aerial survey of the English Bay River counted 6,328 sockeye salmon which is within the SEG range of 6,000–13,500 for this system. Pink salmon escapements were below the lower end of the SEG range for Humpy, and China Poot Creeks, and above the upper bound for Tutka Creek. Pink salmon escapement in both Barabara and Seldovia Creeks as well as the Port Graham River were within SEG ranges. Chum salmon escapement in the Port Graham River was below the SEG range.

Kamishak Bay District

The 2021 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Kamishak Bay District was 54,000 sockeye, 1,900 coho, 63,200 pink, and 7,600 chum salmon. CIAA forecasted a run of 30,000 sockeye salmon to the Kirschner Lake remote release site. The preliminary Kamishak Bay District commercial harvest estimate was 71,883 sockeye, 24 coho, 62,598 pink, and 4,443 chum salmon with five permit holders reporting deliveries. The previous 10-year average is 45,790 sockeye, 1,319 coho, 40,725 pink, and 10,111 chum salmon harvested in the commercial fishery. In addition, 16,439 sockeye salmon were harvested by CIAA from the Kirschner Lake SHA for cost recovery purposes.

There are 13 SEGs in the Kamishak District: seven for chum salmon, three for sockeye, and three for pink salmon. Chum salmon escapement was within the SEG range in the Ursus and Cottonwood Creeks, above in the Bruin, Little Kamishak, Big Kamishak, and Iniskin Rivers, and below the SEG range in the McNeil River. Pink salmon were above SEG ranges in Sunday and Brown's Peak Creek, and within the SEG range in the Bruin River. Sockeye salmon escapement to Chenik Lake and Amakdedori Creek was above the SEG range, however escapement to Mikfik Lake for this species was below the minimum SEG.

Outer District

The 2021 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Outer District was 4,000 sockeye, 1.7 million pink, and 23,600 chum salmon. The harvest, from 13 permit holders that participated, was 22 Chinook, 225 sockeye, 313 coho, 1.6 million pink, and 20,334 chum salmon. This harvest compares to previous 10-year averages of 21 Chinook, 8,881 sockeye, 361 coho, 1.1 million pink, and 56,147 chum salmon.

There are 15 SEGs in the Outer District: nine for pink salmon, four for chum and two for sockeye salmon. Pink salmon escapement were within their respective SEG ranges at Windy Left, South Nuka Island, and Desire Lake Creeks, as well as the Rocky River. Pink salmon were above their SEG ranges at Dogfish Lagoon, Port Chatham, Windy Bay Right, Port Dick, and Island Creeks. Chum salmon escapement was above the SEG range for the Rocky River, and within the SEG ranges for Dogfish Lagoon and Port Dick Creeks. Island Creek was below its assigned chum salmon SEG. Sockeye salmon returns to both Delight and Desire Lakes were below their assigned SEG ranges.

Eastern District

Due to small runs in the last 10 years, no wild stock sockeye or pink salmon were forecast to be available for commercial harvest from the Eastern District in 2021. CIAA forecasted a total run of 211,700 sockeye salmon to Resurrection Bay facilities with 201,800 fish needed for broodstock and cost recovery purposes. Total cost recovery harvest from this district was 52,437 sockeye salmon. An additional 2,556 sockeye and 23 coho salmon were donated at the weir to members of the public. Portions of Resurrection Bay were open for commercial harvest from June 22 through July 16. Commercial harvest during this period is confidential due to fewer than three permit holders reporting harvests. The previous 10-year harvest average for sockeye salmon is 13,858 fish.

CIAA passed 14,818 sockeye salmon through the Bear Creek weir in 2021. However, only 3,500 sockeye salmon were subsequently removed from Bear Lake for broodstock, leaving a final escapement of 11,318 fish, which is above the SEG range of 700–8,300 for this stock. The only other index system in the Eastern District is Aialik Lake and is for sockeye salmon. Final escapement to this system was below its established SEG range.

Under Alaska's Health Advisories 1, 2, 3, and 4, commercial fishing is an Essential Business and is part of Alaska's Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Commercial fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities in support of commercial fishing operations follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Advisories. COVID-19 Health Advisories may be found here: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/health-advisories/>.

Table 1.—Lower Cook Inlet commercial salmon harvest based on preliminary fish ticket data, 2021.

District (or hatchery)	Permits	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Total
Southern District	14	32	74,535	1,725	41,650	374	118,316
Outer District	13	22	225	313	1,559,174	20,334	1,580,068
Eastern District	<3		---				---
Kamishak Bay District	5		71,883	24	62,598	4,443	138,948
Purse seine preliminary total	15	54	149,515	2,062	1,663,422	25,151	1,840,204
Southern District	--	231	13,004	981	3,461	2,231	19,908
Set gillnet preliminary total	16	231	13,004	981	3,461	2,231	19,908
Commercial common property preliminary total		285	162,519	3,043	1,666,883	27,382	1,860,112
Hatchery cost recovery preliminary harvests							
Tutka Lagoon SHA		1	35,069	17	303,169	20	338,276
Port Graham SHA							0
Hazel Lake SHA							0
Resurrection Bay SHA			52,437				52,437
Kirschner Lake SHA			16,439		1,103	2	17,544
Hatchery preliminary total		1	103,945	17	304,272	22	408,257
Homepack		14	395	329	193	27	958
Hatchery donated fish			2,556	23	0	0	2,579
LCI preliminary total harvest		300	269,415	3,412	1,971,348	27,431	2,271,906