2025 COOK INLET EEZ SALMON SAFE REPORT & HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS

February 2025 NPFMC

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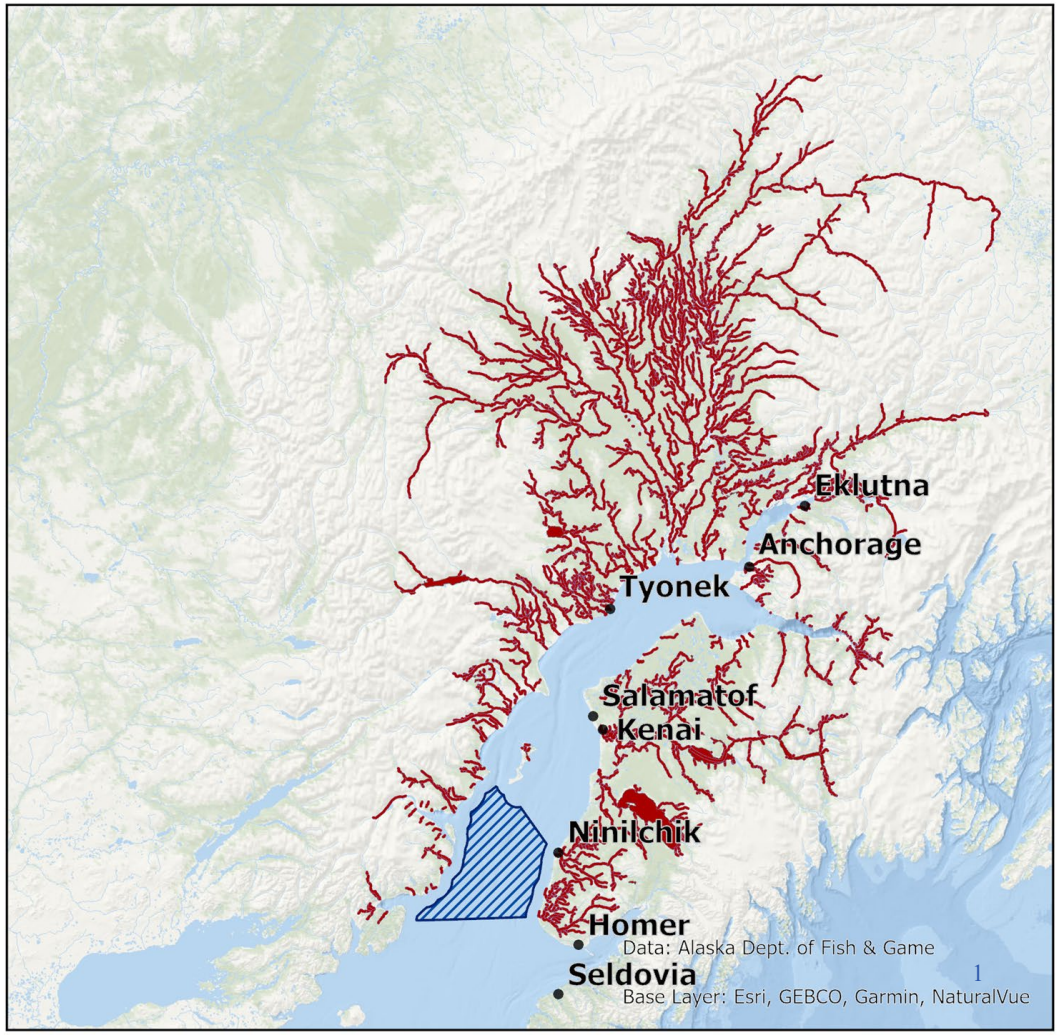
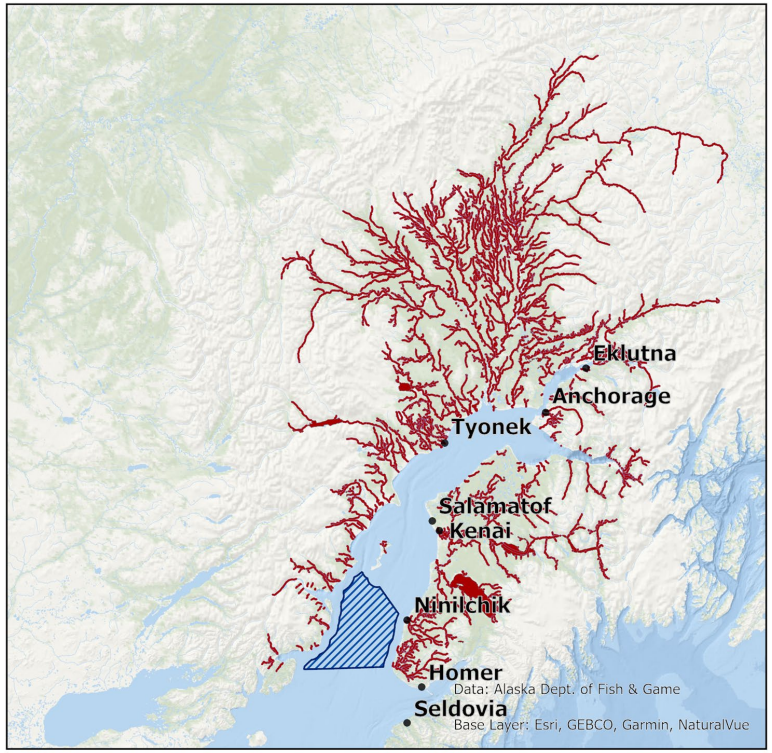


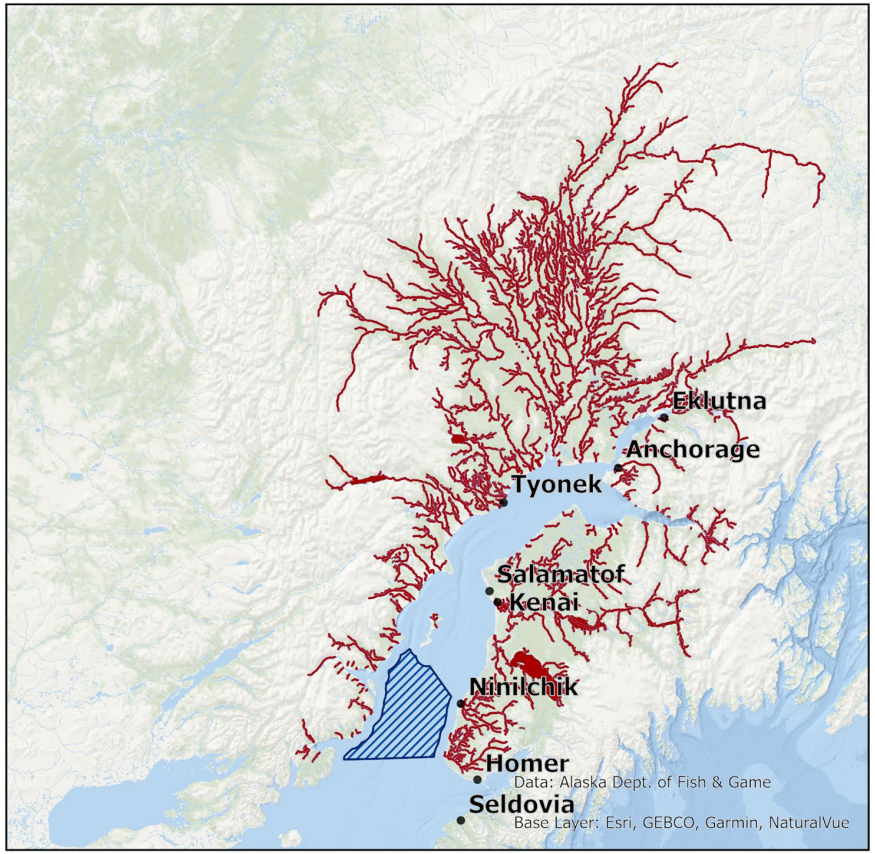
OUTLINE

1. The need for Council action on 2025 harvest specification
2. Overview of Federal Management
3. 2024 Cook Inlet EEZ Salmon Fishery
4. 2024 SSC Recommendations and how they were addressed
5. Stock overviews for 2024 and 2025
6. Summary of NMFS SAFE Team recommendations
7. Considerations for future assessments
8. Update on the request for a tribal salmon fishery in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area



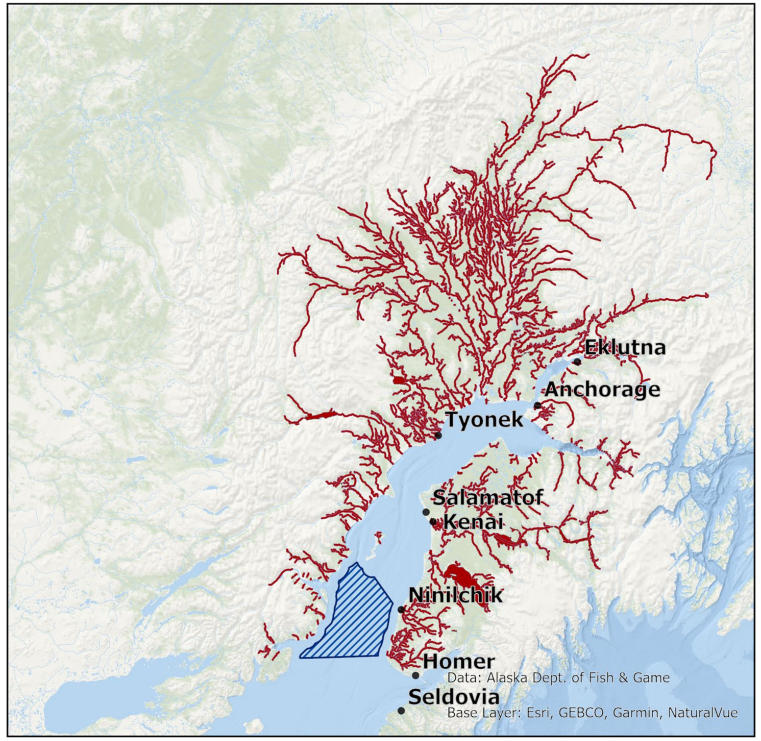
A Council recommendation for TACs is necessary for the fishery start by June 19th

- For 2025, without a court order to implement the fishery, we will not have justification for a 30-day comment period under (**305(d)**) (used for 2024)
- Thus, with a 60-day comment period under Secretarial Authority (**304(c)(6)**), there is not sufficient time to implement harvest specs prior to June 19th
- Delayed fishery start would have economic impacts to fishermen, processors, processor workers, and communities (e.g., landing tax).



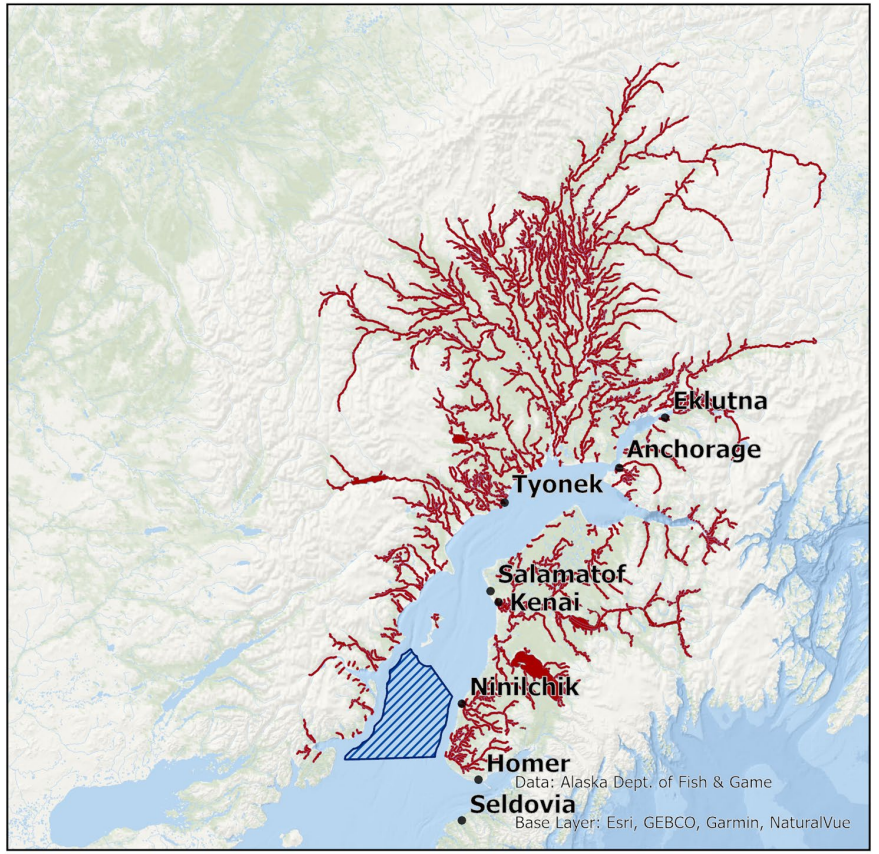
FEDERAL COOK INLET STOCKS AND STOCK COMPLEXES IN SALMON FMP

- Kenai Late Run Sockeye Salmon (KNSOCK)
- Kasilof Sockeye Salmon (KASOCK)
- Aggregate "Other" Sockeye Salmon Stock Complex (AOSOCK)
- Aggregate Chinook Salmon Stock Complex (ACHIN)
- Aggregate Coho Salmon Stock Complex (COHO)
- Aggregate Chum Salmon Stock Complex (CHUM)
- Aggregate Pink Salmon Stock Complex (PINK)



COOK INLET EEZ FISHERY MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

- 2025 Season is June 19th - August 15
  - June 19 - July 15: Mondays & Thursdays, 7am - 7pm
  - July 16 - July 31: Thursdays ONLY, 7am - 7pm
  - August 1 - August 15: Mondays & Thursdays, 7am - 7pm
- NMFS closes EEZ commercial fishing:
  - TAC is reached or;
  - Inseason information indicates run failure or;
  - August 15
- Fishing only in EEZ or State waters on each day (not same day)
- EEZ fishing must begin with no fish onboard
- EEZ fish must be landed before fishing elsewhere
- SFFP and VMS are required for participation



CHANGES FROM 2024 TO 2025 SAFE (2024 SSC Recommendations)

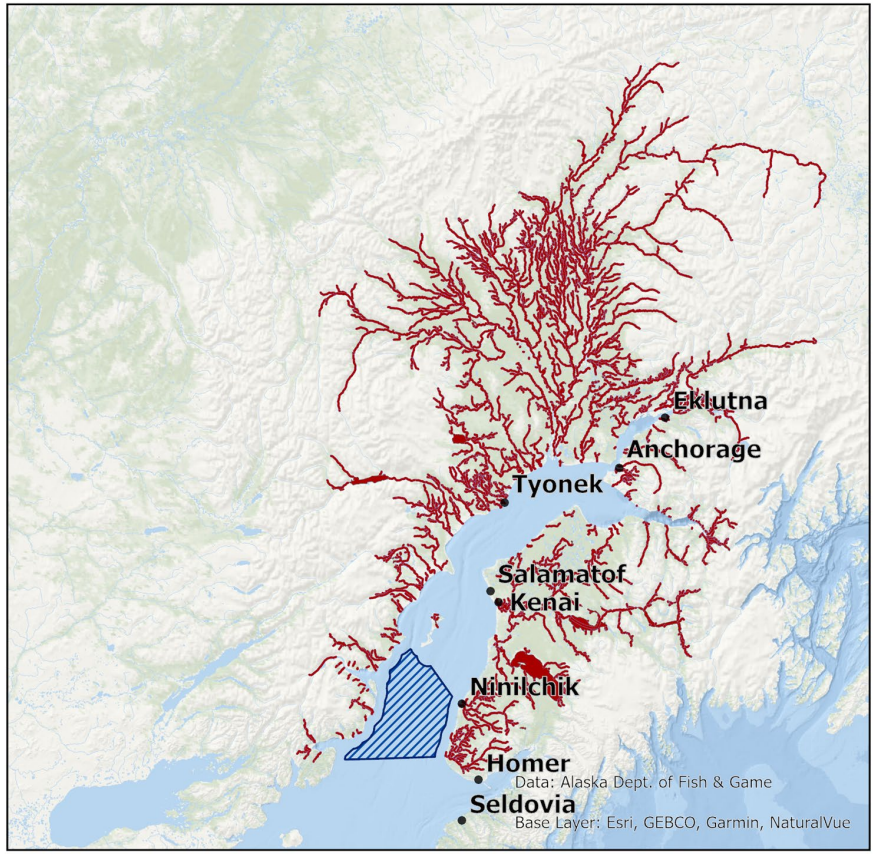
*****SSC Recommendations were addressed and implemented for 2024 and 2025 assessments and the FMP*****

SSC recommendations pertained to:

- FMP: Tier 1 Preseason OFL calculation
- 2024 Assessment: 2024 Tier 1 SDC calculated using $S_{MSY\text{-}POINT}$
- 2025 Assessment: Tier 3 OFL and Preseason OFL calculations
- 2026 Assessment: Risk tables; Bayesian modeling approach

2024 COOK INLET EEZ FISHERY

- 2024 management went smoothly, thanks to many people: OLE, Coast Guard, AFSC, AKR
- TACs not exceeded for any stocks
- No overfishing of any stocks
- No stocks overfished
  - COHO: spawning escapements were not a reliable index of abundance as the weirs washed out 2022 - 2024.
- Thanks to OLE for uncovering reporting issues for Chinook salmon catch.
  - 31 Chinook salmon reported harvests.
  - For 2025: continued enforcement monitoring and outreach



Fisheries Enforcement

- For 2025, OLE and their partners will continue monitoring and enforcing the CI EEZ salmon fishery; including operations at sea, dockside, air, in fish processing facilities, and will include vessel boardings.

