



# Kachemak Bay

## Kachemak Bay and Homer

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, about a five-hour drive. By commercial air carrier, Homer is about a 45-minute flight from Anchorage, and is also 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, restaurants, grocery stores, tackle shops, art galleries, and museums.

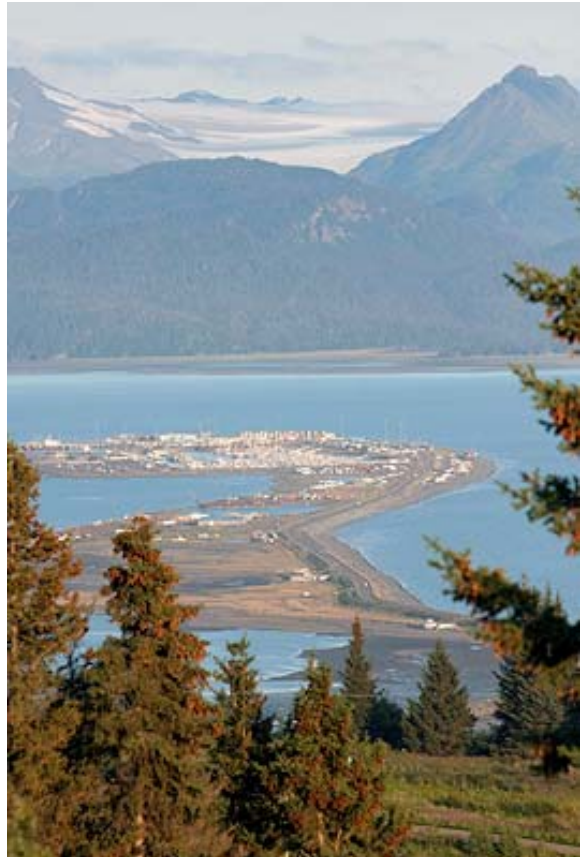
## Sport fisheries management

The recreational fisheries of the Kachemak Bay and Lower Kenai Peninsula area are managed by the Division of Sport Fish Homer office, 3298 Douglas Place, Homer, Alaska, 99603, (907) 235-8191. Their web site is <http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/Management/Areas.cfm/FA/LCI.overview>

The division manages recreational fisheries for sustainability and opportunity, often under management plans provided by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Regulations may change by emergency order if the sustainability of a stock is at risk, or if additional fishing opportunities are available. For example, the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon on the Homer Spit is open to snagging by emergency order only.

Emergency orders are sent to newspapers, radio and TV stations, other agencies, recorded on telephone hot lines, and posted right away on our web

For opening dates, daily bag limits, regulations, and tackle restrictions, consult the current Southcentral Alaska regulation summary booklet.



*Kachemak Bay's Homer Spit is the "End of the Road" for some, the beginning of saltwater fishing adventure for others. (Photo © Ken Marsh 2009)*

site. For current information, call (907) 267-2502 (Anchorage), or (907) 235-6930 (Homer), or visit [www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us) and click on the link, "Emergency Orders and News."

Anglers can also call the Anchorage Sport Fish Southcentral Region Information Center at (907) 267-2218, or e-mail [sfreg2@fishgame.state.ak.us](mailto:sfreg2@fishgame.state.ak.us)

Kachemak Bay anglers target five Pacific salmon species — king, coho, sockeye, pink, and chum salmon — as well as halibut, cod, and rockfish. Clam diggers love the bay's many hardshell clam beaches.



Species	Location	Period of Availability
King Salmon	Kachemak Bay & Cook Inlet Deep Water Trolling Homer Spit Halibut Cover Lagoon Seldovia Bay	Entire Year Mid-May to early June Mid-May to early June Mid-May to early June
Red Salmon	China Poot Bay	Early July to mid-August
Silver Salmon	Homer Spit	Mid-July to mid-September
Pink Salmon	Kachemak Bay Salt Waters & South Shore Streams	Late June to mid-August
Halibut	Kachemak Bay & Cook Inlet	March to late-September
Dolly Varden	Homer Spit	Mid-May to mid-July
Clams	Homer Spit and South Shore	Entire year
Tanner Crab	Kachemak Bay	Mid-July—Mid March



These opportunities funded in part by Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration.

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If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire further information please write to ADF&G, P.O. Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811-5526; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 300 Webb, Arlington, VA 22203; or O.E.O., U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240.

For information on alternative formats for this and other department publications, please contact the department ADA Coordinator at (voice) 907-465-6077, (TDD) 907-465-3646, or (FAX) 907-465-6078.

