

Table 1 – Select Southcentral Region Salmon Escapement Goals and Escapements for king salmon, 2015 to 2024 (preliminary).

System	2024 Goal Range		Type	Initial Year									Preliminary	
	Lower	Upper			2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
KING SALMON														
<i>Bristol Bay</i>														
Nushagak River	55,000	120,000	SEG	2013	98,019	125,368	56,961	97,239	47,882	43,032	55,222	44,434	31,499	41,893
Alagnak River	2,700		LB SEG	2007	917	1,283	435	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
<i>Kodiak/Alaska Peninsula</i>														
Karluk River	3,000	6,000	BEG	2011	2,777	3,434	2,600	3,155	3,898	3,344	2,796	2,629	378	76
Ayakulik River	4,800	8,400	BEG	2017	2,392	4,594	3,712	2,149	1,948	2,402	2,961	2,845	590	394
Chignik River	1,300	2,700	BEG	2002	2,041	1,843	1,137	825	1,517	1,278	1,072	661	267	1,166
Nelson River	2,400	5,000	BEG	2019	2,440	4,618	1,502	5,022	11,653	2,298	4,539	3,785	4,078	3,542
<i>Upper Cook Inlet</i>														
Alexander Creek	1,900	3,700	SEG	2020	1,117	754	170	296	1,297	596	288	NC	NC	51
Campbell Creek	380		LB SEG	2011	654	544	475	287	393	154	339	423	171	160
Chuitna River	1,000	1,500	SEG	2002	1,965	1,372	235	939	2,115	869	806	NC	372	402
Chulitna River	1,200	2,900	SEG	2020	3,137	1,151	NC	1,125	2,765	845	1,535	NC	494	272
Clear (Chunilna) Creek	eliminated (see Talkeetna Stock)			2020	1,205	NS	780	940	1,511					461
Crooked Creek	700	1,400	SEG	2002	1,456	1,747	911	714	1,444	830	594	735	500	550
Deshka River	eliminated (see Deshka Stock)			2020	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	3,440 ^d
Eastside Susitna Stock	13,000	25,000	SEG	2020						14,995	15,208	7,654	4,003	Pending
Goose Creek	eliminated (see Eastside Susitna Stock)			2020	NC	NC	148	90	NC					
Kenai River - Early Run (all fish)	eliminated ^a			2017	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	1,365
Kenai River - Late Run (all fish)	eliminated ^a			2017	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	6,959
Lake Creek	eliminated (see Yetna Stock)			2020	4,686	3,588	1,601	1,767	2,692					
Lewis River	eliminated			2020	5 ^b	0	0 ^b	0	0 ^b					
Little Susitna River (Aerial) ^f	700	1,500	SEG	2020	1,507	1,622	1,192	530	NC	NC	889	NC	NC	NC
Little Susitna River (weir)	2,100	4,300	SEG	2017			2,531	549 ^d	3,666	2,445 ^d	3,121	2,288	799 ^d	964 ^d
Little Willow Creek	eliminated (see Eastside Susitna Stock)			2020	788	675	840	280	631					
Montana Creek	eliminated (see Eastside Susitna Stock)			2020	1,416	692	603	473	789					
Peters Creek	eliminated (see Yetna Stock)			2020	1,514	1,122	307	1,674	1,209					
Prairie Creek	eliminated (see Talkeetna Stock)			2020	3,290	1,853	1,930	1,194	2,371					
Sheep Creek	eliminated (see Eastside Susitna Stock)			2020	NC	NC	NC	334	NC					
Talachulitna River	eliminated (see Yetna Stock)			2020	2,582	4,295	1,087	1,483	3,225					
Talkeetna Stock	9,000	17,500	SEG	2020						7,283	9,107	4,288	2,216	Pending
Theodore River	500	1,000	SEG	2020	426	68	21	18	201	111	38	NC	NC	33
Willow Creek	eliminated (see Eastside Susitna Stock)			2020	2,046	1,814	1,329	411	897					
Yetna Stock	16,000	22,000	OEG	2020						14,850	18,890	16,583	8,294	Pending
<i>Lower Cook Inlet</i>														
Anchor River	3,800	7,600	SEG	2017	10,241	7,146	5,796	3,162	5,691	3,558	4,300	3,147	23,338	3,331
Deep Creek	350		LB SEG	2017	535	NS	753	182	751	327	NC	NC	NC	NC
Ninilchik River	750	1,300	SEG	2017	874	572	855	979	1,185	833	772	687	330	676

