

**ADVISORY PANEL**  
**Motions and Rationale**  
**February 6-9, 2024 - Seattle, WA**

**C3 Cook Inlet Salmon**

**Motion:**

The AP recommends the following total allowable catches (TACs) for the 2024 Cook Inlet salmon fishery in the EEZ. The AP used a 10% buffer to set TACs below the annual catch limits recommended by the SSC to account for management uncertainty for this new fishery to prevent catch in the EEZ from exceeding the annual catch limit.

**Table 1:** Proposed 2024 recommended harvest specifications for Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon stocks. The SSC recommended minimum stock size threshold (MSST), preseason overfishing level (OFL), acceptable biological catch (ABC), annual catch limit (ACL), and AP's recommended total allowable catch (TAC) are in numbers of fish.

	SSC Recommended					AP Recommended
Stock	Tier	MSST	Preseason OFL	ABC buffer	ABC=ACL	TAC (10% buffer)
Kenai River Late-Run sockeye salmon	1	3,030,000	901,932	0.478	431,123	885,715
Kasilof River sockeye salmon	1	555,000	541,084	0.694	375,512	
Aggregate Other sockeye salmon	3	163,000	887,464	0.200	177,493	
Aggregate Chinook salmon	3	44,200	2,697	0.10	270	243
Aggregate coho salmon	3	38,800	357,688	0.100	35,769	32,192
Aggregate chum salmon	3	NA	441,727	0.25	110,432	99,389
Aggregate pink salmon	3	NA	270,435	0.5	135,218	121,696

The AP heard extensive public comment regarding a set-aside for tribal fishing **in the EEZ** and understands that this could not be completed within Amendment 16 ~~the court's timing~~. The AP will likely have a recommendation regarding tribal consultation under staff tasking.

***Amendment Passed: 21/0***

***Main Motion as Amended Passed: 11/10***

***Rationale in Support of the Motion:***

- *These proposed TACs recognize the multiple users that depend on salmon in Cook Inlet. The 10% buffer between ACL and TAC accounts for the significant management uncertainty associated with a brand new management regime. Sources of management uncertainty include:*
  - *the number of vessels that will participate in the EEZ fishery,*
  - *catch rates,*
  - *salmon run timing,*
  - *the spatial distribution of fishing effort in the EEZ,*
  - *whether additional fishery openings occur before inseason closure is published in the Federal Register,*
  - *lag times between harvest in the EEZ and escapement monitoring, and*
  - *lack of in-season genetic information to precisely inform harvest on relatively strong and weak salmon stocks of the same species (e.g., Kenai sockeye salmon and other sockeye salmon).*
- *A conservative approach is appropriate for a new EEZ fishery and will reduce the likelihood that harvest exceeds the ACL, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Both the biological condition of salmon stocks and social and economic considerations as presented in the extensive EA/RIR Analysis, the 2024 SAFE report and associated references, were considered.*
- *The SAFE Report and EA/RIR Analysis provide key information to inform the TACs, including:*
  - *assessments of the stock condition of each target species;*
  - *assessments of the multispecies impacts of harvesting the salmon stocks at current levels, given the assessed condition of stocks;*
  - *historical catch trends and fishery participation;*
  - *assessment of the many fisheries in Cook Inlet that depend on Cook Inlet salmon (subsistence, personal use, sport, and setnet fisheries); and*
  - *community dependence on salmon and salmon fisheries*
- *As an Action agenda item related to harvest specifications, the AP is expected to forward TAC recommendations to the Council. Complexities brought forth during public testimony and AP discussion included the court-related deadline, potential dissatisfaction about the effectiveness of tribal consultation, complications of mixed jurisdiction management, NMFS's ability to respond to conservation concerns in-season, and public comment requests for a tribal allocation. The complexity of the underlying issues is unfortunate, but should not preclude the AP from making TAC recommendations to the Council at this time.*

***Rationale against the motion:***

- *AP members expressed concern over NMFS' limited ability to quickly adjust the 2-day a week fishing schedule based on changes in run timing or strength. This could undermine the conservation corridor, shift the burden of conservation onto State of Alaska salmon managers and salmon users, and undermine sustainable salmon management.*
- *There should be an improved and well-published timeliness of tribal consultation and ways to ensure that consultation is occurring when developing a TAC, not dismissing tribal input due to capacity issues.*
- *An AP member noted concern from stakeholders that a low TAC which is overly conservative may negatively affect the processors in the region which this fishery relies on and there are concerns those processors may not open.*
- *Tribal consultation is crucial in ensuring the perspectives and sovereign rights of indigenous communities are considered, especially when their territories intersect with other management areas, like TAC setting.*
- *Fisheries management for struggling Alaskan salmon stocks requires sharing real-time run composition, abundance and location/timing data to ensure sustainability. There is not a current co-management system for Cook Inlet salmon fisheries where decision-making is shared equally by tribal, state and federal governments. The decision-making process took many years and there was ample time for meaningful and appropriate tribal consultation to discuss and incorporate a Tribal Subsistence Fishing Opportunity, which should have occurred.*