



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Former Santa Cruz resident Jens Meyerhoff, on a salmon fishing visit from his home in Arizona, bagged his limit early Tuesday morning.

Salmon season starts strong

Fish & Fishing

By **STEPHEN BAXTER**

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✓ SANTA CRUZ — Motoring out of the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor Tuesday around dawn, Brian Hayden didn't know what kind of day he would have salmon fishing with his three friends from Santa Cruz.

By about 9:30 a.m., he knew. They caught eight salmon — their limit — and headed back to the harbor as a light rain started to fall.

"It hasn't been like this in the past eight years — with that many fish and the quality of fish," said Hayden, a 30-year-old from Hollister.

"The cool thing is: This is right out of Santa Cruz. We didn't have to go out of Moss Landing or Seaside."

Since recreational salmon season started Saturday, Santa Cruz harbor officials said anglers have seen good results. The season is expected to last through April.

"We're excited about the recreational salmon fishing season here and the stimulus it's creating within the harbor," said Senior Deputy Harbor-master Don Kinnamon. "It's the strongest we've seen in many years."

Kinnamon noted that the harbor has new docks for

anglers that were rebuilt after the tsunami on March 11, 2011. Overnight boat berths also are available through the harbor-master's office.

Anglers also have noticed that many of the salmon caught off Santa Cruz have been wild rather than hatchery fish — which could show their health in Monterey Bay. People can spot hatchery fish because they have a small fin removed when they are young.

Tom Dolan, owner of Santa Cruz Charters, said about 75 percent of the salmon caught on his recent charters have been wild.

However, he said many of

the fish have been small. Salmon must be at least 24 inches to be caught legally.

Tuesday, Hayden said the biggest fish on his boat weighed 12 and 13 pounds.

"I'm sure we'll be going out again," he said.

Harbor officials invited everyone to check out the salmon fishing buzz at the harbor.

"Even if you're not going fishing, you can view it from the launch ramp or go by the fish cleaning stations," Kinnamon said. "You can enjoy it land side, too."

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