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



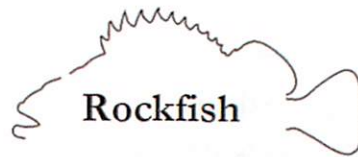
Tanner Crab

Cook Inlet Tanner Crab

No trawl surveys were conducted in 2023 or 2024, so the limited fishery was implemented for both seasons. Just over 2,100 permits were issued for the 2023–2024 season. Of these, 78% reported participating in the fishery and approximately 6% failed to report and will be denied a permit for the 2024–2025 season. For the 2023–2024 season, the harvest was 6,437 male Tanner crabs, which was slightly below the recent year's average. Permits are only available through ADF&G's online store for the 2024–2025 season.

Management Actions

- No management actions were implemented for the 2023–2024 fishery season.



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 the SWHS and Charter Logbook program, and biological data is monitored from the 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. Based on these conditions, the BOF reduced the rockfish bag and possession limits to 3 per day and 6 in possession starting in 2024. No harvest has been estimated for 2024 yet. The 2023 rockfish harvest was just over 41,000 fish, which was a 35% reduction from 2022. This reduction was attributed to the emergency order to reduce the bag limit from 5 to 3 fish.

Management Actions

- No management actions occurred in 2024.

Razor Clams

East

All East Cook Inlet beaches remained closed to sport and personal use clamming for the start of 2024 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 both beaches were below the threshold outlined in the management plan to open the fishery. Additionally, the abundance of juvenile clams at both beaches was below average and not sufficient to improve adult abundances over the next couple of seasons.

Management Actions

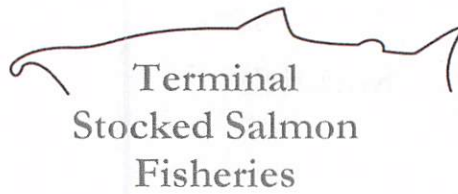
- No management actions occurred in 2024.

West

The West Cook Inlet beaches remained open to sport and personal use clamming in 2024. Harvest estimates for the sport fishery are not available yet, but clammers report good success at Polly Creek and Crescent River Bar areas, with larger clams found at Crescent River Bar. Based on department hand dug samples, the percentage of large size clams in the harvest is continuing to improve in West Cook Inlet.

Management Actions

- No management actions occurred in 2024.



Terminal Stocked Salmon Fisheries

Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon

In 2024, 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. The Statewide Harvest Survey estimates harvest for these fisheries will not be available until 2025. Overall, the king and coho salmon fisheries were likely below recent average harvests in 2024. Snagging was not opened for either species in 2024 because there was not a sufficient buildup of fish at the end of the run.

Management Actions

- No management actions occurred in 2024.

Seldovia Slough and Lagoon

The BOF made a couple of regulation changes for the Seldovia king salmon terminal fishery starting in 2024. The waters of the fishery were defined in regulation and were closed to snagging and spear fishing from January 1 through June 23. Generally, the king salmon fishing success in Seldovia was similar to the NDFL and below the recent year's average performance.

Management Actions

- No management actions occurred in 2024.



Personal Use Dip Net Fisheries

China Poot Creek

The BOF extended the season dates to start June 15 and continue through August 15 in the China Poot Creek personal use dip net fishery. This fishery does not require a permit for participation; harvest data are now available from the SWHS starting in 2022. The annual harvest estimates ranged from 11,000 fish in 2023 to 25,000 fish in 2022. The harvest estimate for 2024 is not yet available. The Division of Commercial Fisheries conducts weekly foot surveys to count sockeye and pink salmon. Success was fair at the start of the season and water conditions were high in the creek. Success was good for the remainder of the season with most participants easily obtaining limits. The success in this fishery is most likely attributed to changes in commercial fishing and cost recovery operations associated with the stocking.

