



Fishing in the Kachemak Bay Area

Kachemak Bay and Homer Area

Kachemak Bay is located at the end of the Sterling Highway, on the southwestern tip of the Kenai Peninsula. The city of Homer, population 4,000 is the recreational hub of Kachemak Bay. Homer is about 225 highway miles south of Anchorage, around a five-hour drive. It is a 45-minute flight from Anchorage, and a seasonal port of call for the Alaska Marine Highway ferry transportation system.

Homer features a large harbor and boat launch with mooring for boats of all sizes, as well as many hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, in addition to beach camping, restaurants, grocery stores, tackle shops, art galleries, and museums. There are numerous sport fishing and sightseeing charters based out of Homer.



tackle, or tackle can be found in the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet.

These booklets are free of charge and are available at ADF&G offices, wherever sport fishing licenses are sold, and online at www.adfg.alaska.gov under the Regulations tab. Before you cast out your line, make sure you read all the regulations for the waters you are fishing. Don't forget to check for advisory announcements and emergency orders on the ADF&G website under the sport fishing tab. Select the Fishing Information link and then the Emergency Orders and News Releases tab. Once there anglers can select the region and management area they intend to fish. ADF&G may issue an advisory announcement and emergency order to open, liberalize, close, or restrict any fishery at any time due to biological needs. In the event an advisory announcement and emergency order is issued, ADF&G attempts to release the documents a minimum of 24 to 48 hours before it becomes effective.

During the summer ADF&G posts weekly in-season fishing reports online. Anglers can find these under the Fishing Reports tab under the Fishing Information tab. ADF&G staff records these in-season fishing reports on the Homer sport fishing hotline at (907) 235-6930. Anglers can also subscribe to receive the notifications via their email. Updates are also posted on the ADF&G - Sport Fishing Southcentral Alaska Facebook page. If you have any questions, please contact the Homer ADF&G office at (907) 235-8191.



Anglers can target salmon, especially Chinook or king salmon, coho or silver salmon, sockeye or red salmon, and pink or humpy salmon, as well as halibut, Pacific cod, lingcod, and rockfish in the Kachemak Bay area. The man-made Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon is located on the 4-mile-long Homer spit, one of the longest natural spits in the world. The lagoon features sport fishing for stocked Chinook and coho salmon.

Understanding Sport Fish Regulations

Every year ADF&G releases four sport fishing regulations booklets for the Northern, Southcentral, Southeast, and Southwest areas. Sport fishing regulations specific to the Homer area such as bag and possession limits, seasons,



The Richness of Kachemak Bay

In 1974, the Kachemak Bay area was designated as a critical habitat area to protect and preserve the areas crucial to the perpetuation of fish and wildlife, and to restrict all other access not compatible with that primary purpose. Hunting, fishing, trapping, and other recreational activities are encouraged so long as they are in keeping with the primary purpose for establishing the area.

Kachemak Bay is home to a variety of fish and wildlife species, including marine mammals, a multitude of waterfowl, seabirds, and invertebrates. Eagles, ducks, shorebirds, puffins, guillemots, murrelets, minks, river otters, coyotes, foxes, black bears, sea otters, porpoises, harbor seals, sea lions, orca whales, beluga whales, minke whales, humpback whales, and finback whales are all residents or frequent visitors of the bay.



The high level of biological productivity in Kachemak Bay is at least partially due to a water circulation pattern that holds shellfish larvae in the bay. Larvae are an important food source for larger animals such as clams and fish, which are, in turn, an important food source for birds and mammals. Kachemak Bay's productivity is further enhanced by a 'nutrient trap' estuarine system. Nutrients from the land are washed out into the bay from rivers and creeks, and settle to the bottom. Nutrients from the ocean are moved on shore by deep tidal currents.



Chinook Salmon

Trolling for Chinook Salmon

Most of the Chinook salmon caught in the open water of Kachemak Bay are 'feeder king salmon' or 'winter king salmon,' which weigh anywhere from 10 pounds to more than 50 pounds. These fish are not ready to return to their home streams outside of Cook Inlet to spawn and are feeding and growing in the saltwaters before making their journey to their spawning grounds. Feeder king salmon are present in Kachemak Bay throughout the year.

