

# Roadside Salmon Fishing in the Tanana River Drainage



# Table of Contents

<b>Welcome to Interior Alaska</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Salmon Biology</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Best Places to Fish for King and Chum Salmon</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Chena River</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Salcha River</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Other King and Chum Salmon Fisheries</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Where Can I Catch Coho Salmon?</b> .....	<b>4</b>

*cover and front inside photos by: Reed Morisky & Audra Brase*

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# Welcome to Interior Alaska

Sport fishing for salmon in Interior Alaska occurs primarily in the Tanana River drainage. From Fairbanks the best angling occurs southbound along the Richardson Highway, starting at the Chena River, continuing to the Salcha River and ending at the Delta Clearwater River. These rivers, along with several other smaller streams, are key areas for recreational fishing for king, chum, and coho salmon.

Interior Alaska provides a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. Fishing can easily be combined with boating, rafting, camping, hiking and more. Several campgrounds along the Richardson Highway adjacent to the rivers provide boat and walk-in access for fishing opportunities.

This booklet provides maps to help anglers locate fishing areas, and includes fishing tips, instructions for catch-and-release, and a bit about salmon biology. More information may be found on the Alaska Department Fish and Game website at:

[www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/index.cfm](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/index.cfm)



**King Salmon**



**Chum Salmon**



**Coho Salmon**

*Photographs courtesy of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife*

## Salmon Biology

Salmon that return to spawn in streams in the Tanana River drainage travel over 1,000 miles up the Yukon River from the Bering Sea. King salmon are typically 5-6 years old when they return to spawn, chum salmon are 4-5 years old, and most coho salmon are 4 years old. After spawning, all Pacific salmon die and their carcasses provide nutrients to the stream. After hatching in the spring, the young salmon will spend anywhere from a few weeks to 2 years in fresh water before migrating to the Bering Sea where they will mature into the adults who will return to their birth streams to continue the salmon cycle.

*Photo by: Mike Brase*

# Best Places to Fish for King and Chum Salmon

The Chena and Salcha Rivers have the largest numbers of returning king and chum salmon in the Tanana River Drainage, with over 7,000 kings and 14,500 chums returning annually to the Chena River and over 9,000 kings and 25,000 chums returning annually to the Salcha River.

## Chena River

There are many boat launches and walk-in fishing locations on the Chena, including: Chena Small Tracts Road, Peger Road, Chena River State Recreation Site, Graehl Landing, Nordale Road, and Moose Creek Dam.



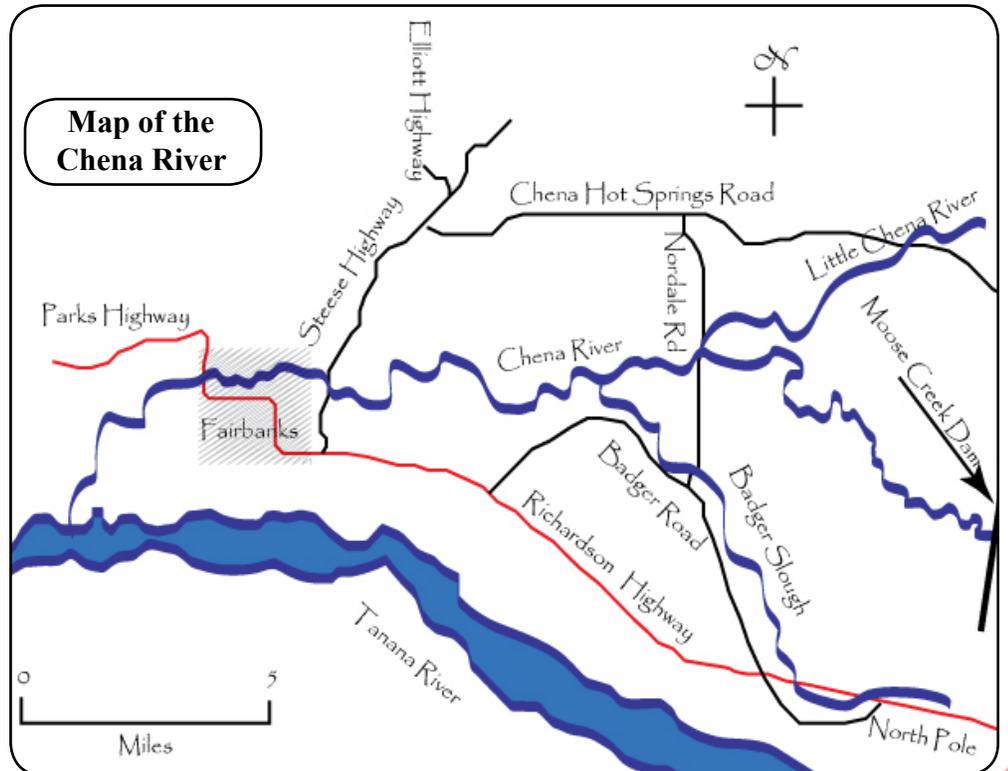
Photo by: Reed Morisky

## King Salmon Fishing Tips

Fish from a boat. Throughout July back troll in eddies with large “quick-fish” lures. Cast from the river banks using spoons, plugs or “spin and glo” type lures.