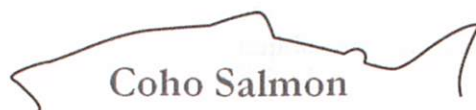
Management Actions

- No management actions occurred in 2024.

king salmon harvest for the Summer and Winter Fisheries were all below their respective averages for the past three years. The winter fishery harvest was 3,936 king salmon, which was below the guideline harvest level for the first time since 2013. In 2024, during the winter fishery, anglers found good success in January, but fishing success was lower in February and March. The summer fisheries had poor success from April through mid-May but improved in June and remained fair to good for the remainder of the summer. Anglers consistently found success in the Bluff Point area. At the start of the winter fishery season in September, anglers had good catches throughout Kachemak Bay.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1 closed king salmon fishing in the Cook Inlet salt waters north of the latitude of Bluff Point (lat 59°40.00' N) through August 15.
- A preseason emergency order effective May 1 reduced the king salmon bag and possession limits from two to one fish any size in the Cook Inlet salt waters south of the latitude of Bluff Point (lat 59°40.00' N) through July 31.



Freshwater Fisheries

There are no preseason forecasts and no escapement goals for any coho salmon stocks in the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams (Anchor and Ninilchik Rivers, Deep and Stariski Creeks). A video weir was operated on the Anchor River to enumerate coho salmon escapement. The preliminary escapement count was 2,100 fish, which was well below the historical average. Based on below-average inseason counts and fishery performance indicators, most freshwater sport fisheries on the Kenai Peninsula and West Cook Inlet area were restricted. For the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams, the coho salmon bag limit was reduced from two to one fish and the use of bait and treble hooks was prohibited starting August 24 and continuing for the remainder of the season.

Sport fishing effort was low throughout August on all lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams and was further reduced towards the end of August with the emergency order restrictions. The Statewide Harvest Survey estimates of harvest for these fisheries will not be available until 2025.

Marine Fisheries

Sport fishing for coho salmon in Cook Inlet was poor, and anglers struggled to find concentrations of coho salmon. Most charters reported king salmon were more prevalent than coho salmon throughout July and August. Based on these fisheries performance indicators and the below average coho salmon run to the Anchor River, the coho salmon bag limit was restricted from three to one fish on August 24 through the remainder of the season for Cook Inlet salt waters, excluding the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon. The Statewide Harvest Survey estimates for this fishery will not be available until 2025.

Management Actions

- Coho salmon bag and possession limits were reduced by emergency order in Kenai Peninsula fresh waters, West Cook Inlet fresh waters, and Cook Inlet salt waters. Additionally, the use of bait and treble hooks was prohibited in Kenai Peninsula fresh waters. The effective date for these restrictions was from August 24 through the remainder of the season.

use of bait for the remainder of king salmon season. Effort tapered off through the remainder of June and success was poor to fair.

The 2024 Ninilchik River wild king salmon escapement was 676 (after broodstock removals), which was below the lower end of the SEG and was the third consecutive year that the run did not achieve the SEG. The hatchery king salmon count upstream of the sport fishery was 1,298 fish, and after removals for broodstock, the hatchery escapement was 896 fish.

Broodstock collection at the Ninilchik River fell short of both the naturally-produced and hatchery-reared collection goals. Enough naturally-produced fish were collected to continue stocking the Ninilchik River in 2025 at a reduced level. The hatchery-reared collections also fell short at the other broodstock collection locations in Cook Inlet, so reduced numbers of smolt will be available for stocking at locations like Seldovia and the Homer Spit in 2025.

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.
- An inseason emergency order was issued to restrict the use of bait in the continuous fishery from June 19 through July 15.