- NMFS managers and OLE have regular communications throughout the fishing season, including bi-weekly management meetings.

- For 2025: NMFS and OLE will conduct outreach emphasizing that full retention of Pacific salmon is a requirement of participating in the CI EEZ salmon fishery.

2024 COOK INLET EEZ FISHERY

Table 4. 2025 SAFE Report (page 7).

Stock	Tier	OFL_{PRE}	ABC/ ACL	TAC	Catch	Sockeye Catch
KNSOCK	1	901,932	431,123			189,380
KASOCK	1	541,084	375,512	492,100	**324,837**	77,960
AOSOCK	3	887,464	177,493			57,496
ACHIN	3	2,697	270	240	**31**	NA
COHO	3	357,688	35,769	25,000	**4,432**	NA
CHUM	3	441,727	110,432	99,400	**28,832**	NA
PINK-EVEN	3	270,435	135,218	121,700	**6,249**	NA

COOK INLET EEZ FISHERY TIER SYSTEM

Tier 1 Highest available information: total run size estimates, stock -specific harvests, escapements

- OFL_{PRE} = forecasted run size - escapement goal target - projected State harvest
- ABC = OFL_{PRE} reduced by a buffer to account for scientific uncertainty (run size & State harvests)

Tier 3 Least amount of information: harvest data, some stocks have escapement estimates

- OFL_{PRE} = highest average harvest over generation time
- ABC = reduced by a buffer to account for scientific uncertainty
  - Selected based on scientific uncertainty:
    - Stock size, escapement goal achievement
    - Susceptibility to gillnets
    - Ecosystem considerations (i.e, beluga whales, climatic indices)

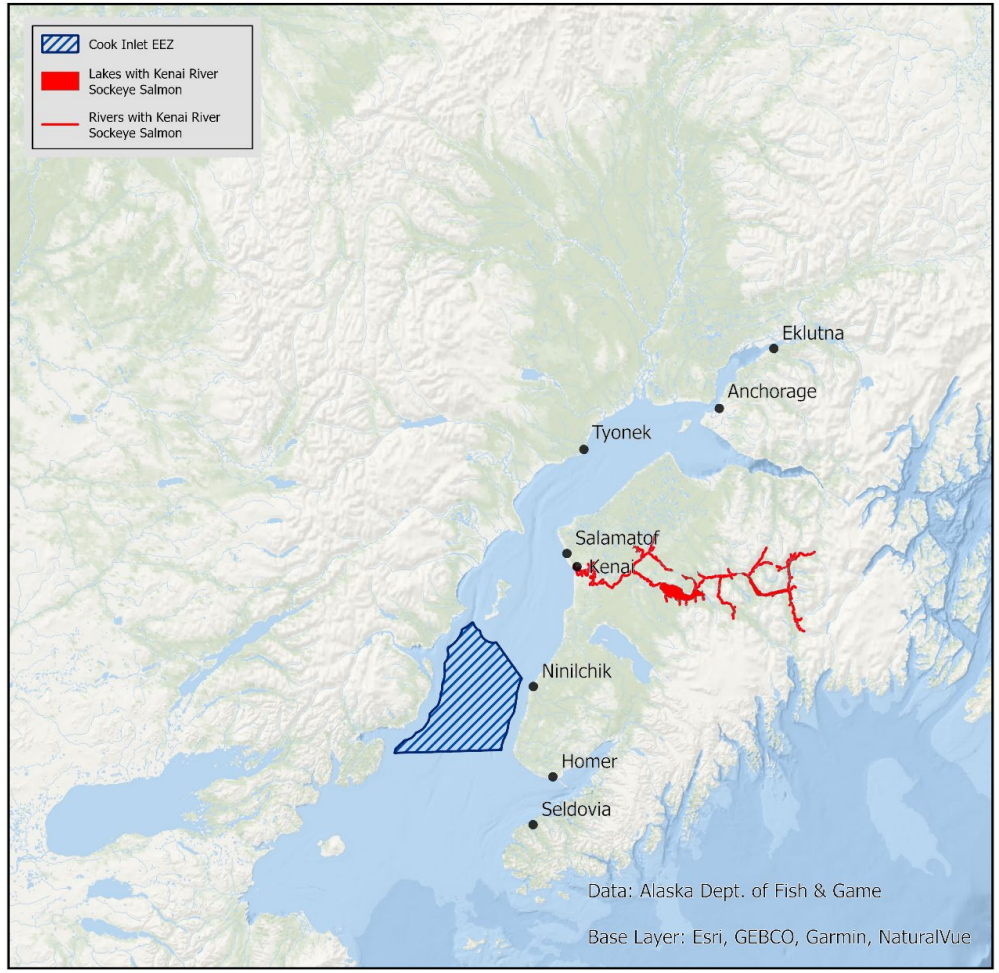
COOK INLET EEZ FISHERY STATUS DETERMINATION CRITERIA: TIER 1

- Tier 1
  - **Overfishing**
    - MFMT vs. F_{EEZ} (EEZ harvest rate)
    - MFMT is the sum of the *realized* potential yield over the most recent generation/ sum of the total run size over the most recent generation.
  - **Overfished**
    - MSST (escapement goal for a generation) vs. cumulative escapement for recent generation
    - MSST = (Escapement Target x Generation Time)/ 2

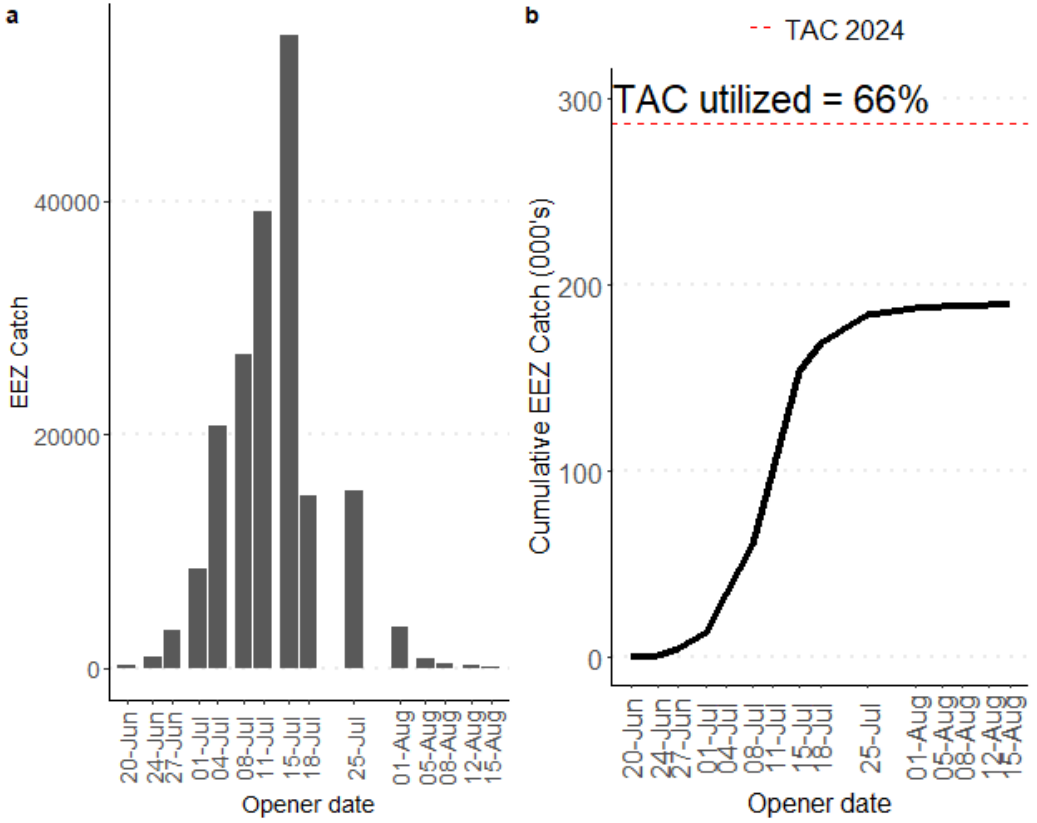
COOK INLET EEZ FISHERY STATUS DETERMINATION CRITERIA: TIER 3

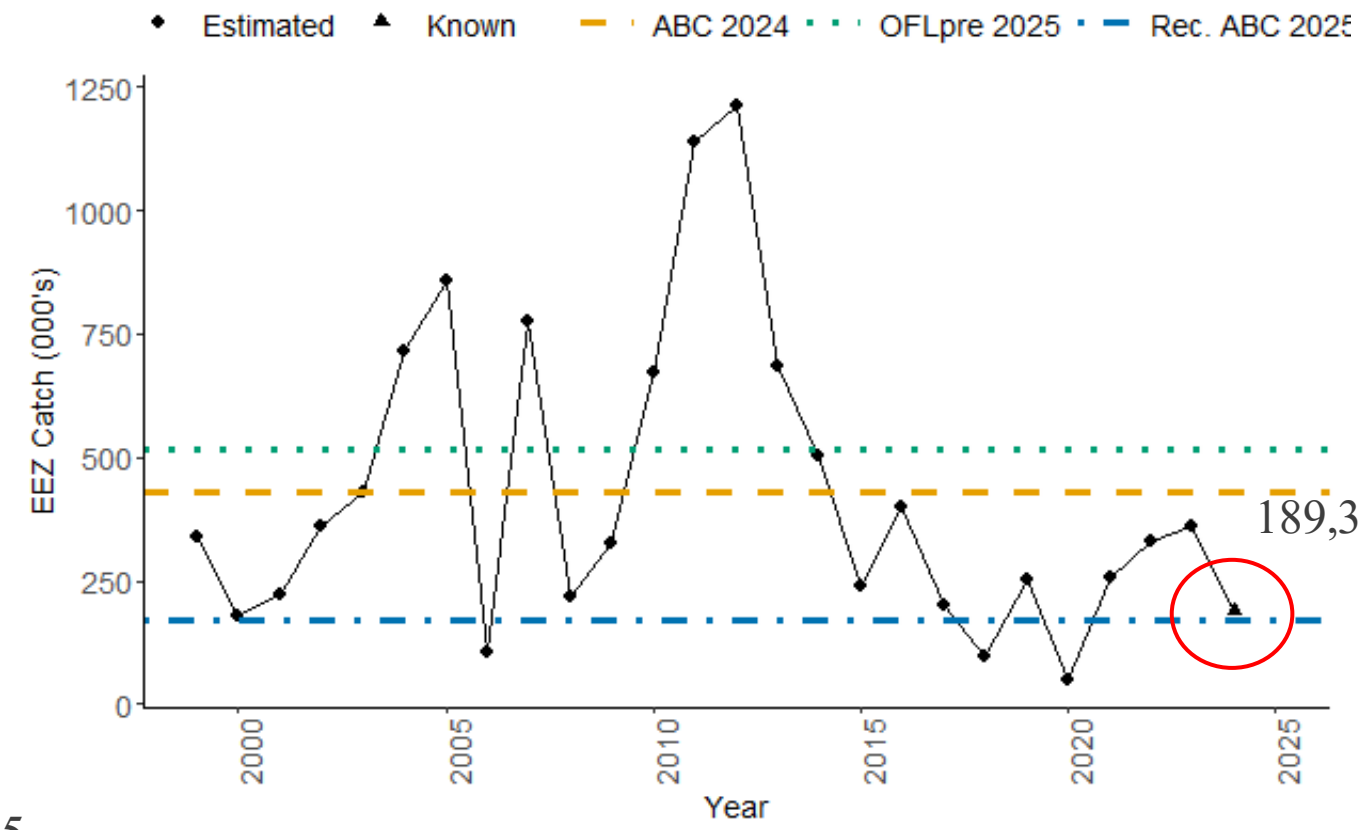
- Tier 3
  - Overfishing:
    - OFL vs. sum of EEZ harvest over the most recent generation time
    - OFL is the highest historical EEZ harvest over a generation time
  - Overfished
    - Same as Tier 1: MSST vs. Cumulative escapement for recent generation
    - Stock complexes w/o indicator stocks (CHUM, PINK)
      - Overfished determination cannot be made

KENAI LATE RUN SOCKEYE SALMON (KNSOCK)



KENAI LATE RUN SOCKEYE SALMON (KNSOCK)
2024 CI EEZ FISHERY (Section 7.2)

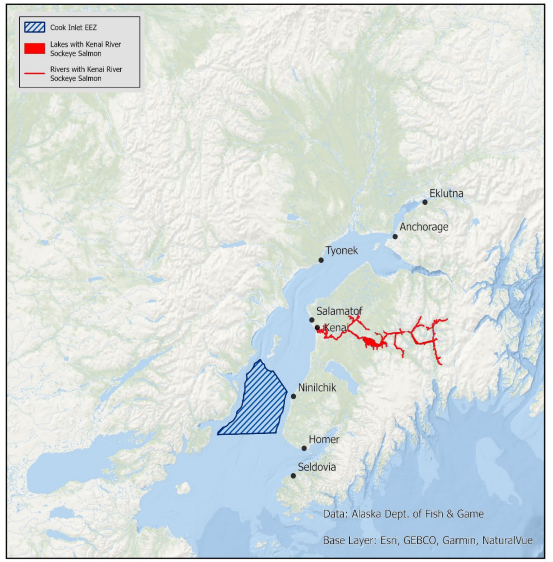




- Fishery opened June 20, closed August 15
- Max sockeye catch July 15
- 189,380 KNSOCK harvested

KENAI LATE RUN SOCKEYE SALMON (KNSOCK)

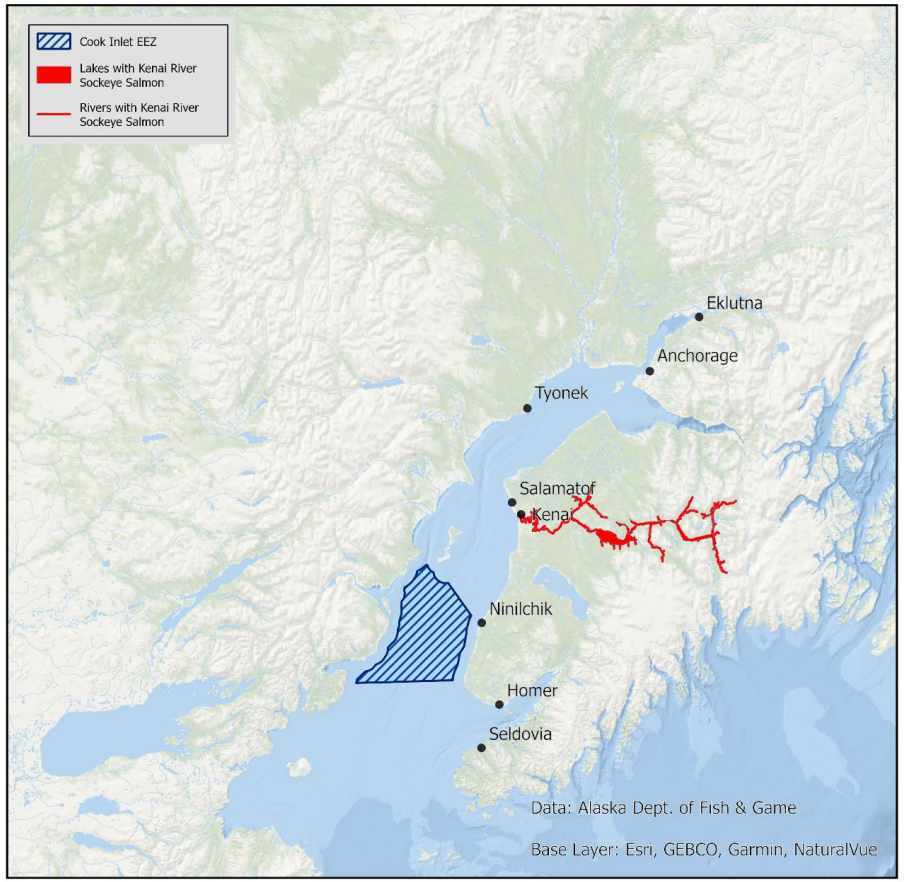
- 2024: 189K harvested in EEZ (~19% of State + Federal commercial sockeye salmon harvest in UCI)
- 2024: KNSOCK was 58.3% of EEZ sockeye harvest based on State genetics
- Forecasted 2025 total run size = 3.45M sockeye.
  - 2020 - 2024 was 2.39 - 3.72M sockeye