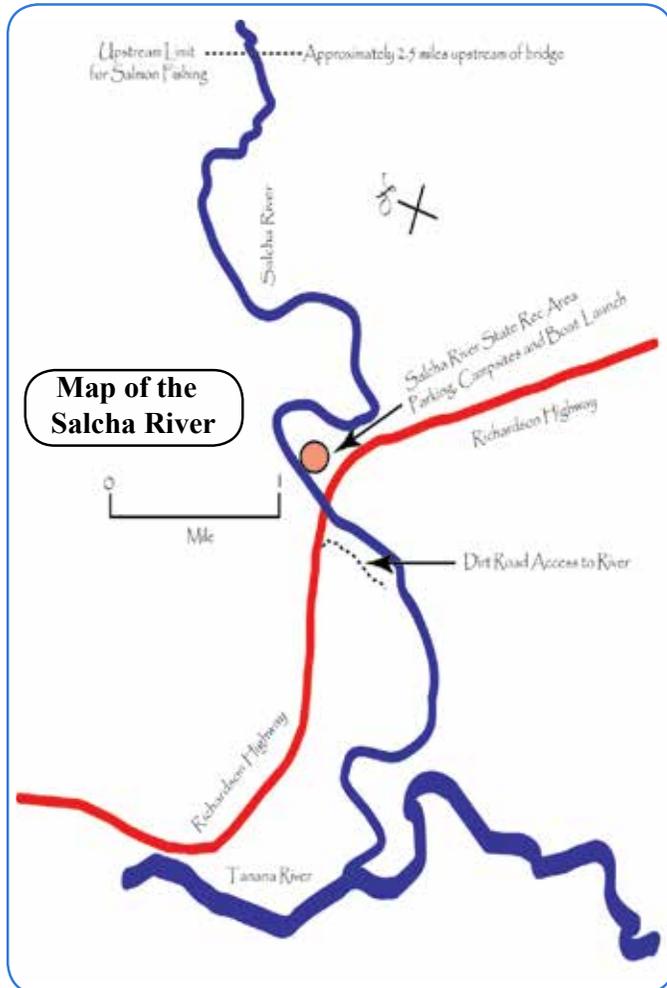
## Before You Go

- Consult the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim sport fishing regulations summary booklet for opening dates, daily limits, closed areas and special tackle restrictions.
- Have a current Alaska Sport Fish license & king salmon tag (if appropriate).
- Check the ADF&G website or local ADF&G office (hotline 459-7385) for emergency restrictions or liberalizations to the Interior salmon fisheries.
- Check the river stage. High and muddy water conditions will reduce fishing success.



## Salcha River

To fish the Salcha River: launch boats at the Salcha River State Recreation Area; or drive/walk to the large gravel bar located downstream of the Richardson Hwy Bridge. Fishing from the bridge is prohibited.

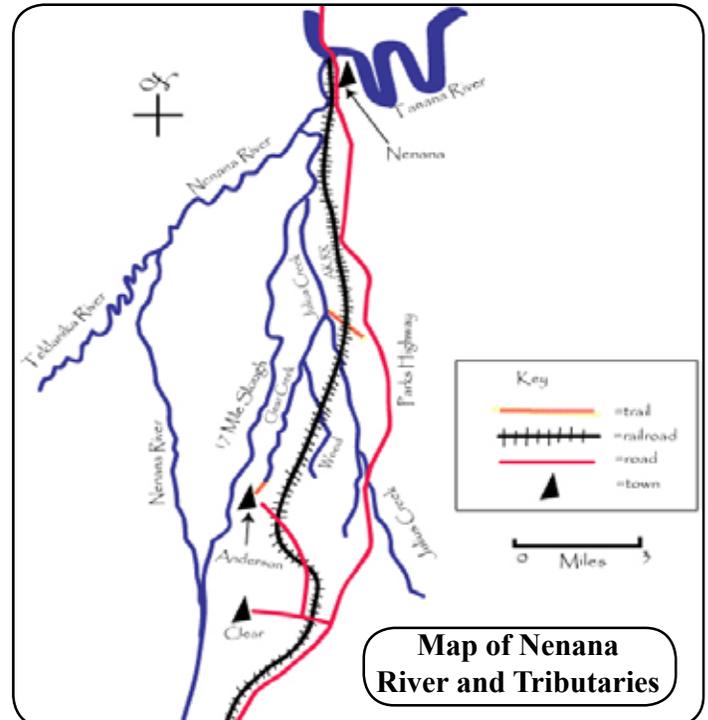


## Other Small King and Chum Salmon Fisheries

*Chatanika River*—The Chatanika is accessible via both the Elliott and Steese Highways. Powerboats may be launched by the Elliott Bridge and canoes may be launched from either location. Hikers can also gain access from Olnes Pond near the Lower Chatanika.

