



Fishing poles at the ready, a trio of salmon fishermen head for open waters Saturday morning from the harbor.

BILL LOVEJOY/SENTINEL

Anglers hoping for big catch

Fishermen take to the bay as salmon season opens

By SHANNA MCCORD

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SANTA CRUZ — A full moon shone brightly over the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor very early Saturday as a steady stream of boats, stocked with fishing lines, headed out to sea.

Some returned in a few hours, their ice chests filled with the allowed quota of large shimmering fish — a sign, they say, this salmon season will be prolific.

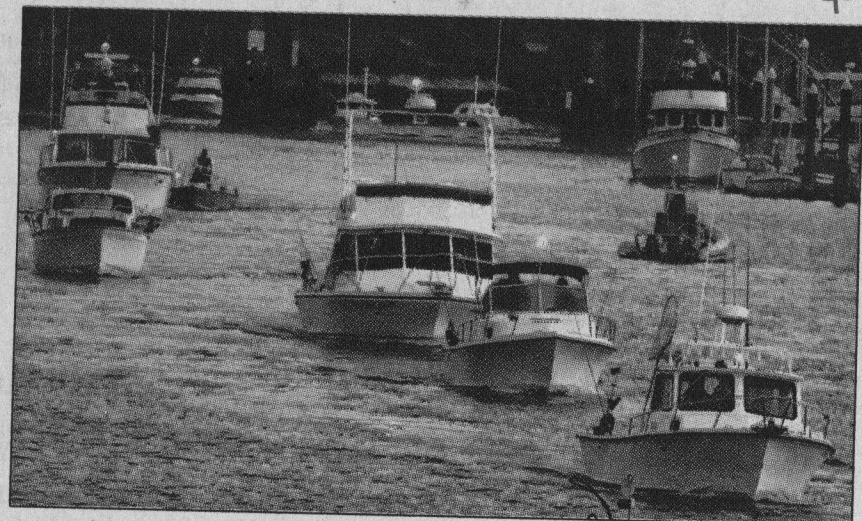
"It was excellent," said Brad Miller of Ultimate Fish Charters. "We got early limits for our passengers. They were nice, decent size keeper fish."

The recreational salmon season opened Saturday, allowing sport anglers to catch the daily limit of two Chinook salmon. Each catch of the popular fish must be at least 24 inches long. Coho salmon are off limits.

A strong salmon season is welcomed by fishermen after a collapse in the salmon population four years ago shut down California's salmon fisheries.

Fishermen have suffered through some lean years as well as the 2008 and 2009 seasons getting canceled due to a severe shortage of fish.

Forecasts from the Pacific Fishery Management Council indicate the popu-



After three years of little or no salmon fishing, hopes were high for anglers as they left the harbor at dawn on the first day of sport salmon season Saturday.

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lations have rebounded.

There are an estimated 1.65 million adult Chinook in the ocean this year from the Klamath River near the Oregon border, according to the Pacific Fishery Management Council. Further, the council estimates that there are more than 800,000 salmon in the Sacramento River.

Santa Cruz resident Sven Geffken, a

longtime fisherman, threw his first line out at 6:30 a.m.

Fishing in an area of the Monterey Bay called Mulligan Hill, Geffken netted two keepers. Another he had to throw back due to its small size.

"It was a great opener," said Geffken, who enjoys cooking fish he catches for

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Don Puccinelli and sons Joey and Tony of San Jose show off their catch after hauling them in off Moss Landing on Saturday.

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family and friends. "The thrill of where are the fish and are they going to bite. To hook a fish, there's nothing like it."

Mike Jani called it a day after catching one and throwing back four smaller fish.

He spent most of his time at a spot about five miles offshore called the Soquel Hole.

"The guys that went toward Moss Landing and Mulligan Hill definitely did a lot better," Jani said. "We heard a few boats got their limit."

Sunnyvale resident Ethan Derby was one of the unlucky ones, returning to the launch ramp empty-handed.

"That's OK, I've got some in the freezer," Derby said. "I'll be back soon."

It was still dark when Justin Gammino filled his small boat with fuel and pulled away from the dock.

This would be his first ocean-going fishing venture in the 14-foot wooden vessel he named "The Canoli."

"So, we'll see. I might not even get to see a single fish," he said. "I like to cook, so I've been practicing with fish purchased at the grocery store all winter. Hopefully I'll be smoking fish later this evening."

The salmon season is expected to end in early October.

The commercial salmon fishing season begins May 1 and runs through Sept. 30 with a few breaks.

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