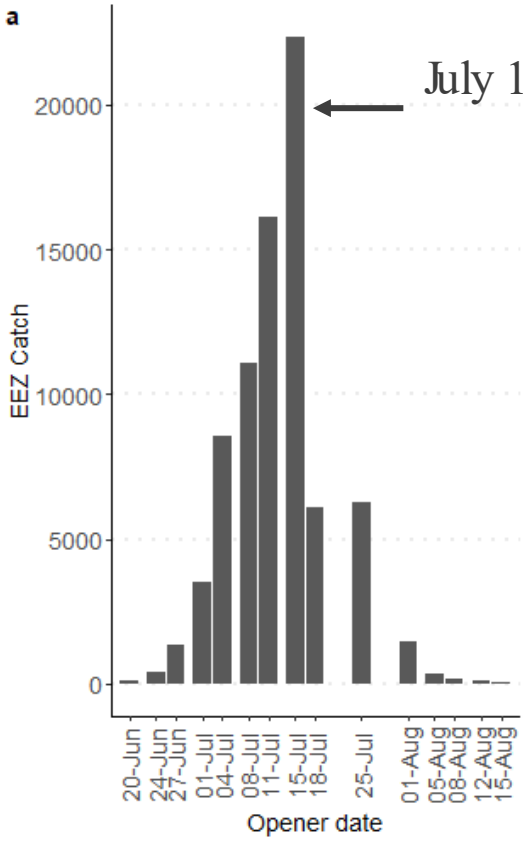
KENAI LATE RUN SOCKEYE SALMON (KNSOCK)
TIER 1 ABC/ACL RECOMMENDATIONS (Section 7.2)

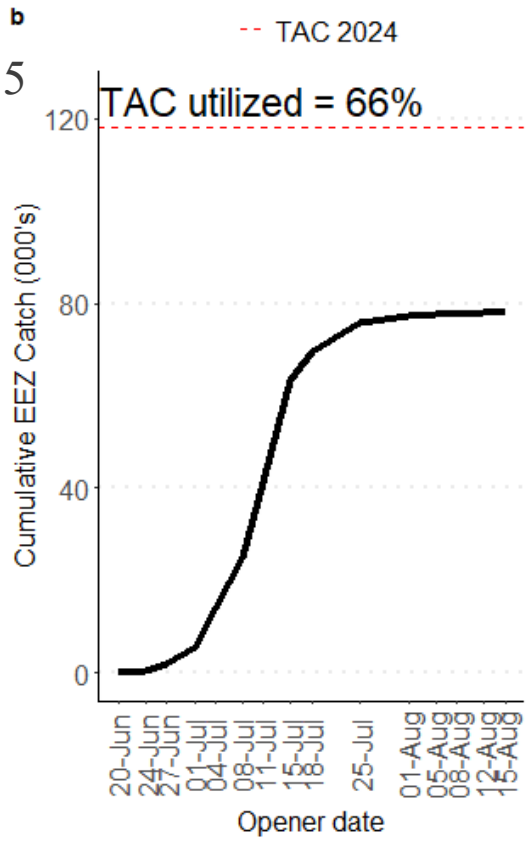
SAFE Recommendations:

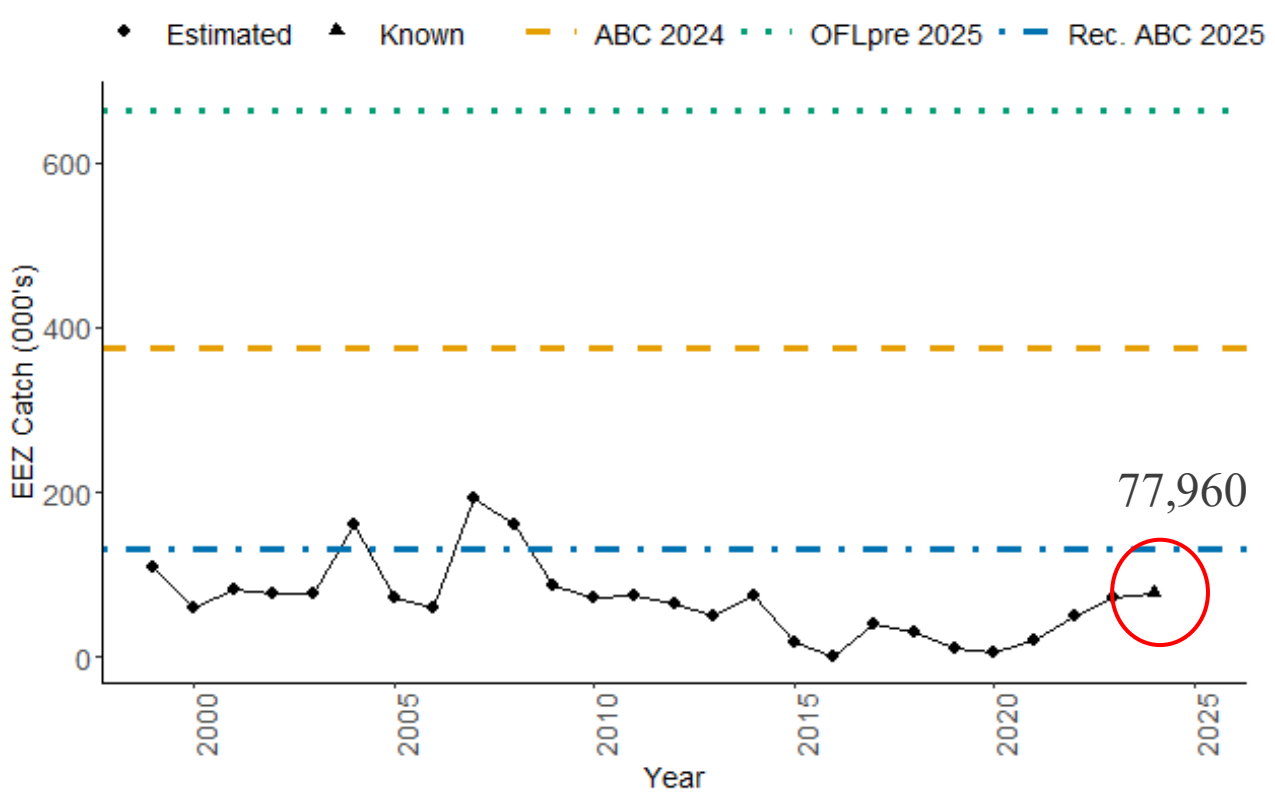
- Tier……1
- MFMT (EEZ overfishing rate)…….0.327
- MSST (overfished value)……..……..1,875,000 fish
- OFL_{PRE}……976,761 fish
- Buffer……27.3%
- ABC ……..……709,954
- ACL = ABC



KASILOF SOCKEYE SALMON (KASOCK)
2024 CI EEZ FISHERY (Section 7.3)

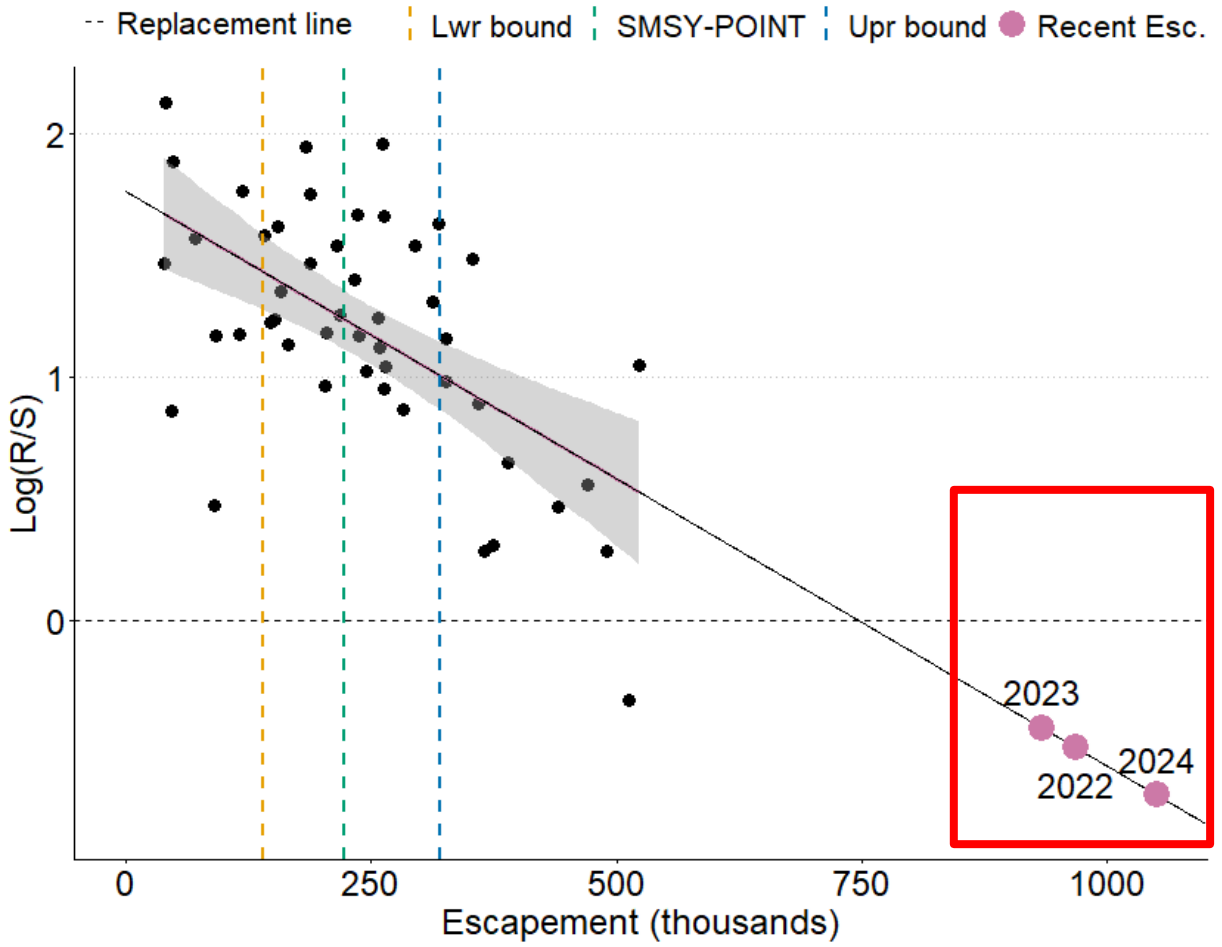






KASILOF SOCKEYE SALMON (KASOCK)
SPAWNER-RECRUITMENT CHARACTERISTICS: PRODUCTIVITY

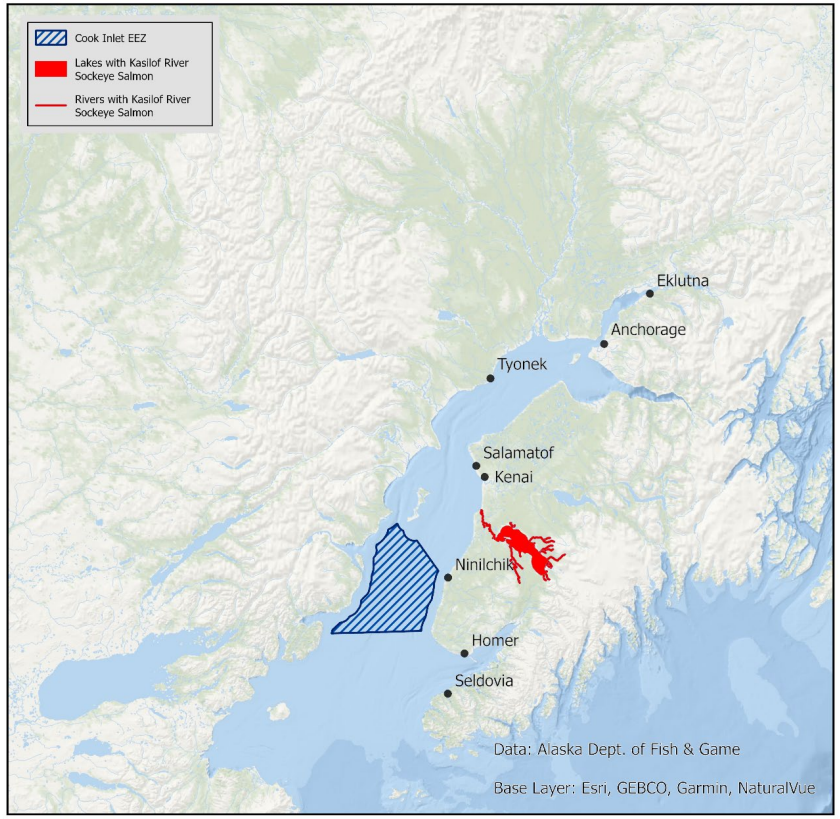
- Declining productivity
- Recent escapements are ~ 1M fish.
  - Recent escapements:
    - 2022 = 968K
    - 2023 = 933K
    - 2024 = 1.05M
  - *Potentially* below replacement



KASILOF SOCKEYE SALMON (KASOCK)

- 2024: 78.0K harvested in EEZ (~19% of State + Federal commercial harvest in UCI).
- 2024: ~ 24% of EEZ sockeye salmon harvest based on State genetics

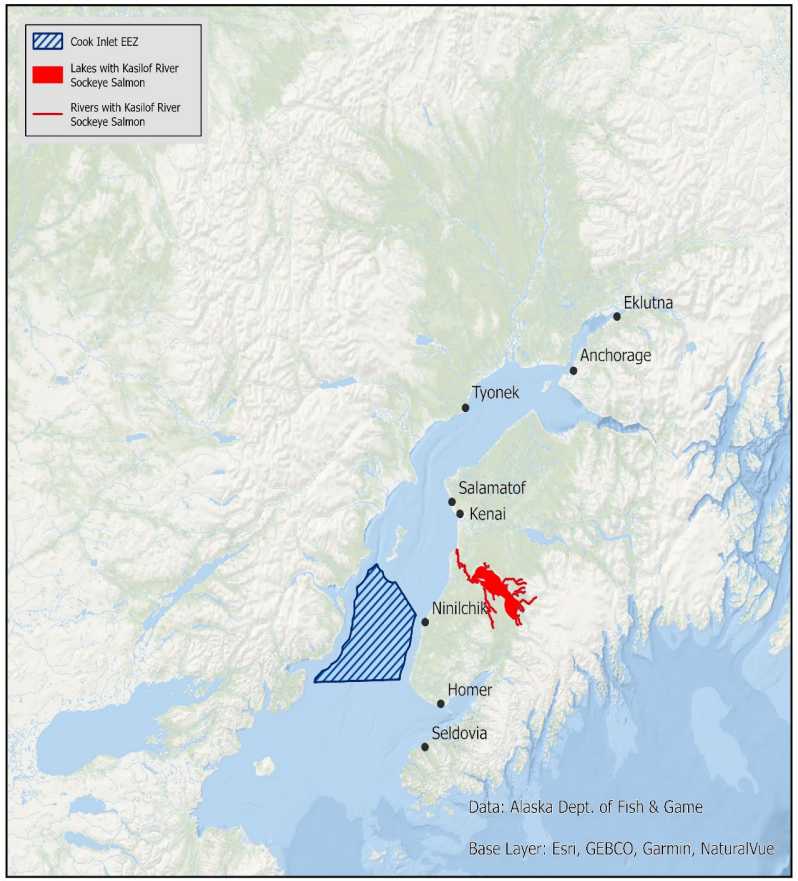
- Forecasted 2025 run size = 1.31M sockeye
  - 2020 - 2024 was 845K - 1.8M
  - Buffer based on forecasted run size and State harvest rate.
  - 2025 buffer only considers probability of overforecasting OFL.