Three youth-only fisheries occur annually on the Homer Spit, one the first Saturday in June for king salmon, and two the first and third Saturday in August for coho. Check the regulations summary booklet for specific dates. During the youth-only fisheries, only kids younger than 16 may fish in a certain section of the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon.

With the exception of the Homer Spit, access to most fishing and clamming hot spots requires a boat or airplane.

The manmade 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 fishing for stocked king and coho salmon.

The Homer Spit also offers beach camping, as

well as hotels, shops, and restaurants. Many fishing and sightseeing charters are based in Homer. Contact the Homer Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 541, Homer, Alaska, 99603, (907) 235-7740, [www.homer.alaska.org](http://www.homer.alaska.org)

A wealth of area sport fishing information is available on the ADF&G Sport Fish web site at [www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us)

## The richness of Kachemak Bay

Kachemak Bay is home to a variety of fish and wildlife species, including marine mammals, a multitude of waterfowl, seabirds, and invertebrates. Geese, ducks, shorebirds, eagles, puffins, guillemots, mur-



*Releasing a king salmon from a boat,*

## Saltwater catch-and-release

With two exceptions, snagging or trying to snag a fish is illegal in Cook Inlet fresh and salt waters.

Snagging is allowed during certain times within Kachemak Bay. Also, snagging in the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon is allowed from time to time on an emergency order basis.

In some fisheries, if you plan to release a fish, you may not remove it from the water, even to take a photo. For some species, the use of gaffs is not allowed. Check the regulations carefully before going fishing.

Rockfish and some other bottom-dwelling (non-pelagic) species often do not survive the trip to the surface because their swim bladder expands and forces air bubbles into the fish's blood and organs. When fishing, if you find you're catching more of these non-pelagic species than you want to keep, move to another spot.

At one time or another, almost everyone accidentally foul-hooks or "snags" a fish. If the waters are closed to snagging, the fish must be released immediately. If released correctly, the fish will suffer little permanent injury. Here are some suggestions that minimize harm to fish:

1. Land the fish as quickly as possible. Playing the fish to complete exhaustion takes away the energy it needs for spawning. Do not remove the fish from the water.
2. Never place your hands under the fish's gill covers. This injures fragile gill arches and causes almost certain death.
3. Gently grasp the fish around its body to remove the hook. A long-nosed pliers is excellent for hook removal. Don't wet your hands: it makes the fish more difficult to handle.
4. If the hook can't be easily removed, cut the line as close as possible to the hook, and leave it in the fish. Do this if it appears that removing the hook will cause more damage than leaving it in.
5. Immediately return the fish to the water and point it into the current. Gently cradle it in this position until it swims on its own.



*This rockfish will probably not survive release. Note the stomach pushed into the mouth by over-expanded swim bladder.*



res, mink, river otter, coyote, fox, black bear, brown bear, sea otters, porpoise, harbor seals, sea lions, orca whales, beluga whales, minke whales, humpback whales, and finback whales are all residents or frequent visitors of the bay.

Kachemak Bay is an important fish and shellfish rearing area, with an abundance of herring, salmon, and halibut. Popular summer activities include sport fishing for halibut and salmon, wildlife watching tours, and clamming.

This high level of biological productivity is at least partially due to a water circulation pattern that holds shellfish larvae in the bay. Larvae are an im-



*Anglers try their luck fishing for kings and coho at Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon on the Homer Spit. Photo © ADF&G*

portant food source for larger animals such as clams and fish, which are, in turn, an important food source for birds and mammals.

The 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.

In 1974, the Kachemak Bay area was designated a state critical habitat area to protect and preserve the areas crucial to the perpetuation of fish and wildlife, and to restrict all other uses 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.

Visitors to the Homer area can learn more about the ecological processes of the Gulf of Alaska by stopping in the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve. They offer interpretive programs throughout the year, visit [www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us) and click on

"Kachemak Bay Research Reserve," or call (907) 235-6377.

They're located in the same facility as the Alaska Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, with its interactive exhibits, interpretive programs, and beautiful artwork (over 7,000 hand-sculpted seashore objects are scattered in the lobby floor). Admission is free. Visit their web site at [www.islandsandoocean.org](http://www.islandsandoocean.org), or stop by the facility at 95 Sterling Highway.