From late April through August, anglers can also catch Chinook salmon returning to spawn in Cook Inlet tributaries by fishing the marine waters of Cook Inlet. Anglers often troll for Chinook salmon along the bluffs west of Homer and at the mouths of the many small bays along the southern shore of Kachemak Bay. Concentrate your efforts along submerged rocks or kelp beds, and keep an eye out for areas where seagulls and other marine birds appear to be feeding. Chinook salmon often feed on the same 'bait fish' as the birds.

Check out our fishing forum on the ADF&G YouTube channel titled *Kachemak Bay Winter King Salmon Fishing* for tons of information on trolling for Chinook salmon in Kachemak Bay.

The Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon

In 1984, ADF&G began stocking Chinook salmon into the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon (NDFL) on the Homer Spit to provide Chinook salmon angling opportunities for those fishing from shore or from small boats. These early-run fish start to show in mid-May, peak in mid-June, and are gone by early July.

Successful fishing techniques include casting with lures, flies, chunks of salmon roe, shrimp, and cut herring. Fishing eggs or herring beneath a bobber can be effective at slack water. The best fishing typically occurs as the tide creates more current when it begins to enter or exit the lagoon. Trolling herring and lures along the eastern shoreline of the spit can also be productive. Anglers are reminded the NDFL on the Homer Spit is open to snagging only by emergency order.



NDFL Youth-Only King Salmon Fishery

On the first Saturday in June, a portion of the NDFL is the site of an all day youth-only fishery for Chinook salmon. During the youth-only fishery, only anglers 15 years old and younger may fish for Chinook salmon in the section marked off the youth-only fishery. Although, people age 16 and older can assist youth anglers with landing a fish, this section of the NDFL is closed to all fishing, including catch-and-release, for anglers 16 years and older during this time. Additional information can be found under the Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay Salt Waters area in the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet.

Seldovia Bay

In 1987, ADF&G began stocking Chinook salmon in Seldovia Bay to develop a Chinook salmon sport fishery near Seldovia, a picturesque fishing village located about 20 miles southwest of the Homer Spit.



Most of the salmon return to the Seldovia harbor and nearby slough. The run begins in mid-May, peaks in mid-June, and ends in early July. Trolling herring or lures in Seldovia Bay outside the harbor is effective early in the run, while casting lures, chunks of salmon roe, shrimp, and cut herring works later in the season in the Seldovia harbor. Spinners, herring, and plugs work well in the slough. Check out the 'Fishing for King Salmon in Seldovia' publication for more information on this fishery.



Coho Salmon

Coho salmon are available in Kachemak Bay area by mid-July. They generally weigh between eight to 15 pounds. Coho salmon can be caught in the NDFL, off the southeastern side of the Homer Spit as the coho salmon pass by on their way to spawning grounds in the Fox River area at the head of the bay, or by trolling along the entrance to Kachemak Bay near Bluff Point or Point Pogibshi. Look for a concentration of 'jumpers' and position yourself within casting or trolling distance of these fish.

Productive methods include surfcasting lures from the spit, mooching, or trolling from a small boat. Brightly-colored spoons and spinners are a good choice. Another good method involves drifting salmon eggs at the NDFL on the tidal changes.



NDFL Youth-Only Coho Salmon Fishery

On the first Saturday in August, a portion of the NDFL is the site of an all day youth-only fishery for coho salmon. During the youth-only fishery, only anglers 15 years old and younger may fish for coho salmon in the section marked off the youth-only fishery. Although, people age 16 and older can assist youth anglers with landing a fish, this section of the NDFL is closed to all fishing, including catch-and-release, for anglers 16 years and older during this time. Additional information can be found under the Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay Salt Waters area in the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet.