Deep Creek

The sport fishery was closed with preseason restrictions based on management actions outlined in the management plan based on the Anchor River management actions. Deep Creek has a SEG of 350 king salmon and is assessed postseason via a single aerial survey. No survey was conducted in 2024 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 is structured into the Winter (September 1–March 31) and the Summer (April 1–August 31) Fisheries. The Summer Fishery is separated into two fisheries with the Lower Cook Inlet fishery occurring south of the Bluff Point latitude (lat 59°40.00' N) and the Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) fishery occurring north. The BOF added some preseason and inseason management actions to the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Fishery management plan based on forecasts and inseason projections for early-run stocks (Deshka, Kenai, and Anchor Rivers). For early-run stocks, the effective dates for the management actions are May 1 through July 15. The BOF also included this fishery into the Kenai River Late Run King Salmon Recovery Plan. In the recovery plan, the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Fishery is closed in regulation from June 20 through August 15. With these changes and the restrictions and closures to freshwater sport fisheries throughout Cook Inlet drainages, sport fishing for king salmon was closed in UCI from May 1 through August 15. For the Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) Summer Fishery, the BOF adopted a management plan and established a Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) of 8,500 fish. No management actions were outlined in the plan. The bag limit was reduced from two to one king salmon any size in LCI from May through August 15, based on the closure in UCI and freshwater restrictions.

The performance of these fisheries is only assessed postseason with the Statewide Harvest Survey and charter logbook data, and harvest estimates for 2024 will not be available until 2025. For 2023, the SWHS estimates of

Lower Cook Inlet Management Area



Anchor River

The Anchor River king salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) was updated to 3,200–6,400 fish starting in 2024. Additionally, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) adopted a management plan for the king salmon sport fisheries in the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams. This plan outlines preseason and inseason management actions for the Anchor River based on the preseason forecast and inseason projections.

The 2024 preseason inriver forecast of 2,349 king salmon was below the SEG. With this forecast, the inriver sport fishery was closed preseason based on the management plan. King salmon escapement monitoring transitioned to a new location approximately one mile upstream of the river mouth. This location is just above the intertidal section of the stream and provides for more timely monitoring. Based on inseason projections, it was anticipated that the king salmon run was going to achieve the SEG and the sport fishery was opened on June 15 to catch-and-release fishing for the last four days of the season. The preliminary escapement estimate was 3,331 fish, which met the SEG. The mid-point (June 20) was 14 days early compared to the recent 3-year average mid-point of July 3. The Anchor River king salmon run has met its SEG in two (2021 and 2024) of the last five years.

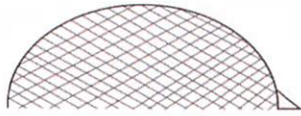
Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order closed the Anchor River and Deep Creek to all sport fishing through July 15.
- An inseason emergency order opened the Anchor River to catch and release king salmon fishing on June 15 for the remaining four days of the season. Gear was restricted to single-hook artificial lure.

Ninilchik River

The Ninilchik River king salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) was updated to 900–1,600 wild (naturally-produced) fish starting in 2024 based on counts at the lower (river mile 2) weir. Additionally, the Ninilchik River king salmon run is supplemented with hatchery fish. In 2023, the BOF adopted a management plan for the king salmon sport fisheries in the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams. This plan outlines preseason management actions for the Ninilchik River, based on the Anchor River forecast, and inseason management actions, based on the Ninilchik River wild and hatchery inseason projections. The BOF also restructured the king salmon sport fishery to be hatchery only by closing the harvest of wild king salmon in regulation, increasing the hatchery bag limit from 1 to 2 fish 20 inches or greater, and restricting gear to single hook with bait or single hook lures. Additionally, the area for the youth-only king salmon fishery was expanded to include an additional mile of stream upstream of the Sterling Highway bridge.