## Tidepooling etiquette

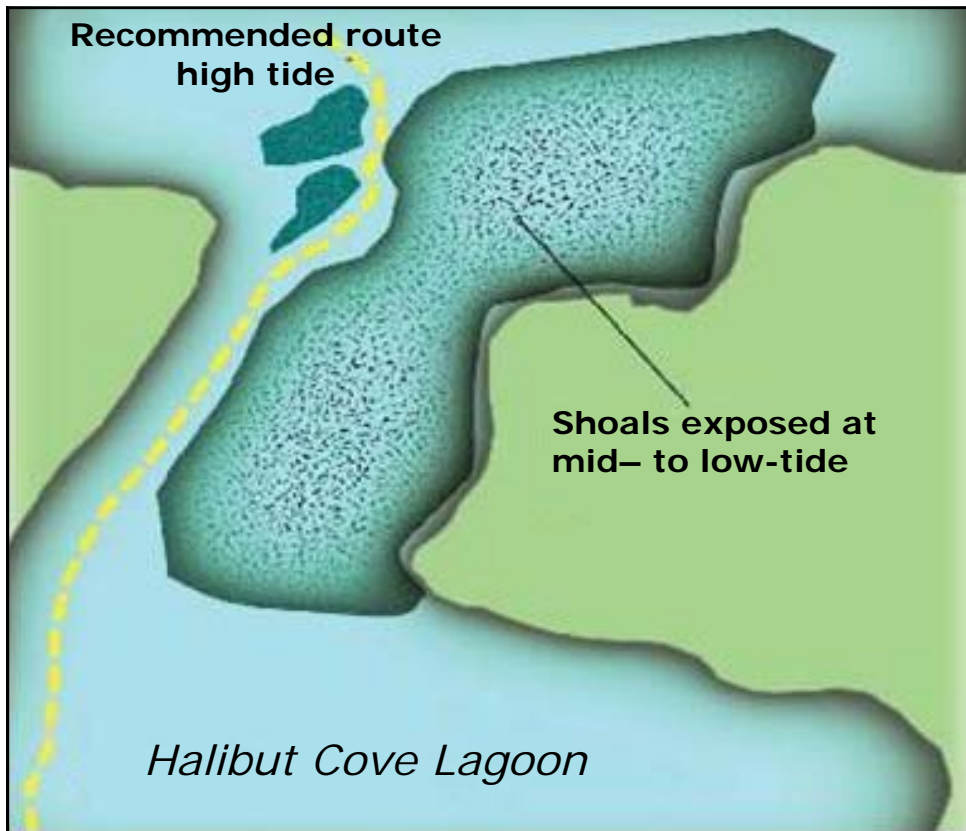
An amazing array of marine invertebrates — sea animals without backbones — live within the intertidal zone, living between the water's edge and the high tide line.

Each year, thousands of residents, local and visiting students and tourists explore Alaska's coastline. The number of coastal enthusiasts is growing annually.

Regardless of your purpose for visiting a beach, remember that the shoreline is home to a myriad of marine creatures. Each time you walk in the intertidal zone of a beach you run the risk of disrupting these animals' lives. However, if care is taken, damage can be minimized and enjoyment maximized.

Here are some tips to help conserve your precious tide pools:

- ⇒ Walk, don't run. You may trip and fall in unfamiliar terrain. Walking also exerts less pressure on the animals.
- ⇒ Explore the shoreline from the exposed beach rather than the water. Or from the edge of a tide pool, rather than in it. This will provide better viewing condition and allow animals to remain undisturbed.
- ⇒ When you turn over a rock, do it gently. A quick turnover may crush animals beside the rock, or those darting under the rock as their hiding place is uncovered.
- ⇒ If you dig clams in a sand or mud flat, fill in the holes. By leaving large piles of mud or sand, you may suffocate small clams or other animals whose burrows can no longer reach the surface.
- ⇒ Obey the laws in respect to open seasons, bag limits and size limits. These laws have been developed on the basis of what we know about the biology of the animals they are designed to protect.
- ⇒ You may not remove animals you aren't going to eat without a free ADF&G Fish Resource Permit. Contact ADF&G for the application form.



*Suggested boat route into Halibut Cove Lagoon*

## King salmon

### Trolling for king salmon

Most of the king salmon caught in the open water of the bay are “feeder” kings, or “winter kings,” which weigh 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 salt waters before making their journey to spawn. Feeder kings are present in the bay throughout the year.

From late April through August, anglers can also “intercept” king salmon returning to spawn in Cook Inlet tributaries by fishing the marine waters of lower Cook Inlet.

Anglers often troll for kings along the bluffs west of Homer and at the mouths of the many small bays along the southern shore of Kachemak Bay.