Sockeye Salmon

Sockeye salmon are usually caught in the saltwater by snagging with a weighted treble hook. However, anglers are reminded that snagging is not allowed in freshwater. Please see the area that is open and closed to snagging in saltwater under the Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay Salt Waters section of the current Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary booklet.

The best area to fish for sockeye salmon in Kachemak Bay is the southwestern arm of China Poot Bay, four miles southeast of the Homer Spit. The fish concentrate here before entering China Poot Creek. This sockeye salmon fishery is the result of stocking by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association which is paid for by the commercial fishery. Each year sockeye salmon fry are stocked in China Poot Lake. The fry rear in the lake before migrating to saltwater as smolt. The sockeye salmon return to China Poot Creek



in two to three years as four to six pound adults from late June through early August. A barrier waterfall about 150 yards upstream prevents the sockeye salmon from returning to the lake. Those that escape commercial nets are available to sport fish anglers. There are a lot mud flats in China Poot Bay and access is best at high tide. Anglers are reminded to be courteous and yield to commercial boats.



Sockeye salmon also return to Tutka Lagoon, and are also the result of the stocked salmon paid for by the commercial fishery and stocked by the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association. The lagoon is accessible through a narrow tidal channel only at high tide. Avoid commercial boats seining the lagoon for eggtakes and taking fish to pay for the stocking project. Adult salmon are held in net pens to ripen and the waters within 100 yards of the pens are closed to sport fishing to protect the fish.

Pink Salmon

Pink salmon are readily caught by casting spoons, spinners, or flies on ultra-light to medium action spinning gear. Pink salmon usually range from three to six pounds, so they provide excellent sport fishing fun for all ages, especially on light tackle.

The majority of the streams on the south side of Kachemak Bay area support spawning runs of this feisty species. Pink salmon are also available along the Homer Spit in July and early August, and near Point Pogibshi and Bluff Point.

Halibut

Homer is the halibut fishing capital of the world. There are over 100 charter boats that operate out of the Homer Harbor, for those without a boat or who want to learn. Charter boats may travel up to 10 to 50 miles or more into Kachemak Bay and Lower Cook Inlet saltwaters. All

equipment and bait is usually provided by the charter, and clients usually bring their own meals and coolers.

Halibut are located throughout Kachemak Bay, but they do move depending on the time of year and are more abundant in waters outside Kachemak Bay. Look for fish concentrations at depths of 50 to 200 feet, near underwater structures such as drop-offs, pinnacles, and kelp beds. Herring is likely the most popular bait, but octopus, squid, salmon heads, and various jigs also work well. Since 100 to 300 pound halibut are commonly caught, use a stout rod loaded with 80 to 100 pound test line.

Strong currents require that you use eight ounce to 32 ounce weights to hold the bait on the bottom during tidal changes. Although drifting is popular, anchoring is probably more effective, since it carries a scent pattern down current which attracts fish.



Halibut are federally managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Consult NOAA's regulations for bag and possession limits, size restrictions, and possible closure dates for unguided or guided (chartered) halibut fishing regulations. Please contact NOAA Fisheries Alaska region at (907) 586-7228 or visit alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/sport-halibut.

Rockfish

Alaskan waters are home to roughly 40 different types of rockfish, but only about 10 species are regularly caught in the sport fishery. Black rockfish are the most common

rockfish encountered in Kachemak Bay saltwaters. Outside of Kachemak Bay, past Point Pogibshi, it's more common to also find yelloweye, China, dark, dusky, tiger, and copper rockfish. Anglers can target rockfish by trolling, particularly with spoons, or by jigging. They're found in rocky structure on the south side of Kachemak Bay, near Dimond Creek at Bluff Point, and near Point Pogibshi.