KASILOF SOCKEYE SALMON (KNSOCK)
TIER 1 RECOMMENDATIONS (Section 7.3)

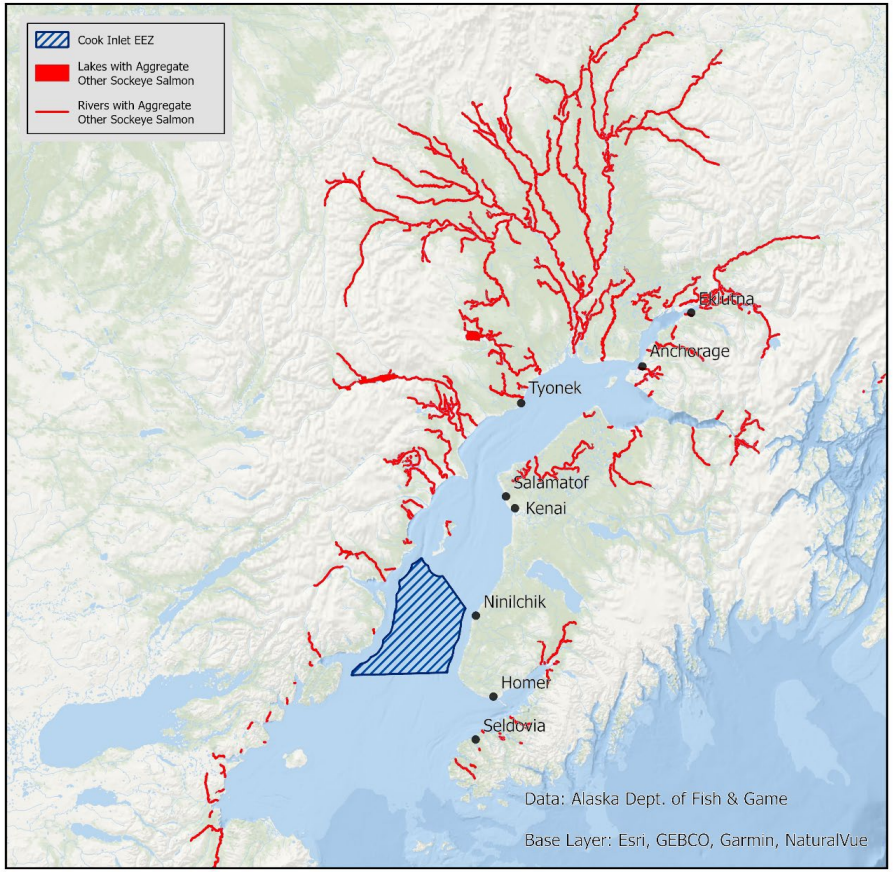
SAFE Recommendations:

- Tier……1
- MFMT……0.572
- MSST……..350,000 fish
- OFL_{PRE}……746,294 fish
- Buffer……57%
- ABC ……..……320,841
- ACL = ABC

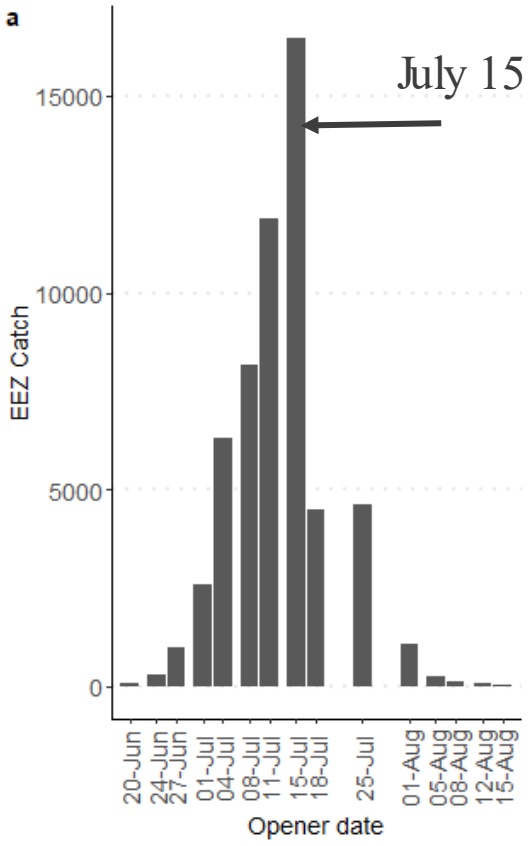


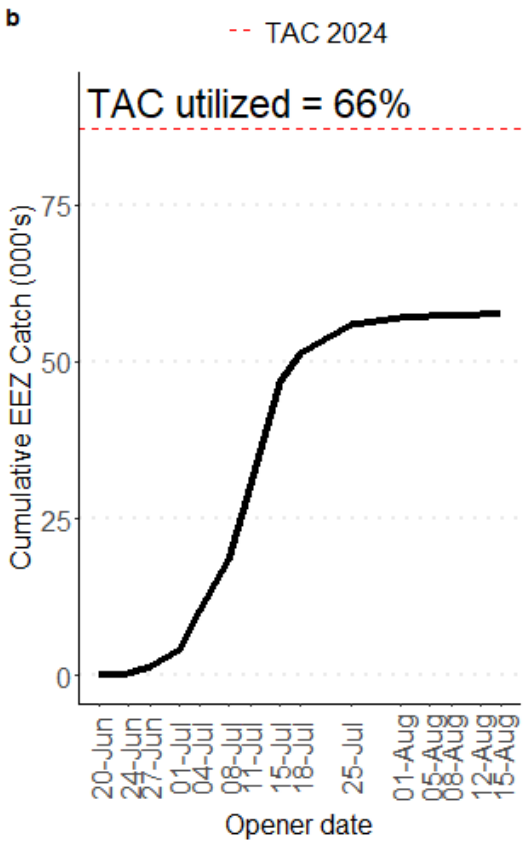
AGGREGATE "Other" SOCKEYE SALMON (AOSOCK) TIER 3 (Section 7.4)

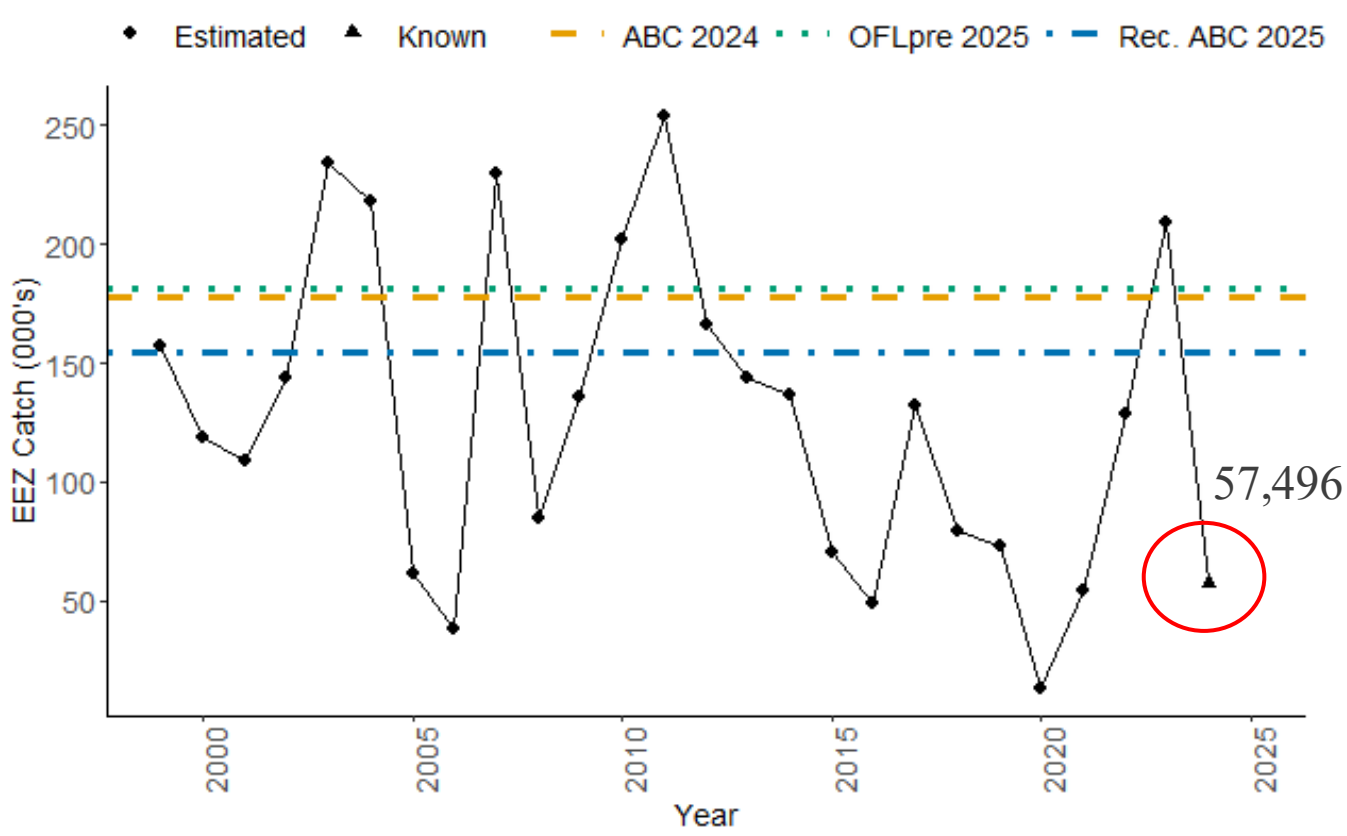
- All other sockeye salmon harvested in the CI EEZ, except Kenai and Kasilof stocks.
- Four indicator stocks:
  - Fish Creek (15,000 - 45,000)
  - Chelatna Lake (20,000 - 45,000)
  - Judd Lake (15,000 - 40,000)
  - Larson Lake (15,000 - 35,000)
  - **Sum of lower bounds = 65K**
- Indicator stocks allow for making an Overfished determination (i.e., MSST vs. Cumulative Esc) for Tier 3 stocks.
  - Must have reliable indices of escapement



AGGREGATE "Other" SOCKEYE SALMON (AOSOCK)
2024 CI EEZ FISHERY (Section 7.4)

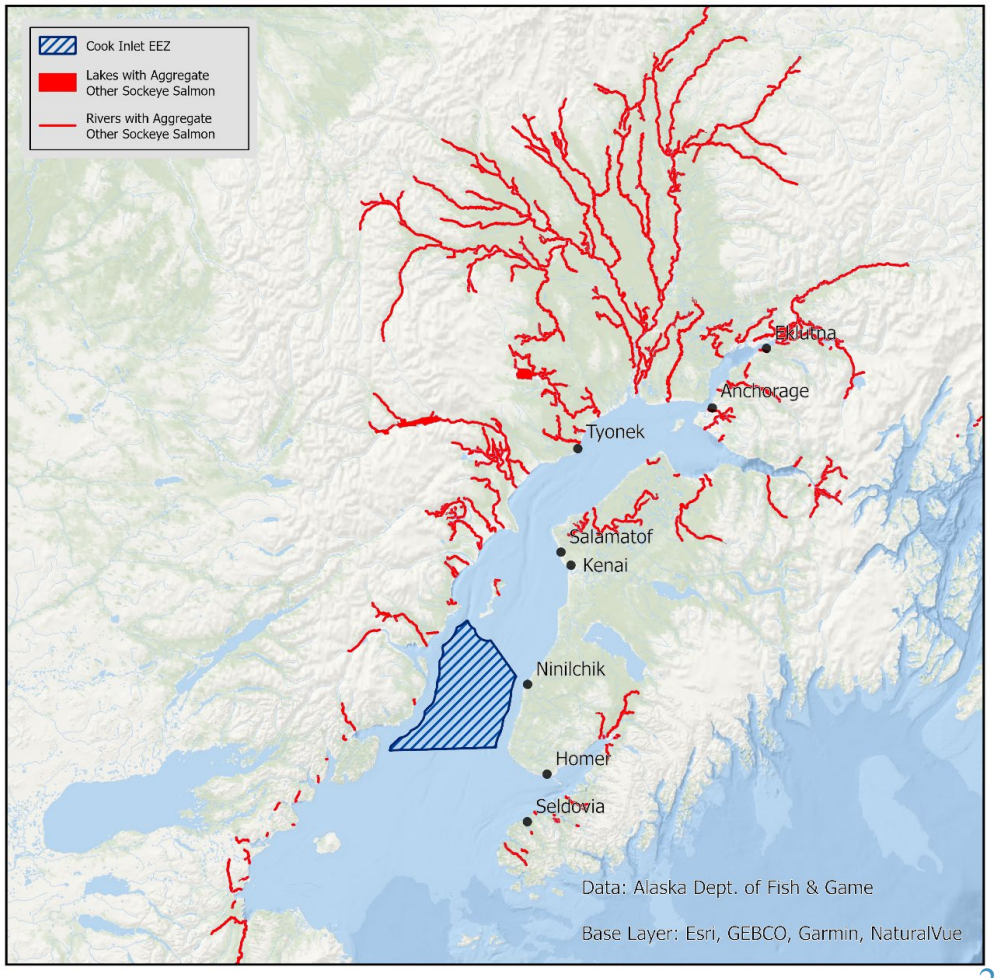






AGGREGATE "OTHER" SOCKEYE SALMON (AOSOCK)

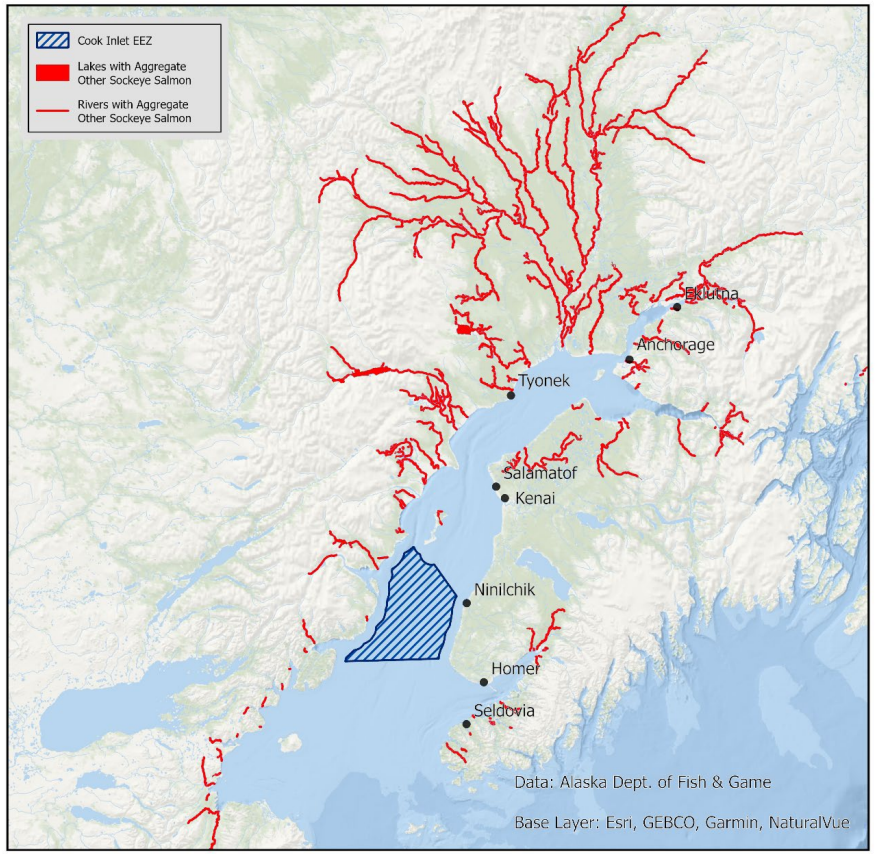
- 2024: 57.5K harvested in EEZ (~18% of State + Federal commercial harvest in UCI).
- 2024: ~ 18% of EEZ sockeye harvest based on State genetics
- 2025 assessment: AOSOCK total run size likely = or > than Kasilof sockeye salmon stock
- 2025: Tier 3, recommended 15% buffer and ABC of 154.1K fish.
  - Escapement goals met in recent years.
  - 15% buffer reflects uncertainty associated with run size estimate, safeguard against exceeding OFL_{PRE}



AGGREGATE "OTHER" SOCKEYE SALMON (AOSOCK)
2025 TIER 3 ABC/ACL RECOMMENDATIONS (Section 7.4)