Downriggers, either with lures or bait, are effective since their depth and speed can be controlled. Planers, divers, or trolling sinkers are also effective for deep-water trolling. Cut or whole herring or plastic Hoochie’s fished with flashers or dodgers at varying depths and speeds have also proven successful.

Concentrate your efforts along submerged rocks or kelp beds, and keep an eye out for areas where gulls

and other marine birds appear to be feeding—king salmon often feed on the same “bait fish” as the birds.

### The Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon king salmon

In 1984, ADF&G began stocking king salmon into the fishing lagoon on the Homer Spit to provide early-run king salmon angling opportunities for those fishing from shore or from small boats. Approximately 2,000 king salmon are harvested here annually.

Successful fishing techniques include casting with lures, flies, salmon-egg clusters, shrimp, and cut herring. Fishing eggs or herring beneath a bobber can be effective at slack water. Trolling herring and lures along the eastern shoreline of the spit

can also be productive.

These early run fish start to show in mid-May, peak in mid-June, and are gone by early July.

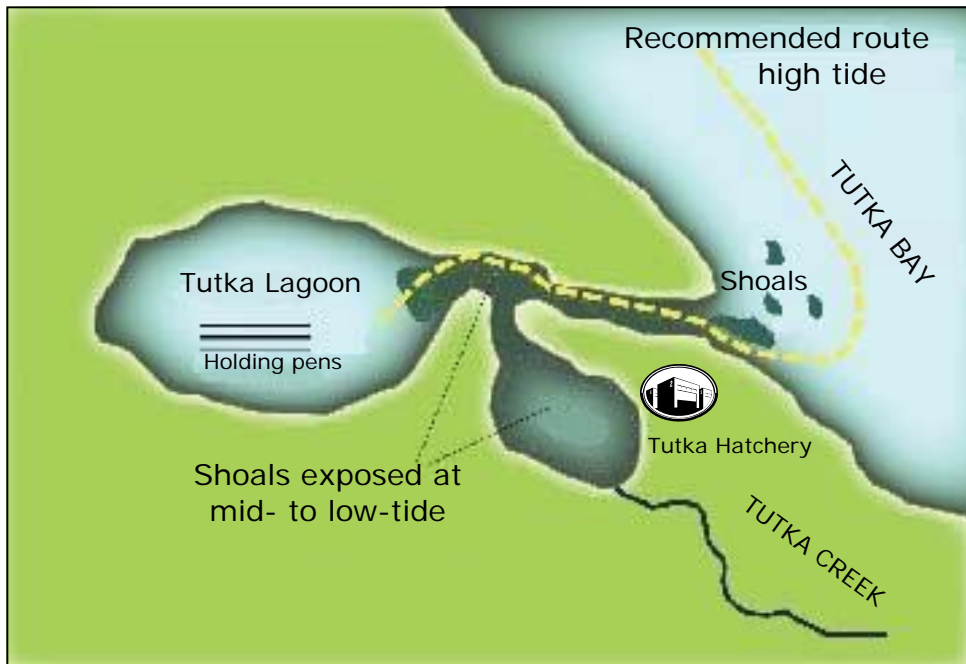
Again, there is a youth-only king salmon fishery the first Saturday in June, and snagging in the lagoon is allowed only at certain times. Check the ADF&G Sport Fish web site for up-to-date information.

### Seldovia Bay king salmon

ADF&G began stocking king salmon in Seldovia Bay in 1987 to develop a king salmon sport fishery near Seldovia, a picturesque fishing village located about 20 miles southwest of the Homer Spit. A successful fishery was created with an annual harvest of approximately 1,000 king salmon.

Most of the king 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, salmon egg clusters, shrimp, and cut herring works later in the season in the Seldovia harbor. Spinners, herring, and Wiggle Warts® work well in the slough.



*Suggested boat route into Tutka Lagoon*

### Halibut Cove Lagoon king salmon

To increase the number of fish available to anglers, ADF&G stocks king salmon at Halibut Cove Lagoon in Kachemak Bay about 12 miles southeast of the Homer Spit. Annual sport catches here average about 1,000 king salmon, with fish weighing up to 40 pounds.

King salmon return to Halibut Cove Lagoon in early May with the run continuing through early July. The run peaks about mid-June.

Early-season anglers have good results by trolling or by casting herring or lures when the returning salmon school in the lagoon and at the mouth of the intertidal channel.