No preseason forecast was estimated for the 2024 wild Ninilchik River king salmon run. The three 3-day weekend fishery occurred as outlined in the management plan. Effort and success generally increased over the weekends. The youth-only fishery was well attended and many youth anglers caught king salmon. At the start of the continuous fishery on June 16, the catch rates declined, which corresponded with a reduction in the daily passage of king salmon at the lower weir. With this, an emergency order was issued on June 19 to restrict the



Personal Use Dip Net Fisheries

Kasilof River and Kenai River

Harvest and participation information for the 2024 season are currently being compiled and will be available this coming winter. The Kasilof River set gill net personal use fishery was delayed by emergency order to reduce mortality of Kenai River bound king salmon from June 11, 2024 to June 19, 2024. The Kasilof River dipnet fishery was open by regulation from June 25 through August 7, 2024. 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 regulation.

Harvest Reports

- Beginning in 2024 harvest reporting was required to be submitted online by August 31, 2024

Management Actions

- On June 11, 2024, the Kasilof River personal use set gillnet fishery was closed until June 19, 2024.
- On June 25, 2024, the Kasilof River personal use dipnetting area was expanded. Dipnetting from shore was allowed from ADF&G markers located on Cook Inlet beaches upstream to ADF&G markers at approximately river mile four of the Kasilof River.
- On July 16, 2024, The Kenai River Personal Use Dip Net fishery was opened 24 hours per day until the season closure.

Management Actions

- No in season management actions were taken during the Russian River sockeye salmon late run 2024.

Kasilof River

The forecast for Kasilof River sockeye salmon was 1,115,161 fish. Kasilof River sockeye salmon are managed to achieve an OEG of 140,000–370,000 fish. The sockeye salmon sonar enumerated salmon passage through August 22, 2024, with a preliminary estimate of 1,048,092 fish.

Management Actions

- On June 25, 2024, sockeye salmon limits were increased in all portions of the Kasilof River open to salmon fishing to six per day, 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 indicated that coho salmon were entering the river in the beginning of August but the abundance seemed poor based on success rates. September reports indicated a mix of angler success but generally, the abundance seemed to remain low in the Kenai River.

Management Actions

- On August 21, 2024, an emergency order was issued to reduce the limit for coho salmon in the Kenai River to a bag and possession limit of one fish, effective Saturday, August 24, through Saturday, August 31, 2024; and a bag and possession limit of two coho salmon Sunday, September 1 through Saturday, November 30, 2024.
- On September 17, 2024, an emergency order was issued to reduce the bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length in the Kenai River to one fish; and restrict gear to one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to the regulatory marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake.

- June 19, 2024, an emergency order was issued to restrict gear to single hook, artificial lure, or fly from the Kasilof River's mouth to the outlet of Tustumena Lake. The emergency order also reduced the bag limit of hatchery-produced king salmon to one from July 1, 2024 to July 31, 2024.
- July 11, 2024, an emergency order was issued to close the king salmon fishery on the Kasilof River downstream of the Sterling Highway bridge effective July 15, 2024.
- July 31, 2024, an emergency order was issued prohibiting the use of bait and restricting to single-hook, artificial lure or fly from the river's mouth to the outlet of Tustumena lake.



Kenai River

The 2024 Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) sockeye salmon forecast projected a total run of 5.72 million fish: 3.38 million fish to the Kenai River, 1.12 million fish to the Kasilof River, with the remaining fish comprising stocks from 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, 2024, ADF&G projected the total Kenai River sockeye salmon run to be 2.96 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 1,926,350 sockeye salmon. Subtracting the recent 10-year average harvest upstream of the sonar (387,757 fish) produces a preliminary escapement estimate of 1,538,593 sockeye salmon, which exceeds the sockeye salmon SEG 750,000–1.30 million fish. Final estimates will be available when the 2024 Statewide Harvest Survey is completed in the fall of 2025.

Management Actions

- General regulations adopted a bag limit of 6 fish per day, 12 fish in possession for sockeye salmon from June 20 to August 15, 2024.

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, 2024, was 34,697 sockeye salmon.

Management Actions

- On June 1, 2024, the Russian River Sanctuary Area opened early for sport fishing.