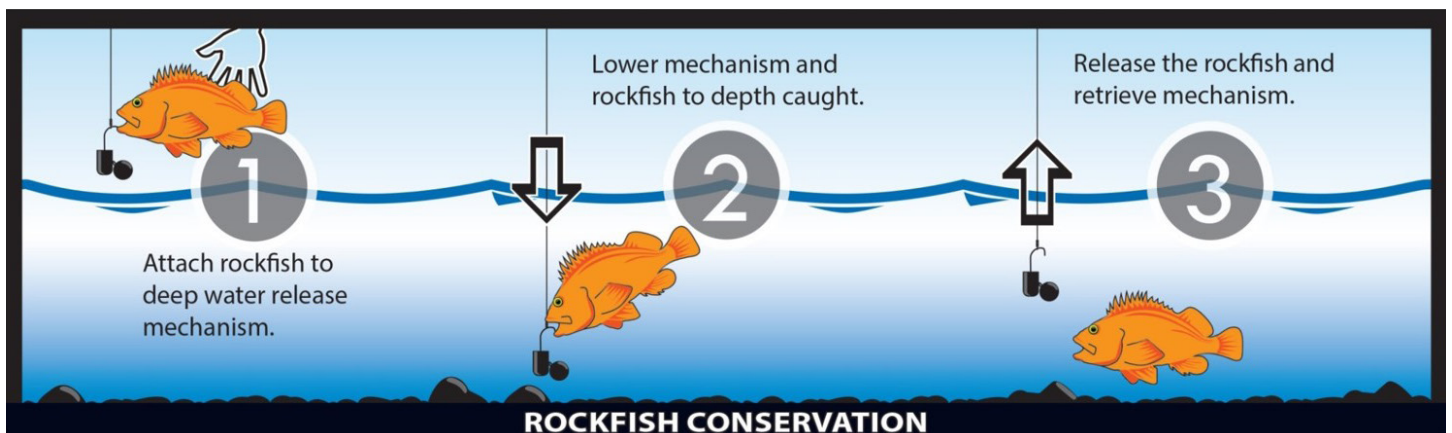


Rockfish are a remarkable and diverse species of fish with extremely long-life expectancies. Certain species of adult rockfish can reach 40 inches and 30 pounds. Rockfish are commonly caught while fishing for halibut over rocky structures. Bringing these deep dwelling fish to the surface can result in 'barotrauma' caused by the expansion of gases in their swim bladder. However, using deepwater release mechanisms can greatly increase rockfish survival by mitigating the effects of barotrauma.

Beginning in 2020, all vessels sport fishing in the saltwaters of Alaska must have a functioning deepwater release mechanism on board, and all rockfish not harvested must be release at depth of capture, or at a depth of 100 feet. For additional information on rockfish conservation and deepwater release mechanisms, visit the ADF&G Rockfish and Conservation and Deepwater Release webpage at www.adfg.alaska.gov/rockfish.

Dolly Varden

Dolly Varden have a very complex lifecycle which includes periods spent in both fresh and saltwater. During their saltwater phase, this species migrates in close to shore.





The best fishing occurs from mid-May to mid-July, with shore anglers being just as successful as those who troll or cast from small boats. Dolly Varden are hooked along the Homer Spit, and may even be found in the NDFL, along the Bluff, and on the south side of Kachemak Bay at locations like China Poot Bay and Glacier Spit. Dolly Varden may be taken on light spinning tackle using small spoons or spinners. Preferred baits include shrimp and small chunks of salmon roe.

Crab and Shrimp

King crab, Dungeness crab, and shrimp are closed by regulation year-round in the Kachemak Bay area due to low population levels. There is a Tanner crab fishery; however, the season typically opens in either September or October and ends in February or March. A pre-season press release is issued prior to the opening of this fishery which includes the opening and closing dates for the season. A permit is required to participate in this fishery and is available through the ADF&G online store and at ADF&G offices. Check out our fishing forum on the ADF&G YouTube channel titled *Tanner Crab Fishing in Kachemak Bay* for all the details on where to go and how to catch Tanner crab.



Clam Digging

Digging for hardshell clams (i.e. butter and littleneck clams) in the sport and personal use fisheries is closed in Kachemak Bay.