Later in the season, when the fish are at the head of the lagoon, clusters of salmon eggs work well. Be careful when boating into the lagoon. Access is through a narrow, rocky channel, **boatable only during high tide**. The unwary boater who stays through the high tide may have to wait through a low tide before returning to Homer (see map on page 5).

Check fishing regulations before fishing here—snagging is allowed after a certain date.

### Red salmon

Red (or sockeye) salmon are usually caught in the salt water by snagging with a weighted treble hook. Snagging is not allowed in fresh water.

The best area to fish for the bay's red salmon 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 red salmon fishery is the result of stocking by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association paid for by commercial fishers. Each year red salmon fry are stocked in China Poot Lake. Here they rear before migrating to salt water as smolt.

They return to China Poot Creek in two or three years as 4-6 pound adults in July and early August. Those that escape the commercial nets are available to sport anglers.

A barrier waterfall 150 yards upstream prevents the fish from returning to the lake. Since no spawning area is available (similar to Halibut Cove Lagoon), all returning red salmon may be harvested.

There are a lot of mud flats in the Bay, and access is only at high tide. Also, please be courteous and yield to commercial boats.

Commercial fishers pay for the red run that returns to Tutka Lagoon. The lagoon is accessible through a narrow tidal channel only at high tide (see map). 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 ripening 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 3-6 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 the bay support spawning runs of this feisty species. Pink salmon are also available along the Homer Spit in July and early August.

### Silver salmon

Silver (or coho) salmon are available in Kachemak Bay by mid-July. They generally weigh between 8 and 15 pounds.



Most silvers are caught either in the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon, or off the southeastern side of the Spit as they pass by on their way to their spawning grounds in the Fox River area at the head of the Bay, or by trolling along the entrance to Kachemak Bay.

There are two youth-only silver salmon fisheries in the Nick Dudiak Lagoon, the first and third Saturday's in August. Check the regulation booklet for specific dates.

Productive methods include surfcasting lures from the spit, or mooching or trolling from a small boat. Brightly-colored spoons and spinners are a good choice.

Look for a concentration of "jumpers" and position yourself within casting or trolling distance of these fish.

Another good method involves drifting salmon eggs near the inlet channel of the Fishing Lagoon on the flooding and ebbing tides.

## Halibut

Homer is the halibut fishing capital of the world, but be cautious! Rough seas can develop quickly, and only anglers with adequate boats and open-water experience should venture out.

More information about halibut in the South-central area is available on our web site at [www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/region2/groundfish/gfhome.cfm](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/region2/groundfish/gfhome.cfm)

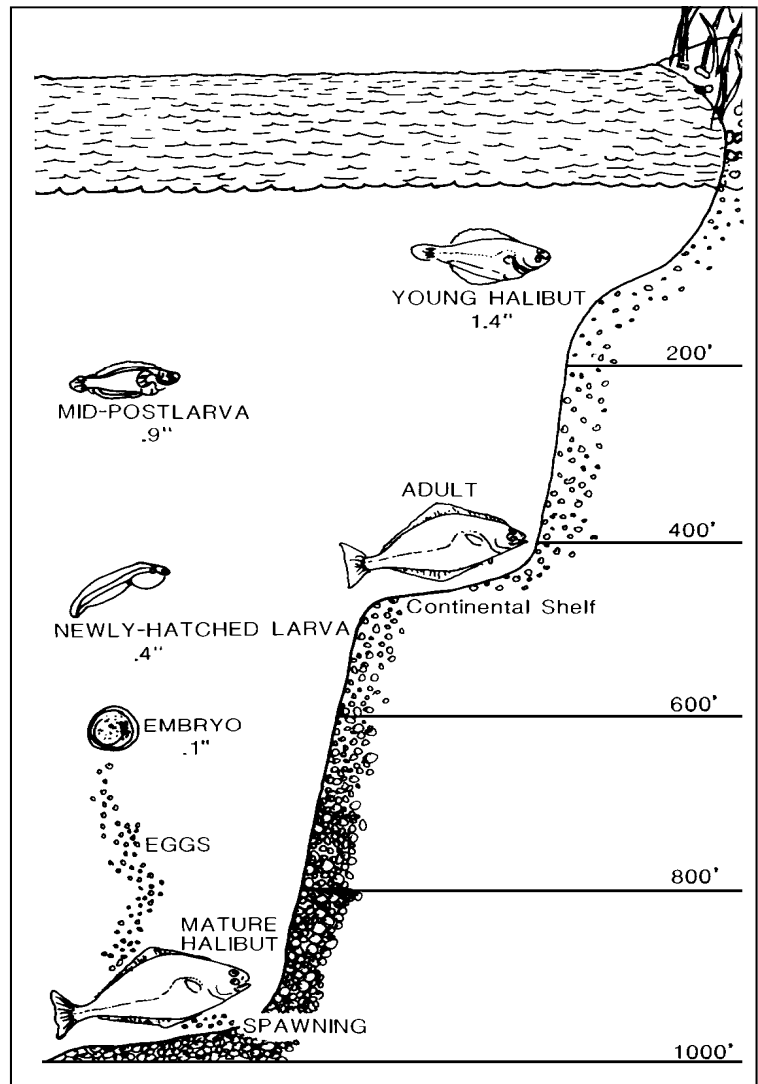
For those lacking experience or equipment, over 100 charter boats operate out of the Homer Harbor. Most charter boats fish the same areas, so many people choose charters based on the level of services offered, such as rest room facilities, heated cabins, boat length, filleting, and so on. Charter boats may travel 10 to 50 miles or more into Kachemak Bay and lower Cook Inlet. All equipment and bait are usually provided, and clients usually bring their 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 100-300 pound halibut are commonly caught, use a stout rod loaded with 80- to 100-pound -test line.