*Goodpaster River* —The Goodpaster is accessible only by boat; launch at the Tanana River near Delta Junction or Clearwater Lake. Consult AYK Regulations Summary as some restrictions apply.

*Nenana River* – Powerboats may be launched south of Nenana at the 12 Street launch. For other access take the Parks Hwy south to Milepost 295 and hike in to Clear Creek and/or Julius Creek, or continue south to Anderson and hike into Clear Creek.



## Where Can I Catch Coho Salmon?

The Delta Clearwater River (DCR) has the largest documented coho salmon run in the Tanana River Drainage, averaging over 20,000 fish returning annually in recent years.

The DCR is a clear, spring fed system which remains ice-free except during the coldest winter temperatures. A state maintained campground and boat launch, located off of Remington Road (7 miles east of Delta Junction), provides easy access to the middle portion of the river.

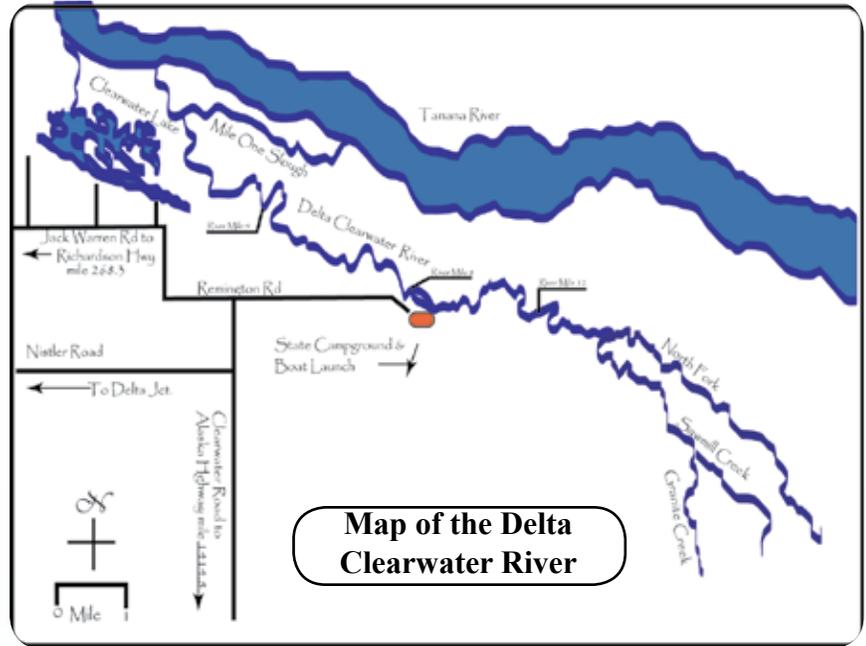
Anglers can fish for coho salmon directly from the riverbank near the campground. Some anglers prefer to fish from riverboats downstream of the boat launch. CAUTION: the boat launch may be icy during coho season.

### Other Coho Salmon Fisheries

Clear tributaries of the Nenana River (Clear & Wood Creeks), and the Richardson Clearwater River.

### Coho Salmon Fishing Tips

In late September and early October cast brightly colored spoons, spinners or streamer-type flies.



### Catch-and-Release Tips

Reminder: If an area is closed to salmon fishing that means it is also closed to catch-and-release salmon fishing.

Although Interior salmon are edible, their flesh has deteriorated after their 1,000 mile journey; therefore many anglers choose to release their catch. Here are some suggestions that minimize harm to fish:

- Use single hooks on lures and/or pinch down barbs on hooks.
- Land the fish as quickly as possible, playing the fish to exhaustion takes away the energy it needs for spawning.

- Do not remove the fish from the water.
- Never place anything (hands, fingers, hooks) under the fish's gill covers.
- Gently grasp the fish around its body to remove the hook. Long-nosed pliers work well for easy hook removal.
- If the hook can't be 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.
- Immediately return the fish to the water and point it upstream. Gently cradle the fish in this position until it swims on its own.



This brochure was produced by:

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