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 3, 2024, was 70,009 sockeye salmon.

of large fish age classes (ocean ages 3 and 4) indicates poor production from the 2017, 2018, and 2019 parent years and corresponds with the overall low abundance of the 2024 return.

The OEG of 15,000–30,000 large fish and SEG of 13,500–27,000 large fish were not achieved in 2024. The SEG has been achieved in one of the last seven years and the OEG has not been achieved since it was created in 2020. Additionally, Kenai River late-run king salmon were designated a Stock of Concern at the Alaska Board of Fisheries March 2024 meeting. The action plan developed to recover Kenai River late-run king salmon includes a recovery goal of 14,250–30,000 large king salmon that is the department’s management objective until the stock recovers. The recovery goal was not achieved in 2024.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective July 1, 2024, closed king salmon fishing from the Kenai River mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake.
- On August 12, 2024 multiple hooks were prohibited from the mouth of the Kenai River upstream to the Moose River confluence to reduce incidental catches of king salmon while fishing for other species.
- River mile 8.6 netting assessment (preliminary)
 - Approximately 46% of king salmon were ≥ 75 cm in total length.
 - Sex ratios for large fish > 75 cm was 77% male and 23% female.

Table 1. Summary of preliminary catch, harvest, and escapement, Kenai River late-run king salmon (≥ 75 cm) fishery, 2024.

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
Inriver sonar estimate	6,630
Preliminary escapement ^b	Approximately 6,959

^a Lower River (below Soldotna Bridge).

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

Kasilof River

In June 2024, approximately 98,436 king salmon smolt were stocked into Crooked Creek to enhance recreational sport fishing opportunity in the Kasilof River. The naturally-produced (non-adipose finclipped) component of the Crooked Creek early-run king salmon run is managed to achieve a SEG of 700–1,400 king salmon. The estimated escapement of naturally-produced king salmon was 550 fish for the 2024 season. The egg take goal for future stocking of Crooked Creek was 25 pairs of naturally-produced king salmon of which 20 pairs were spawned in 2024.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2024, prohibited the retention of naturally-produced king salmon and the use of multiple hooks.
- A pre-season emergency order effective May 1, 2024, restricted the use of bait until May 16, 2024.

Northern Kenai Peninsula Management Area



Kenai River - Early Run

The 2024 outlook for early-run Kenai River king salmon was below average, with a large fish (>75 cm mid eye to tail fork length or greater than about 34 inches in total length) forecast of 2,630 fish. The 2024 forecasted total run was less than the optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 3,900–6,600 large fish, which resulted in preseason closures to the sport fishery. The total estimated passage through June 30, 2024, at the river mile 14 sonar was 1,365 large king salmon, and because of the fishery closure, preliminary spawning escapement and total run estimates are both 1,365 large early-run king salmon. The run exhibited generally low abundance across all age classes and is the second lowest run in the historical data set. The mid-point of the run occurred on June 14, which is two days late when compared to the historical mid-point.

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

Neither the OEG of 3,900–6,600 large fish nor the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 2,800–5,600 large fish were achieved in 2024. However, the SEG has been achieved or exceeded in four of the last seven years, and the OEG has been achieved or exceeded in three of the last seven years.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2024, closed king salmon fishing from the Kenai River mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake until June 30.
- River mile 8.6 netting assessment (preliminary)
 - Approximately 34% were large fish or ≥ 75 cm in total length.
 - Sex ratio of large fish ≥ 75 cm was 26% male and 74% female.
 - Sampled king salmon of all sizes were predominately ocean-age 2 fish (49%), followed by ocean-age 3 fish (31%), ocean-age 1 (14%), and ocean-age 4 fish (6%).

Kenai River - Late Run

The outlook for late-run Kenai River king salmon in 2024 was well below average, with a large king salmon (>75 cm mid eye to tail fork length) forecast of approximately 13,639 fish. The 2024 forecasted total run was less than the optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000–30,000 fish so the fishery started closed. The total estimated passage through August 19, 2024, at the river mile 14 sonar was 6,984 large king salmon, and the preliminary escapement is 6,959 large fish (accounts for spawning downriver of the sonar). The mid-point of the run occurred on July 29, which is two days later than the mean historical mid-point.