Strong currents require that you use 8 ounce to 32



*Halibut lifecycle and distribution.*

ounce weights to hold the bait on the bottom during tide ebbs and flows. Although drifting is popular, anchoring is probably more effective, since it distributes a scent pattern down-current which attracts the fish.

## Dolly Varden

Dolly Varden char have a very complex life cycle which includes periods spent in both fresh and salt water.

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 points on the south side of Kachemak Bay.

These char may be taken on light spinning tackle using small spoons or spinners. Preferred baits include shrimp and small clusters of salmon eggs.

## Crab and shrimp

King crab, Dungeness crab and shrimp are closed by regulation year-round due to low population levels. Tanner crab may be open during part of the year. Tanner crabs are most commonly found in the deepest waters of Kachemak Bay. A permit is required to participate in this fishery. Please check with ADF&G for more information.



*Fishermen clean Tanner crabs at the Homer small boat harbor.*  
(Photo © Ken Marsh 2009)

## Clam digging

Clam digging is a popular sport and can be enjoyed by people of all ages. All you need is a sport fishing license, a container for the clams, a shovel or rake, and a tide book.

Many clam species are available on the south side of the Bay, in all areas with protected waters. Little-necks and butter clams are the most harvested types of clams. Cockles are available in the Mud Bay area on the east side of the spit. Razor clams are available from the mouth of the Anchor River north to the Kasilof River.

Clam digging is best on tides lower than - 2.0 feet. To determine the time of low tide, consult a local tide book or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website at <http://tidesonline.nos.noaa.gov>. Tides in Kachemak Bay are indexed from the Seldovia tide chart.

Only clams on commercial beaches on the south side of Kachemak Bay are tested for PSP. Clam elsewhere at your own risk. Be sure to check with the Department of Environmental Conservation for PSP advisories before heading out to the beaches. Their web site is [www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/fss/seafood/psphome.htm](http://www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/fss/seafood/psphome.htm), or you can call the PSP info hotline at 1-800-731-1312.

## Weather watch and boating safety

Weather conditions in Kachemak Bay and Cook Inlet change rapidly. Be aware of the hazards of fog and rough water. Know your personal limitations and the limitations of your equipment. Conduct your activities within these limitations and enjoy a safe trip.

The marine weather forecast is broadcast on local radio stations, on VHF Channel 2, posted at the Homer Harbormaster's office and available on the web at .The marine weather forecast is updated every 12 hours.

The Homer Harbormaster's office has a list of equipment required for recreational boats, as well as loaner lifejackets for children, who are required to wear them unless they are enclosed in a cabin or below decks.

## Access and private property

The Kachemak Bay area is a mix of public and private lands. Please check to see if the lands you plan to visit are in public ownership. For the most part, shorelands below the "average high tide mark" are state-owned, and therefore open to the public for normal recreational uses. There are exceptions, however, so please check with local sources before heading out.

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For information about camping, accommodations, fishing guides, and other visitor services, contact the agencies listed in this brochure, or the Alaska Travel Industry Association at 2600 Cordova Street, Suite 201, Anchorage, Alaska, 99503  
Web: [www.travelalaska.com](http://www.travelalaska.com) e-mail: [info@AlaskaTIA.org](mailto:info@AlaskaTIA.org)

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### Recreational Fishing Series produced by

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Division of Sport Fish

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Except on state & federal holidays

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