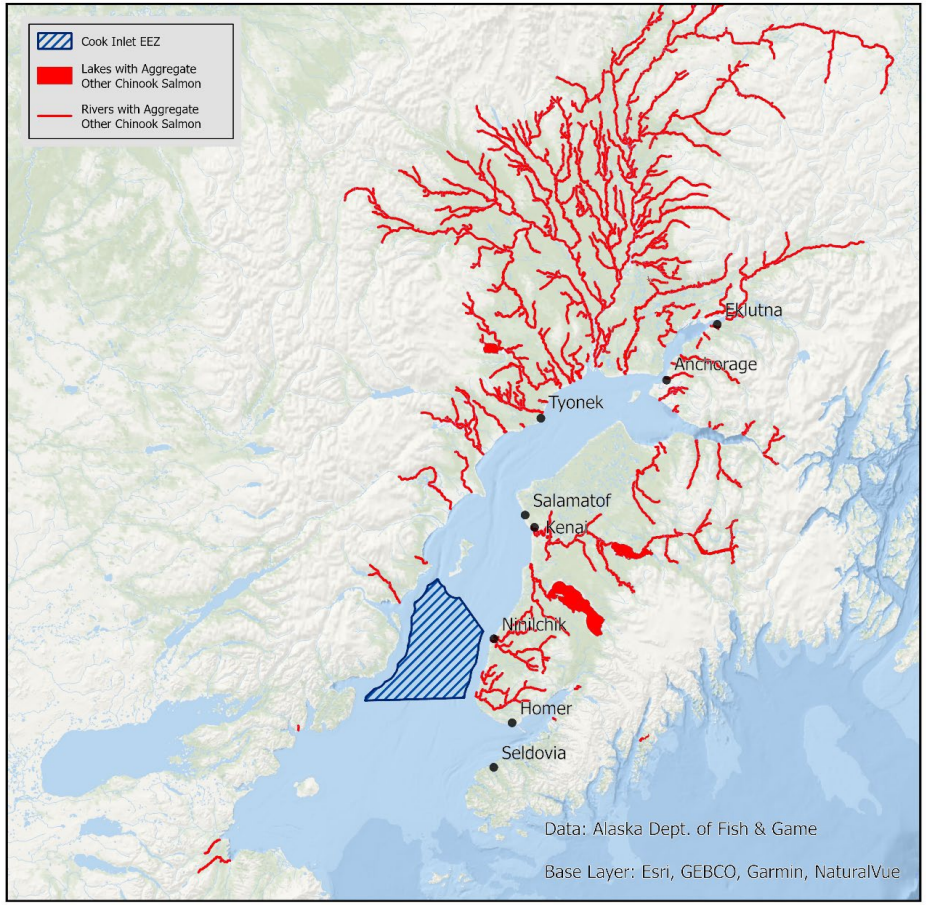
SAFE Recommendations:

- Tier……3
- MSST……..163,000
- OFL……906,757 fish
- OFL_{PRE}……181,351 fish
- Buffer……15%
- ABC ……154,148 fish
- ACL = ABC
- 2025 State forecast estimates: ~1.01M for total run size

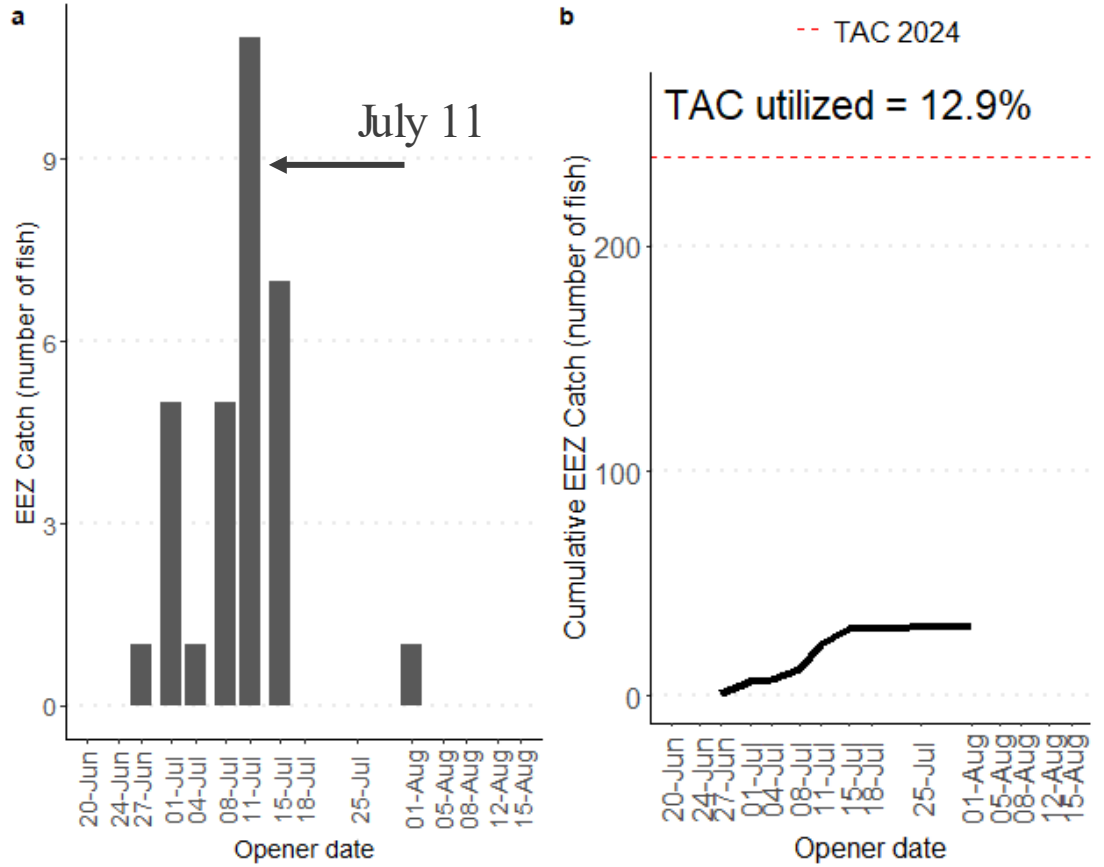


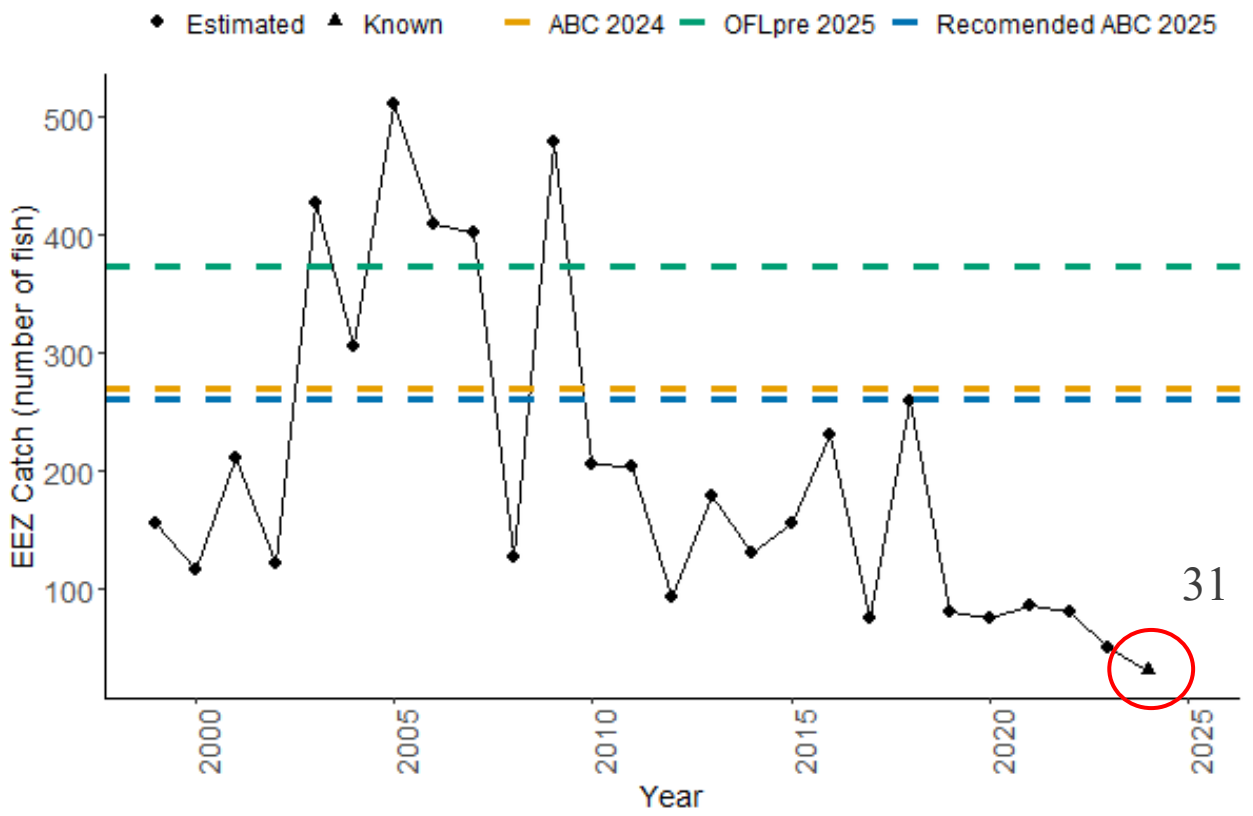
AGGREGATE CHINOOK SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (ACHIN
TIER 3 (Section 7.5)

- All UCI Chinook salmon harvested in the CI EEZ
- Generation time = 6 years
- Indicator stock:
  - Kenai River Late Large Chinook Salmon (13,500 - 27,000)
    - Only Chinook salmon >75 cm METF (~ >13 lbs.)
- Indicator stocks allow for making an Overfished determination (i.e., MSST vs. Cumulative Esc) for Tier 3 stocks.



AGGREGATE CHINOOK SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (ACHIN) 2024 CI EEZ FISHERY (Section 7.5)

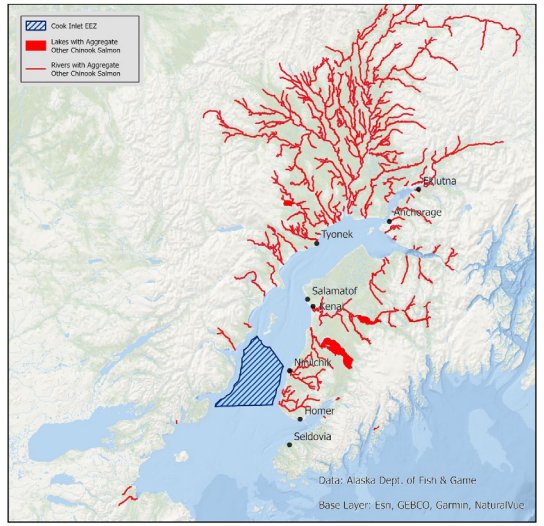




- Max sockeye catch July 15
- 31 Chinook harvested

AGGREGATE CHINOOK SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (ACHIN
2024 CI EEZ FISHERY (Section 7.5)

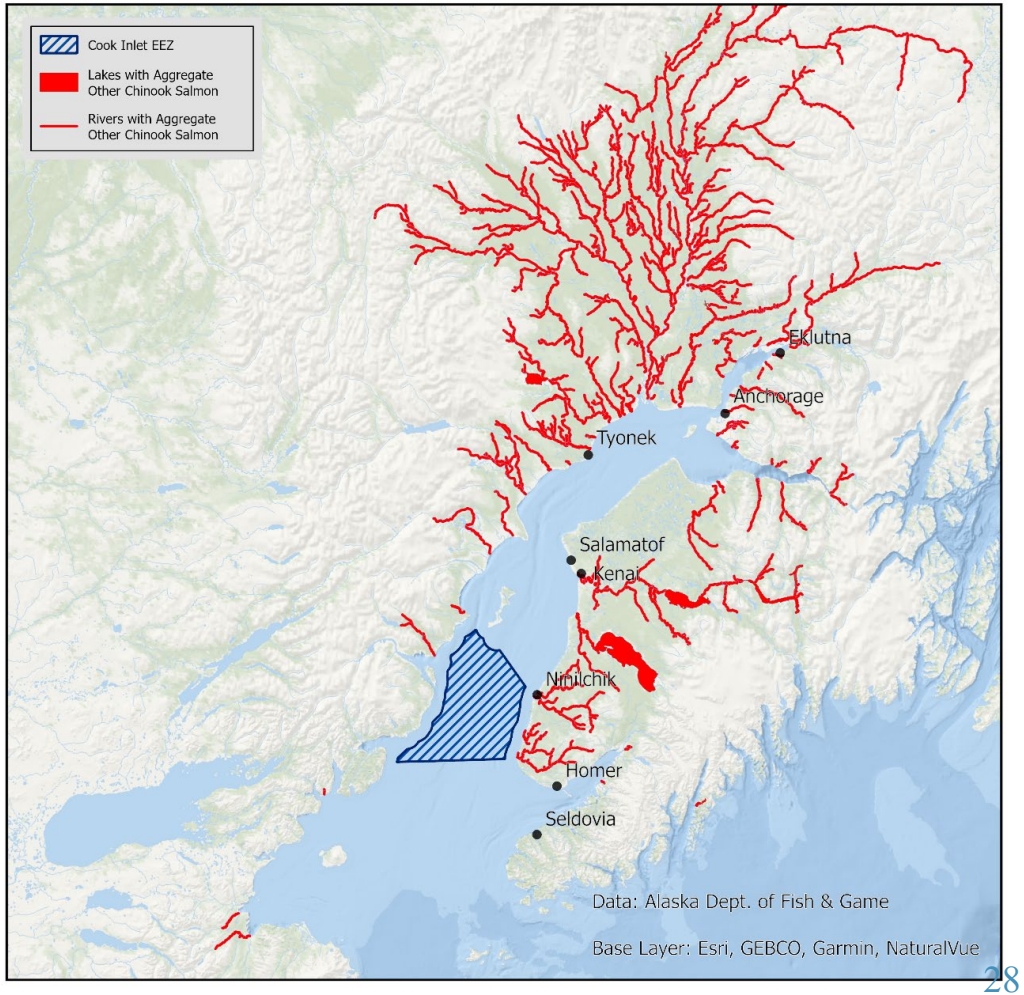
- Kenai Large Late Run Chinook Salmon (>75cm METF: > 13 lbs)
  - State lists as a State "Stock of Concern" in 2024.
  - Of the weighed 2024 EEZ harv. Chinook, only 2 were estimated to be >75cm METF
  - Chinook salmon caught in the CI Central Dist 2018 - 2022:
    - Avg weight was 8.2, 9, 10.8, 7.8, 7.7 lbs., respectively



  - Genetic samples from UCI Central Dist. sport harvest in 2014 - 2018 (Schuster et al. 2021) indicate:
    - 77 - 92% of sport caught Chinook originated from *outside CI*
    - 0.3 - 12.7% were Kenai River Chinook salmon

AGGREGATE CHINOOK SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (ACHIN)

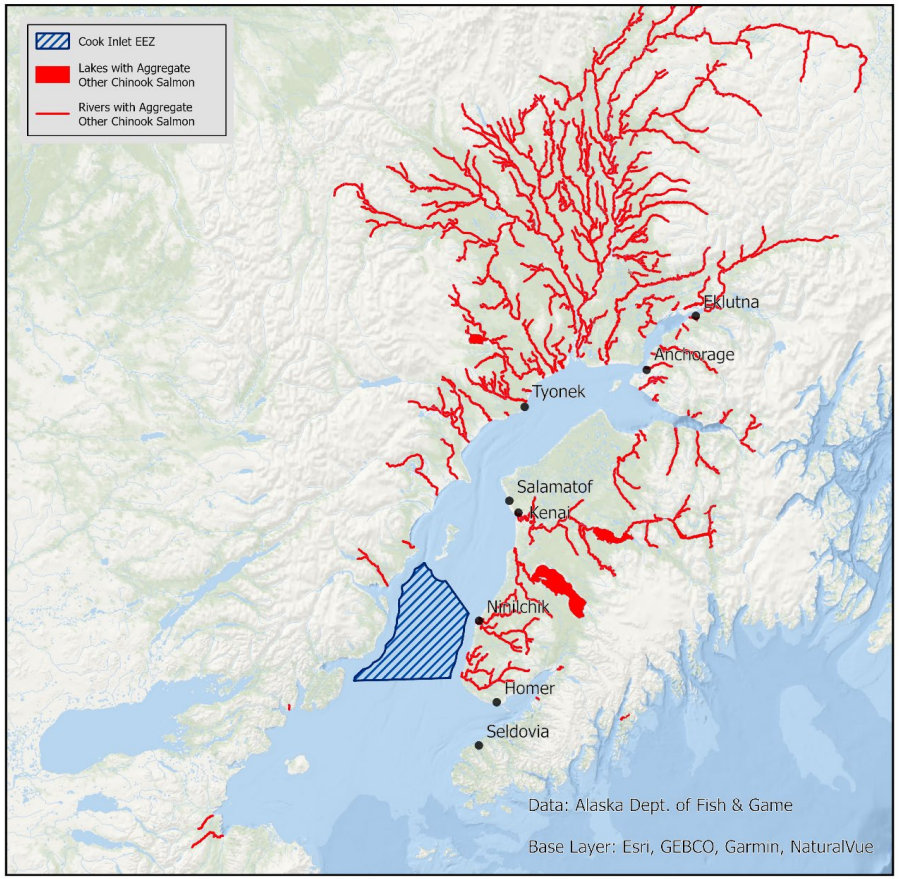
- 2024: Only 31 harvested in EEZ (8% of State + Federal commercial harvest for UCI — 31 of 171). EEZ recreational fishery was closed during 2024.
- 2024: Harvest reporting concern during the season.
- Based on harvest weights during recent years, including 2024, EEZ Chinook **do not** appear to be spawning.
- 2025: Tier 3, recommended 30% buffer and ABC of 261 fish balances conservation with the reality that these do not appear to be Kenai River Chinook salmon and the need to avoid perverse incentives.
- Genetic sampling would be informative