The predominate age class for all sizes of Kenai River late-run king salmon are ocean-age 2 (39.5%), followed by ocean-age 3 (29.8%), ocean-age 4 fish (20.2%), and ocean-age 1 (10.5%). The low abundance

SEG of 10,200–24,100 fish would have been achieved. An emergency order was issued in August to close the Deshka River to the retention of coho salmon and prohibit the use of bait in all other waters of the Susitna River drainage.

Management Actions

- On August 6, the bag limit for coho salmon was reduced to one fish and bait was prohibited in the Susitna River drainage.
- On August 15, the Susitna drainage was closed to fishing for coho salmon.

Knik Arm

The Little Susitna weir was inundated by flood waters at the beginning of the season from spring snow melt. However, when the weir became functional again starting June 22, it is unlikely any coho salmon were missed. Initially, weir counts were favorable and produced an upward trending projection; however counts drastically trailed off by the first quartile of the run on August 6. At this time, an emergency order was issued prohibiting the use of bait, followed by closure of the sport fishery to the retention of coho salmon. Beginning August 8, heavy rainfall led to high water events and a lost weir counts for eighteen days. Also, . The weir count of 964 fish is considered incomplete; however, it is likely the SEG of 9,200–17,700 was missed in 2024.

Fish Creek weir operated for the full coho salmon season. The SEG of 1,200–6,000 fish was not attained with a final count of 235 fish. This count was complete.

Jim Creek weir was funded to operate this season. A weak showing of coho salmon prompted closing the sport fishery to coho salmon fishing by mid-August at about the quarter point of the historical run timing for coho salmon. In addition to Jim Creek, Cottonwood, Fish and Wasilla Creeks were all closed to sport fishing for coho on August 15. Weir counts up to this point were tracking well below years when the weir was operated and the goal was achieved and similar to the count by this time during 2016 when the SEG was missed. The SEG for Jim Creek of 250–700 coho salmon is assessed postseason by a foot survey of McRoberts Creek, a small spawning tributary within the Jim Creek system. A survey conducted on September 23 counted 376 coho salmon, which was within the goal range.

Management Actions

- On August 6, bait use was prohibited on the Little Susitna River and Jim Creek drainage.
- On August 6, the bag and possession limit was reduced to one coho salmon on the Little Susitna River, and Jim Creek.
- On August 15, the Little Susitna River was closed to coho salmon fishing.
- On August 15, Jim Creek, Cottonwood Creek, Wasilla Creek and Fish Creeks were closed to coho 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 was reportedly poor for the 2024 season.

- On August 24, West Cook Inlet streams were restricted to two per day and four in possession for coho salmon.



Susitna Tributaries

A weir was operated to count sockeye salmon escapement into Larson Lake, which drains into the Talkeetna River via Larson Creek (Susitna River drainage). Weirs on Chelatna Lake (Lake Creek) and Judd Lake (Talachulitna River) were not operated this year due to budget reductions. On Larson Creek, the sport fishery, which occurs at the confluence of Larsen Creek and the Talkeetna River, is relatively close 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 with a final count of 16,133 fish within the SEG range.

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. and 11:00 p.m. from July 10 through July 31. This was the fourth year of this fishery. Fishing effort mostly mirrored last season with relatively low participation. Fishing success was reported as poor each period through the end of July.

Management Actions

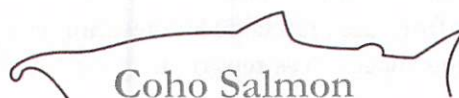
- No management actions were implemented during the 2024 season.

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 the 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 is projected to be above 35,000 fish. The dip net fishery was opened on July 20 for 11 days. Positive dipnetting reports combined with a strong run suggests the harvest estimate may be average to above average for 2024 (5-year mean harvest of 22,500 sockeye salmon). The weir was successfully operated throughout the run and 37,793 sockeye salmon were counted. Sport fishing was open for 7 days a week beginning this season, a change made at the last Board of Fisheries meeting.