Digging for razor clams on the west side of Cook Inlet, like Polly Creek and Crescent River Bar beaches, is open and limited to 10 gallons per day. The west side beaches are only accessible by boat or plane. Many charter boats take diggers from Deep Creek or Anchor Point tractor launches. While a permit is not required, a valid sport fishing license is.

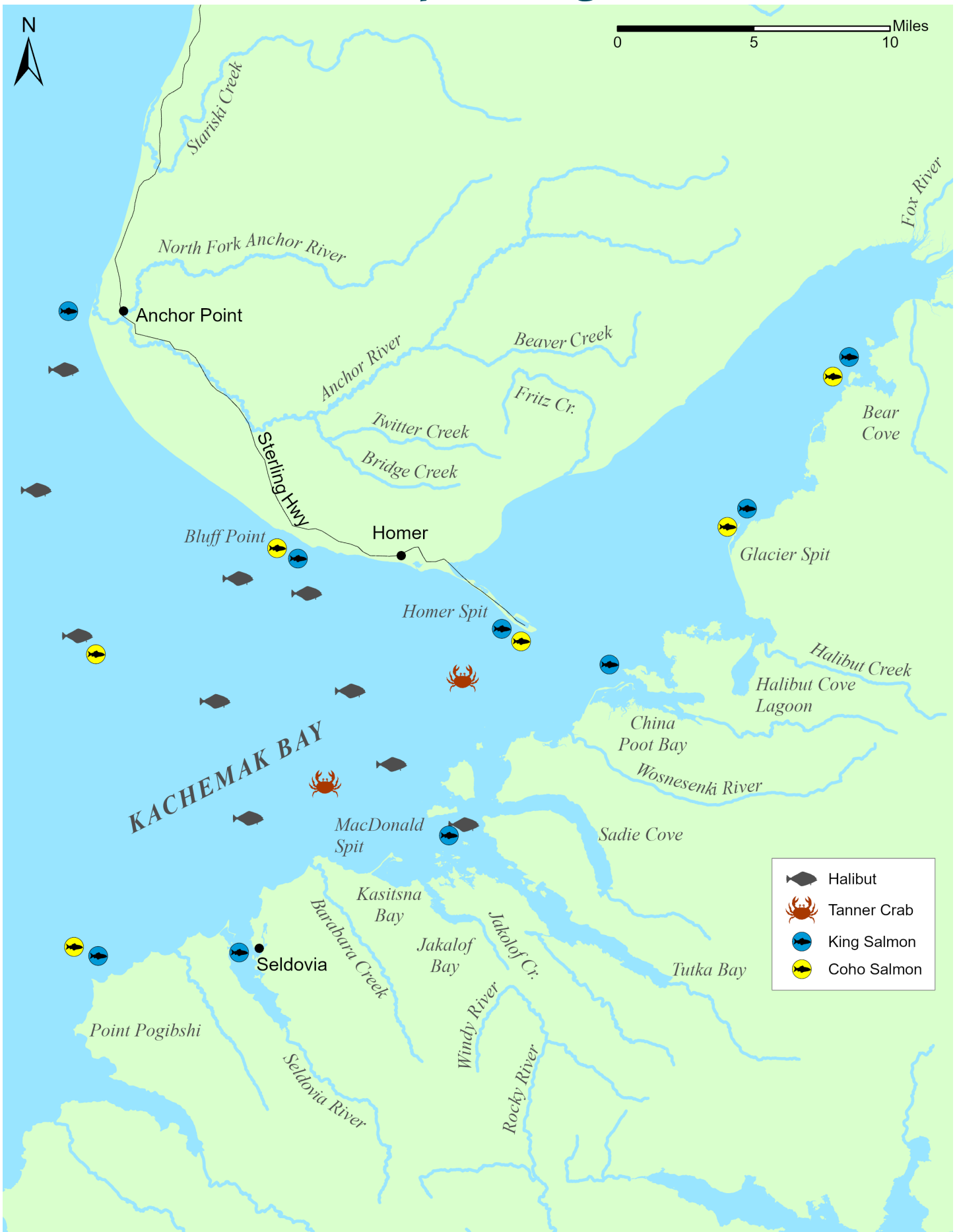
Digging for razor clams on the east side of Cook Inlet, the road accessible beaches from the mouth of the Kenai River to the tip of Homer Spit (i.e. Clam Gulch or Ninilchik) have been closed by an annual emergency order since 2015. If the east side beaches open to digging for clams, an advisory announcement will be released. If opened there will be a small fishery and diggers will be limited to a bag limit of 30 clams, only one area or the other will be open depending on a spring clam abundance survey, and may be open between May through September at most. All pertinent information will be included in the advisory announcement.