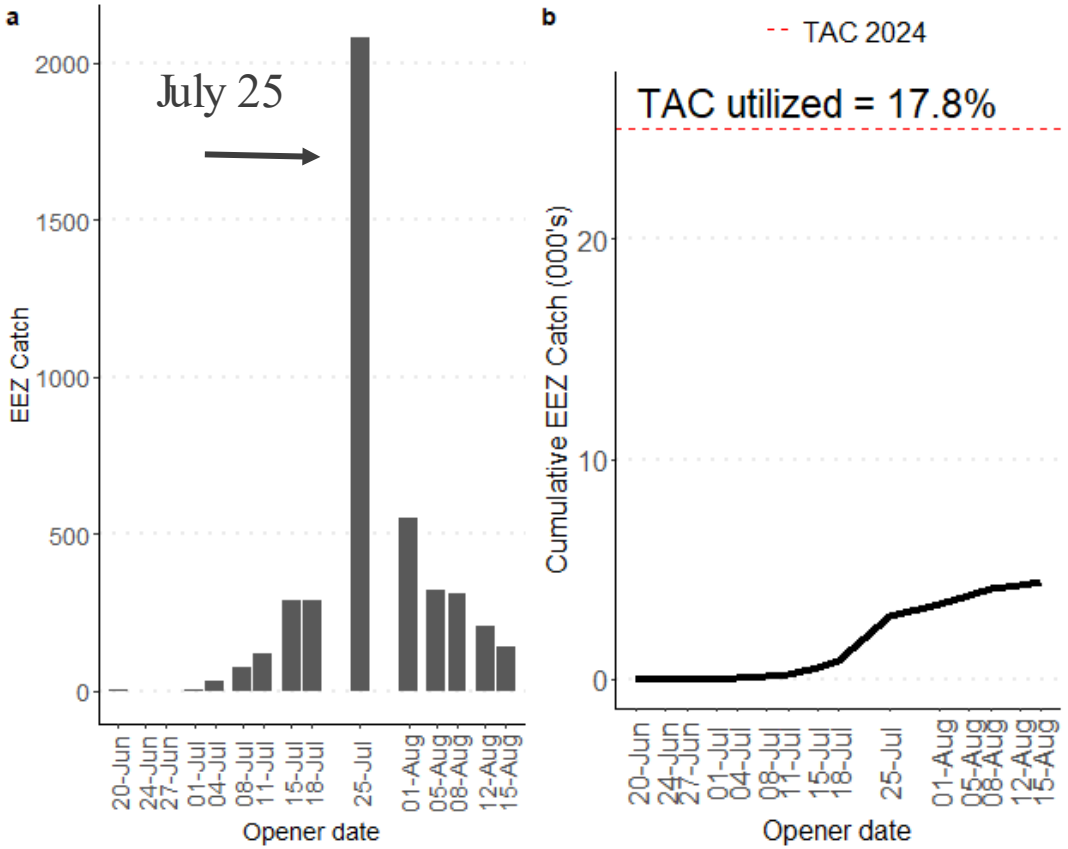
AGGREGATE CHINOOK SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (ACHIN
TIER 3 ABC/ACL RECOMMENDATIONS (Section 7.5)

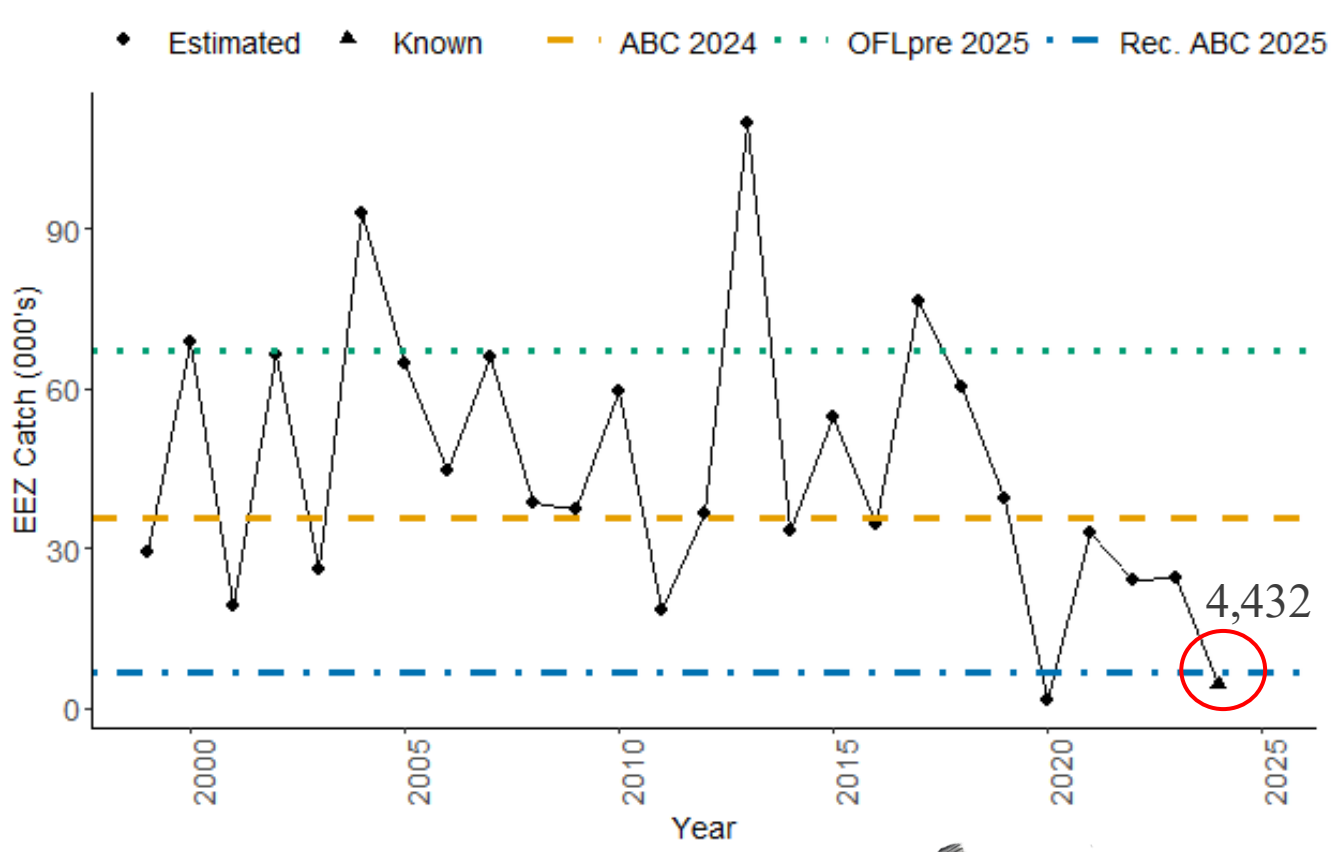
SAFE Recommendations:

- Tier……..3
- MSST……40,500
- OFL……..2,237 fish
- OFL_{PRE}……..373 fish
- Buffer……30%
- ABC ……..….261 fish
- ACL = ABC



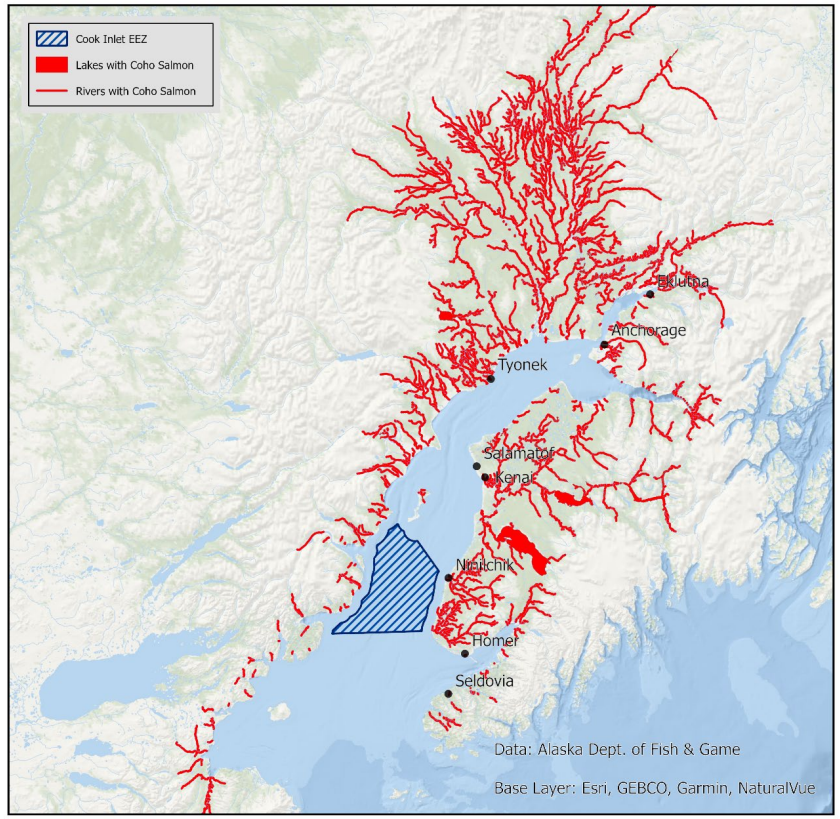
AGGREGATE COHO SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (COHO)
2024 CI EEZ FISHERY (Section 7.6)





AGGREGATE COHO SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (COHO)

- 2024: 4,434 harvested in EEZ = 18% of State + Federal comm. harvest UCI.
  - Escapement not met in indicator systems (Deshka and Little Susitna)
    - Incomplete monitoring 2022 - 2024
    - Stock is not overfished based on available data
- 2025: Tier 3, recommend 90% buffer and ABC of 6,701 fish
- 2025 ABC = less than 24 years of harvest (19,000 - 110,000 coho)
- Most conservative (90%) buffer because:
  - Low escapements during recent years and very low 2024 harvests
  - Coho are prey for CI belugas
  - Size makes them susceptible to gillnet harvest

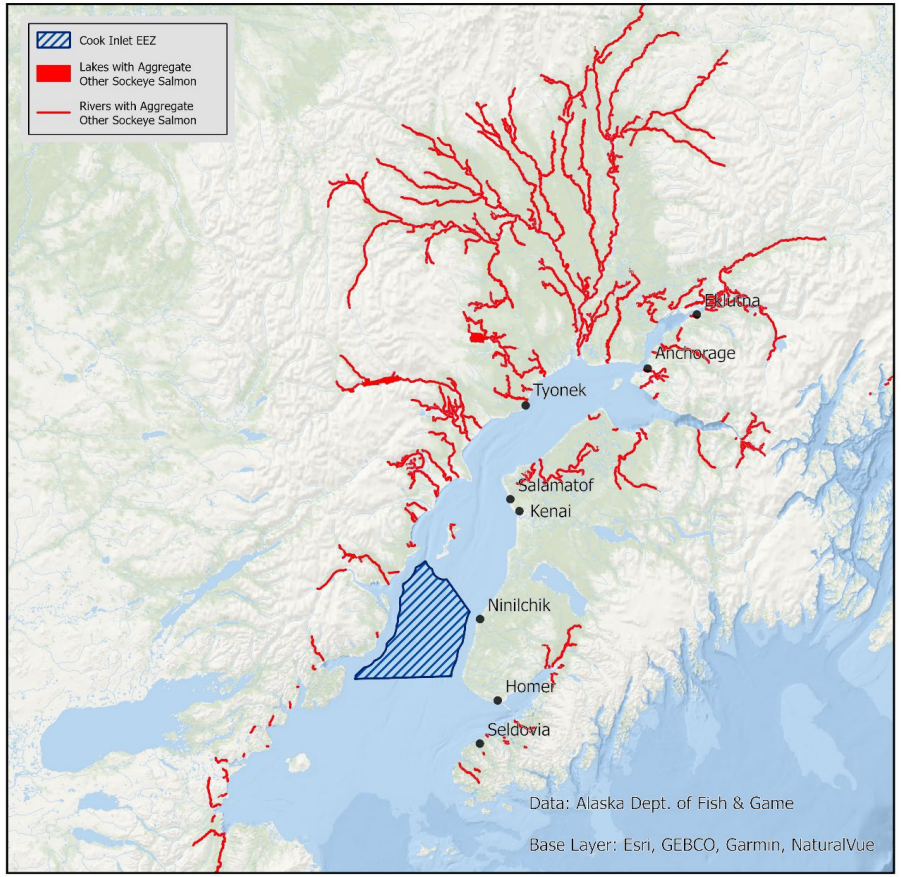


AGGREGATE COHO SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (COHO) TIER 3 RECOMMENDATIONS (Section 7.6)

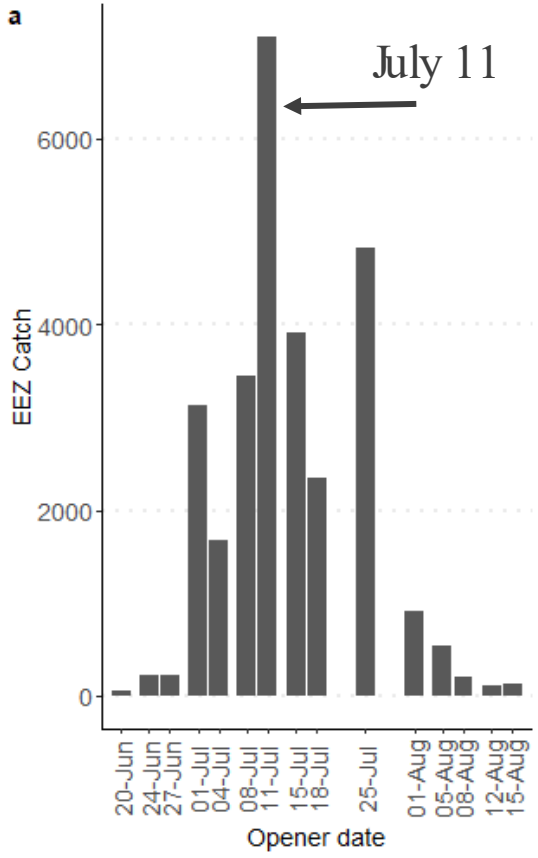
SAFE Recommendations:

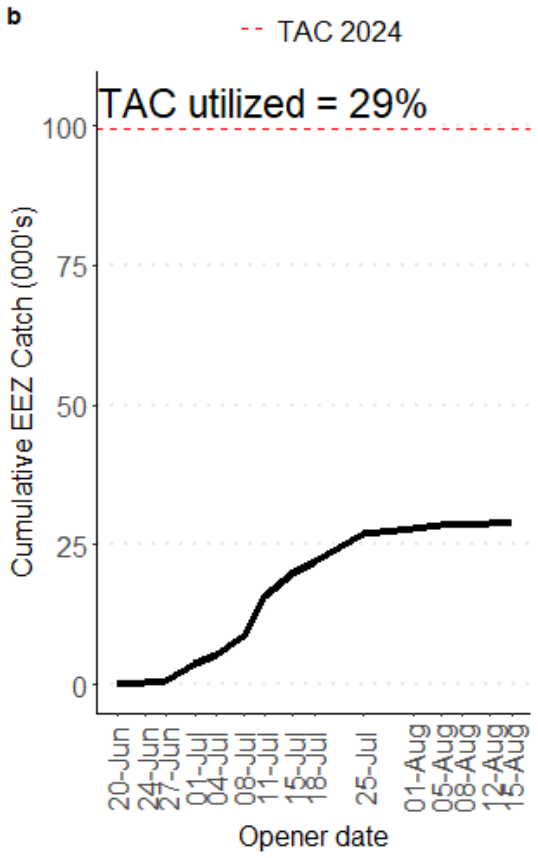
- Tier……..3
- MSST…….38,800***
- OFL……..…….268,053 fish
- OFL_{PRE}……..67,013 fish
- Buffer……90%
- ABC ……..……....6,701 fish
- ACL = ABC