Management Actions

- On July 20, the Fish Creek Personal Use Dip Net Fishery was opened for all salmon species, except king salmon through July 31.



Susitna Tributaries

Flooding prevented counting fish at the Deshka River weir during the season for six days beginning August 9, and the weir sustained major damage ending the weir project on August 16 after counting about 70% of the run based on historical run timing. The count of 642 coho salmon is considered incomplete, but it is unlikely the

Eastside Susitna and Talkeetna Tributaries

Assessment of Eastside Susitna streams (Units 2, 3, 5, and 6) comes from postseason aerial surveys over eight streams that are 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 of the four Susitna River drainage stock goals in place since 2020. Counts were successfully conducted on Willow, North Fork, Kashwitna, and Montana Creeks, which collectively contribute to the Eastside king stock, and Clear and Prairie Creeks, which 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 272 on the Chulitna River was well below the SEG of 1,200–2,900 fish.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2024, closed king salmon fishing on Eastside Susitna (Unit 2), the Talkeetna River (Unit 5), and the Chulitna River (Unit 6). Gear was restricted to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure with a gap between the point and shank of the hook of one-half inch or less.

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 postseason 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, which was the case throughout most of the 2024 season. Cold water temperatures likely impeded upstream migration of king salmon followed by flooding that occurred for 6 days mid-June, which made assessment of run strength using weir counts difficult. However, daily counts after recovery of the weir following the flooding were below past years in which the goal was achieved. The sport fishery was closed by preseason emergency order. The final weir count of 1,013 is considered incomplete.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2024, closed king salmon fishing in the Little Susitna River drainage. In addition, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure with a gap between the point and shank of the hook of one-half inch or less in the waters normally open to king salmon fishing.

West Cook Inlet

Sport fisheries on the Chulitna, Theodore, Lewis, and the Beluga River drainages are closed by regulation. An aerial survey was conducted on the Chulitna River in which 402 king salmon were counted, well below the SEG of 1,000–1,500 fish. The 2024 surveys of the Theodore River and Coal Creek counted only 33 and 38 king salmon, respectively.

Management Actions

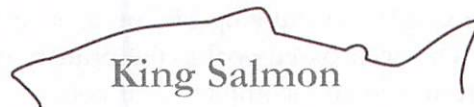
- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2024, closed king salmon fishing on all West Cook Inlet streams not already closed by regulation.



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 marks the fifth year of king salmon management under the four stock-based goals set for the Susitna River drainage (Deshka, Yentna, Eastside, and Talkeetna). The preseason forecast of total run for Deshka River king salmon was 6,671 fish. Given this forecast was below the low end of the BEG and that the escapement goal was missed in 2023, the Deshka king salmon fishery started the 2024 season closed, as did fisheries within the Talkeetna, Yentna, Little Susitna, and Eastside Susitna areas. King salmon escapement goals for all systems were missed in 2024.

Westside Susitna Tributaries

The BEG for the Deshka River of 9,000–18,000 king salmon was not achieved in 2024 despite the sport fishery remaining closed throughout the season. The final weir count was 3,440 king salmon. The age composition of the Deshka king salmon run and forecast for the 2024 season is pending analysis of age data collected at the Deshka River weir. A complete sonar count was conducted for Lake Creek and aerial escapement surveys were flown in late July on five streams contributing to the Yentna king salmon stock: Talachulitna River, Red Creek, Canyon Creek, Dickerson Creek, and Red Salmon Creek. Assessment of whether the Yentna OEG of 16,000–22,000 king salmon was achieved is pending data analysis; however, aerial counts were well below average, and the Lake Creek sonar count was similar to 2023.

Management Actions

- A preseason emergency order effective May 1, 2024, closed king salmon fishing in the Susitna River drainage. Gear was restricted to only one unbaited, single hook, with a gap between the point and shank of the hook of one-half inch or less when fishing in Units 1–6 of the Susitna River drainage.