Check out our fishing forum on the ADF&G YouTube channel titled *What's Going on With East Side Cook Inlet Razor Clams* for a recent update on how razor clams on the east side of Cook Inlet are doing.

As always, consuming harvested shellfish is at your own risk. Diggers are reminded that only clams harvested commercially are tested for Paralytic Shellfish Poison. For additional information, contact the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) at (907) 269-7638 or visit the DEC 'Shellfish' webpage at www.dec.alaska.gov.



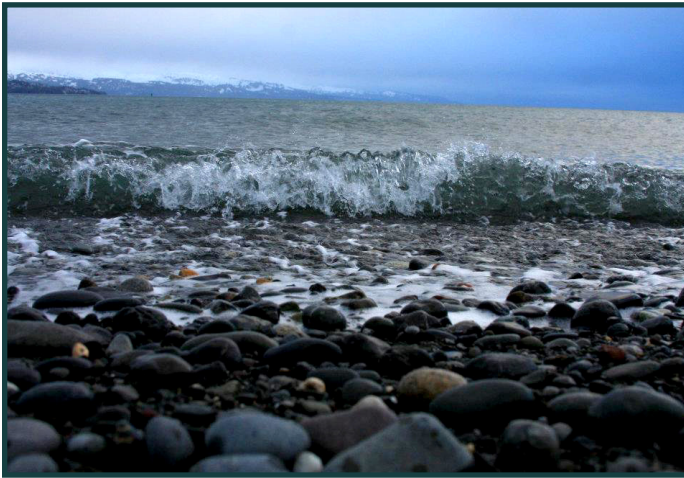
Kachemak Bay Fishing Locations



Weather Watch and Boating Safety

Weather and ocean conditions in the Kachemak Bay and Cook Inlet area change rapidly. Be aware of the hazards of fog and rough water. Therefore, it is important to know our personal limitations and the limitations of your equipment. Remember to adjust your activities within these limitations and enjoy a safe trip. The Homer Harbormaster's office has a list of equipment required for recreational boats as well as, loaner life jackets for children. In Alaska all children under the age of 13 are required to wear life jackets when in an open boat, on the deck of a boat, but not when enclosed in a cabin or below decks.

Anglers are reminded to review marine weather forecast before heading out on the waters, which is updated every 12 hours. The marine weather forecast is broadcasted on local radio stations, on VHF Channel 2, posted on the Homer Harbormaster's office, and available on NOAA's Marine Forecasts webpage at www.weather.gov.



Follow us on
Instagram

[@adfg.sportfish.homer](https://www.instagram.com/adfg.sportfish.homer)

[@adfg.sportfish.southcentral](https://www.instagram.com/adfg.sportfish.southcentral)



Like us on
Facebook

ADF&G - Sport Fishing Southcentral Alaska
ADF&G - Ship Creek Fisheries Center
ADF&G - Sport Fishing Interior Alaska



Sport Fishing Series Produced By:

Southcentral Region
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Sport Fish

333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99518

Sport Fish Information Center
(907) 267-2218
M-F 8am - 5 pm
Except on state holidays

These opportunities funded in part by the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This summary is available in alternative communication formats. If you need assistance, please contact the ADF&G ADA Coordinator at (907) 465-6078; TTY/ Alaska Relay 7-1-1; or 1 (800) 770-8973.

www.adfg.alaska.gov

1/2024