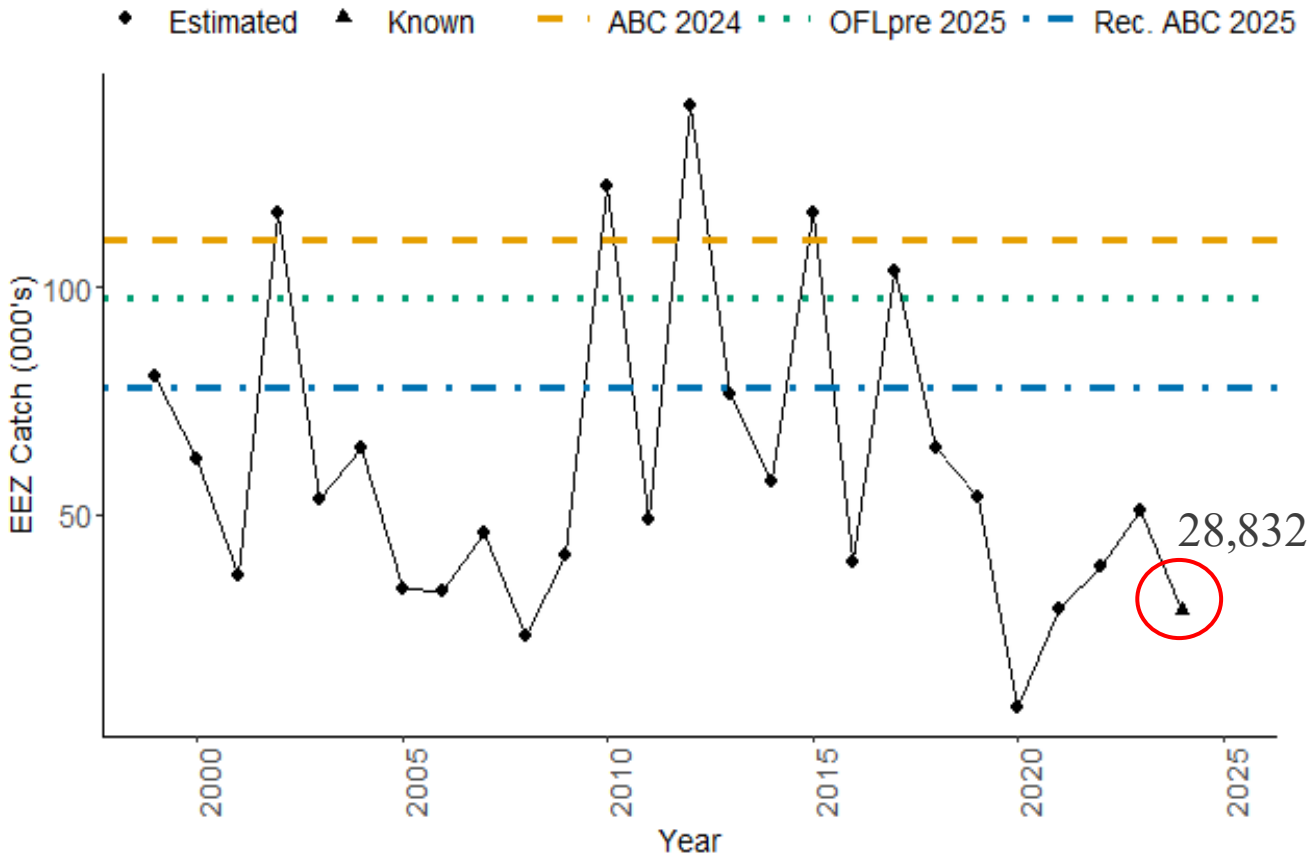
*** Recommend that COHO are **not overfished** and that future determinations to be based on indicator systems with a **complete and reliable** history of monitoring.



AGGREGATE CHUM SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (CHUM)
2024 CI EEZ FISHERY (Section 7.7)

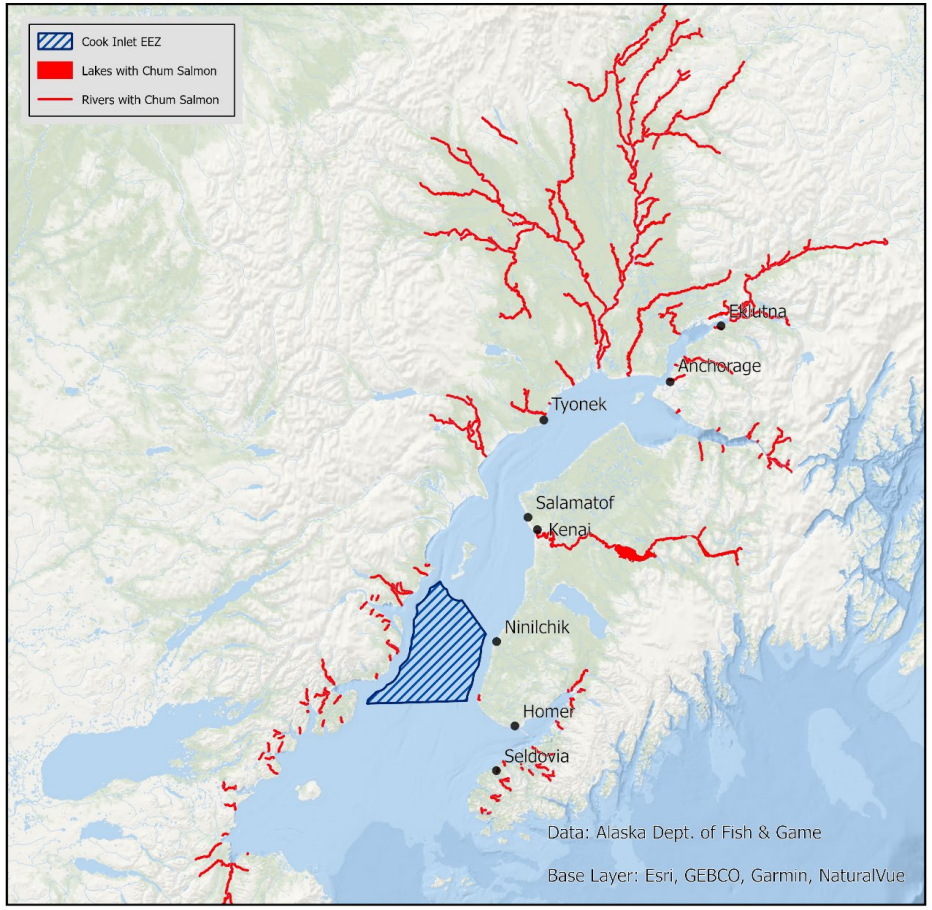






AGGREGATE CHUM SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (CHUM)

- 2024: 28, 832 harvested in EEZ (37% of State + Federal commercial harvest for UCI).
- 2025: Tier 3, recommended 20% buffer and ABC of 78,006 fish
  - Less of a concern compared to ACHIN.
  - Size makes susceptible to catch.
  - Not many chum salmon streams.
  - 2025 ABC = relatively average level of EEZ harvest.

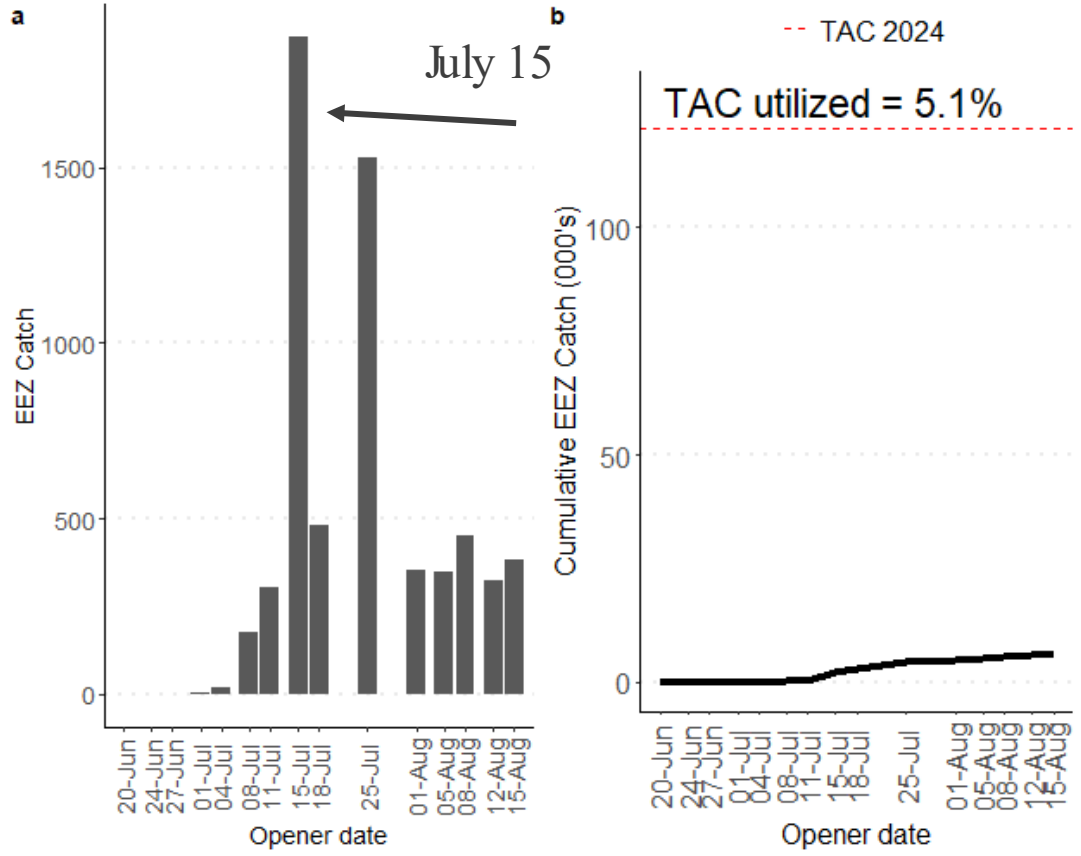


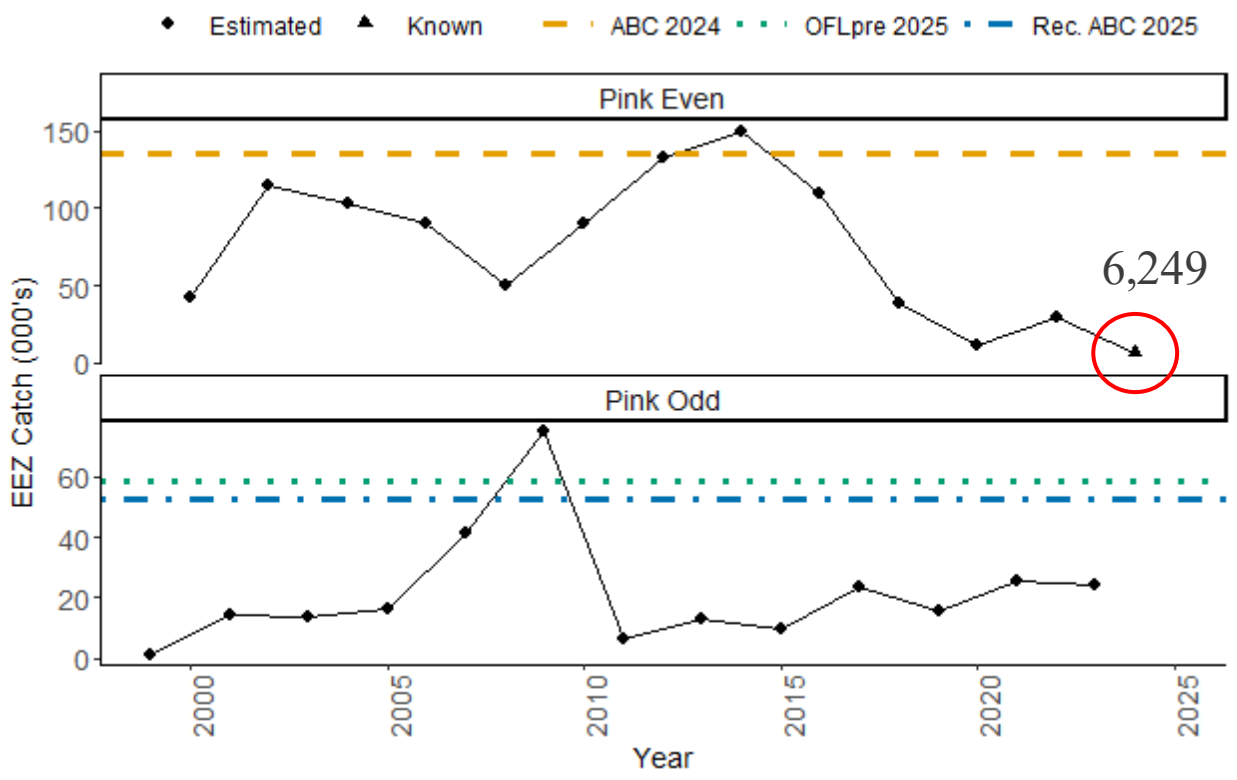
AGGREGATE CHUM SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (CHUM)
TIER 3 ABC/ACL RECOMMENDATIONS (Section 7.7)

SAFE Recommendations:

- Tier……..3
- OFL…….……390,030 fish
- OFL_{PRE}……..97,508 fish
- Buffer……20%
- ABC ……..……....78,006 fish
- ACL = ABC

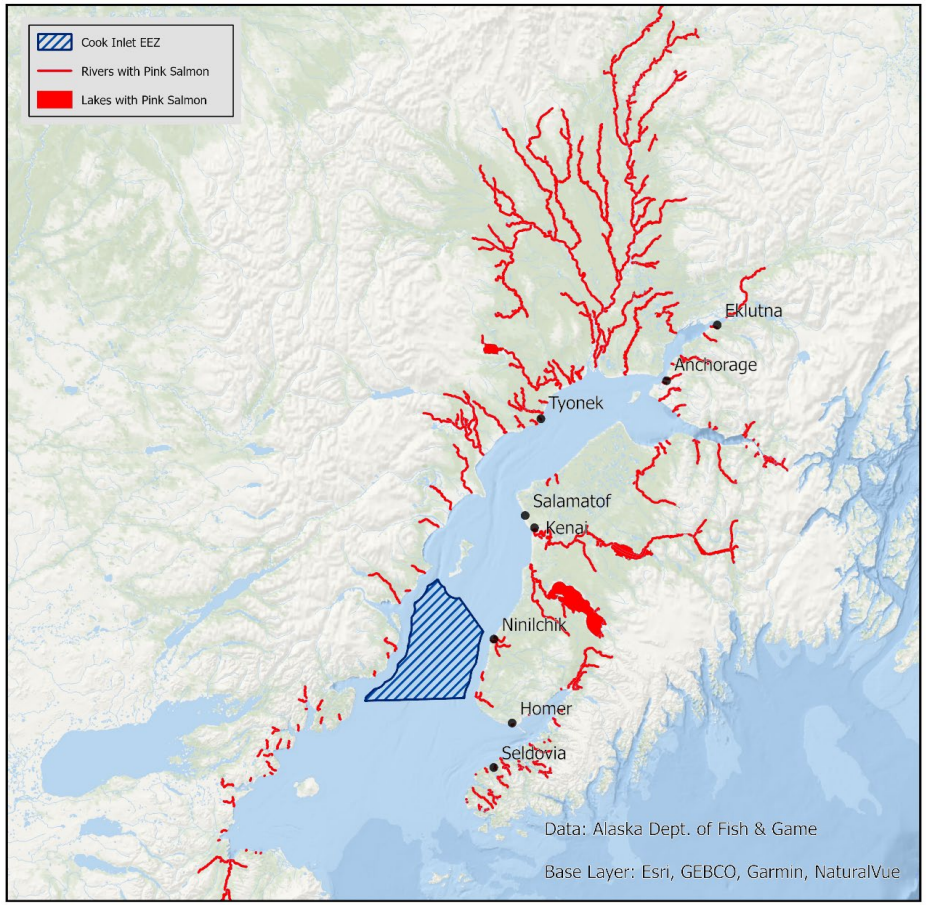
AGGREGATE PINK SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (PINK)
2024 CI EEZ FISHERY (PINK EVEN-YEAR CLASS) (Section 7.8)





AGGREGATE PINK SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (PINK)

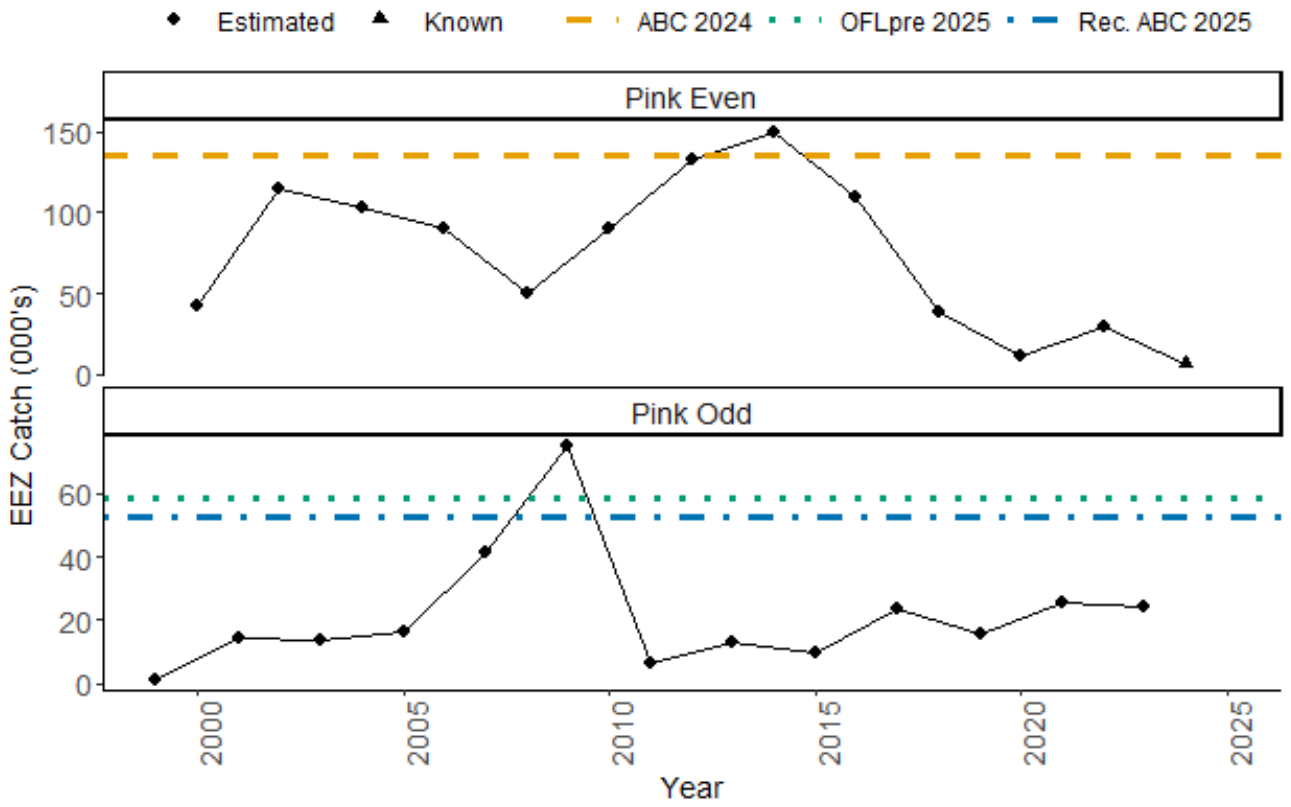
- Assessed as even- and odd- year broodlines
- 2024: 6,250 harvested in EEZ (36% of State + Federal commercial harvest for UCI).
- 2025: Tier 3, recommended 10% buffer and ABC of 52,357 fish
  - Small body size = less susceptible to gillnets



AGGREGATE PINK SALMON STOCK COMPLEX (PINK) TIER 3 ABC/ACL RECOMMENDATIONS (ODD-YEAR) (Section 7.8)

SAFE Recommendations:

- Tier……3
- OFL……116,348 fish
- OFL_{PRE}……58,174 fish
- Buffer……10%
- ABC ……52,357 fish
- ACL = ABC



2025 NMFS SAFE TEAM RECOMMENDED SDC & ABC USING LOWER BOUND OF GOALS FOR TIER 1 SDC

Table 2. SAFE Report (page 3)

Stock	Tier	MFMT	MSST	OFL	OFL_{PRE}	Buffer (%)	ABC/ACL	Sockeye Total
KNSOCK	1	0.327	1,875,000	NA	976,761	27.3%	**709,954**	**1.185M**
KASOCK	1	0.572	350,000	NA	746,294	57.0%	**320,841**	
AOSOCK	3	NA	163,000	906,757	181,351	15%	**154,148**	
ACHIN	3	NA	45,000	2,237	373	30%	**261**	
COHO	3	NA	38,800	268,053	67,013	90%	**6,701**	
CHUM	3	NA	NA	390,030	97,508	20%	**78,006**	
PINK (odd-year)	3	NA	NA	116,348	58,174	10%	**52,357**	

SUMMARY OF MAIN SAFE RECOMMENDATIONS SECTION 8

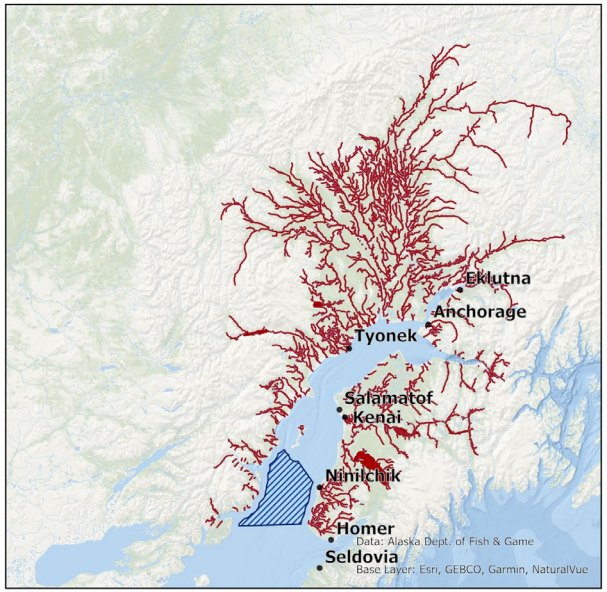
Tier 1 Kenai and Kasilof sockeye salmon stocks ,
substantial harvestable yield in the EEZ while also allowing State harvests and escapement goals.

Tier 3 Aggregate coho salmon, 90% buffer & ABC of 6,701 is precautionary to prevent overfishing.

- No reliable indices of spawning escapement during recent years
- Escapement targets not achieve
- Historically low harvests

Tier 3 Aggregate Chinook salmon , 30% buffer & ABC of 261 is precautionary to prevent overfishing.

- EEZ harvests do not appear to be of Kenai River Late Run Large Chinook salmon
- 2024 EEZ harvest was only 18% of the overall (State + Federal) commercial harvest.



Salmon Plan Team

Study of alternative fishery methods

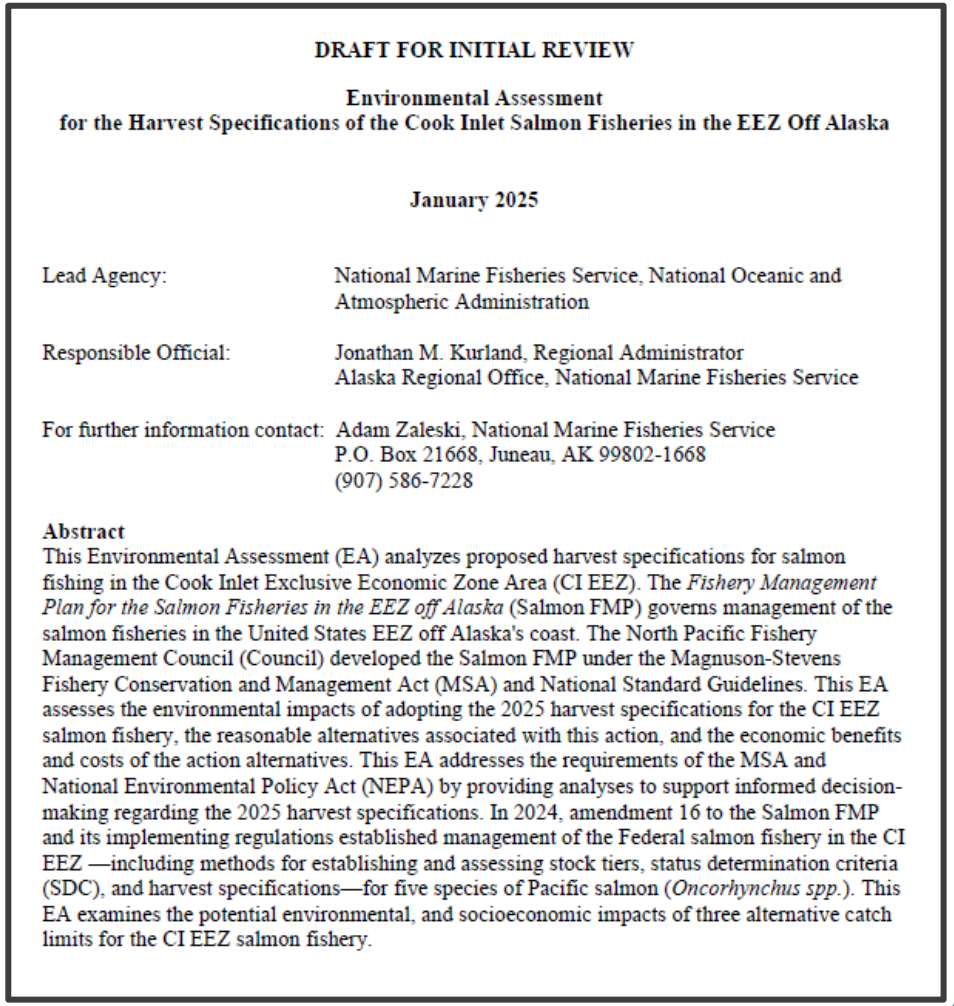
Genetic sampling study of EEZ harvests

Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Harvest Specifications: Draft for Initial Review

- **Alternative 1 –** *The no action alternative*. Harvest specifications are not established, total allowable catch (TAC) is not set for any salmon species, and salmon fishing would not be permitted in the CI EEZ.

- **Alternative 2 –** *Status quo and the preferred alternative*. Harvest specifications are established following the methods and procedures in the Salmon FMP. The TACs are set below the acceptable biological catch (ABC) for each salmon species and account for scientific and management uncertainty.

- **Alternative 3 –** *The alternative that represents the highest allowable harvest under the Salmon FMP*. Harvest specifications are established. The TACs are set equal to the preseason overfishing limit (OFL_{PRE}), which is the equivalent of a 0% buffer applied to the OFL_{PRE} to account for scientific uncertainty and a 0% buffer applied to the ABC to account for management uncertainty such that OFL_{PRE} = ABC = TAC.



DRAFT FOR INITIAL REVIEW

Environmental Assessment
for the Harvest Specifications of the Cook Inlet Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ Off Alaska

January 2025

Lead Agency: National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Responsible Official: Jonathan M. Kurland, Regional Administrator
Alaska Regional Office, National Marine Fisheries Service

For further information contact: Adam Zaleski, National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668
(907) 586-7228

Abstract

This Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzes proposed harvest specifications for salmon fishing in the Cook Inlet Exclusive Economic Zone Area (CI EEZ). The *Fishery Management Plan for the Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ off Alaska* (Salmon FMP) governs management of the salmon fisheries in the United States EEZ off Alaska's coast. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) developed the Salmon FMP under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and National Standard Guidelines. This EA assesses the environmental impacts of adopting the 2025 harvest specifications for the CI EEZ salmon fishery, the reasonable alternatives associated with this action, and the economic benefits and costs of the action alternatives. This EA addresses the requirements of the MSA and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by providing analyses to support informed decision-making regarding the 2025 harvest specifications. In 2024, amendment 16 to the Salmon FMP and its implementing regulations established management of the Federal salmon fishery in the CI EEZ —including methods for establishing and assessing stock tiers, status determination criteria (SDC), and harvest specifications—for five species of Pacific salmon (*Oncorhynchus spp.*). This EA examines the potential environmental, and socioeconomic impacts of three alternative catch limits for the CI EEZ salmon fishery.

Potential option for revised Cook Inlet specs timing

- Issue: no February Council meeting in future years, plus additional support helpful for assessment authors

- Possible option
  - May workshop
  - June or September review of harvest specs methodology for upcoming year (SSC only)
  - December harvest specs (SSC, AP, and Council)

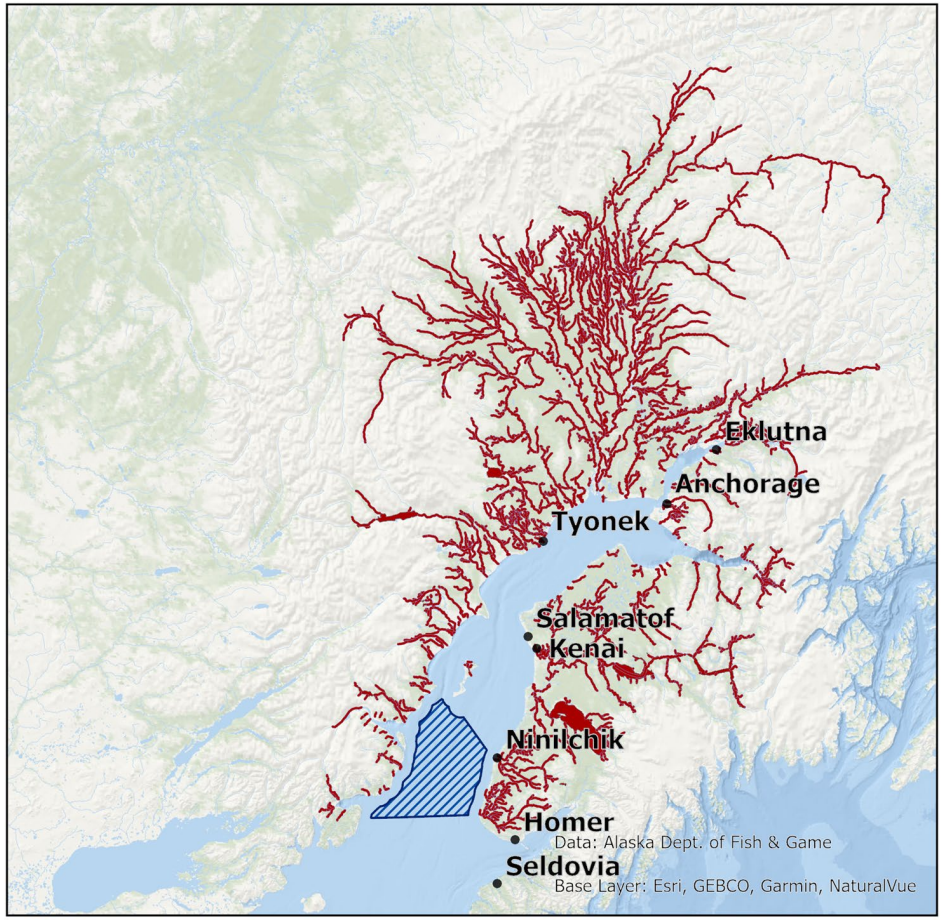
Updateon requests for a tribal fishery in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area

- In early 2024, seven Cook Inlet area Tribes requested consultation for a tribal salmon fishery in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area
- Discussed during consultation and engagement on Amendment 16
- In July 2024, AKR sent a consultation letter providing feedback on the requests
- From July to October, AKR received replies from Tribes providing additional input, and requesting that the consultation continue in writing.
- AKR replied in November 2025, providing feedback on potential management measures
  - Suggested that the Tribes bring a proposal to staff tasking at the April 2025 NPFMC meeting
  - Offered continued consultation on the tribe's proposal

Thank you!


NOAA Fisheries


NOAA Fisheries


Eklutna
Anchorage
Tyonek
Salamatof
Kenai
Ninilchik
Homer
Seldovia
Data: Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game
Base Layer: Esri, GEBCO, Garmin, NaturalVue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