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Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Federal Subsistence Board News Release



Forest Service

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Federal Waters Within the Boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

2015 Kuskokwim Area Salmon Fishery News Release 2

The Refuge Manager of Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, through authority delegated by the Federal Subsistence Board, will close the Chinook salmon fishery to non-federally qualified users in federal waters within and adjacent to the boundary of the Refuge from May 21 – July 20, 2015. He will also close Chinook salmon fishing on the Lower Kuskokwim River to all user groups from May 21-28, 2015 through federal special action.

Two Emergency Special Actions were issued today and will go into effect on Thursday, May 21, 2015. Special Action **3KS-01-15** limits who can participate in the Chinook salmon fishery on the Kuskokwim River. Federal public waters in the Kuskokwim River drainage that are within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge are closed to the harvest of Chinook salmon except by the residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefornak, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok and Kongiganak.

Special Action **3KS-02-15** closes the Chinook salmon fishery on federal public waters in the lower portion of the Kuskokwim River drainage (downstream of Tuluksak) to all user groups. Gill nets must be set and are restricted to four-inch or less mesh size not exceeding 60-feet in length and 45 meshes deep. This opportunity is allowed for 72 hours each week from 6:00 a.m. Thursday through 6:00 a.m. Sunday. This area is closed to all gill nets from 6:01 a.m. Sunday through 5:59 a.m. Thursday weekly.

The area affected by **3KS-02-15** is defined as that portion of the Kuskokwim River and its salmon tributaries (see Figure 3 on-line) upstream from the mouth of the Kuskokwim River from a line from the West bank of the Kuskokwim River at N59.999231°, W162.507352° and the East bank of the Kuskokwim River at N59.999238°, W162.187927° (see Figure 1 on-line) to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game regulatory markers on the main stem of the Kuskokwim approximately half a mile upstream from the confluence of the mouth of the Tuluksak and the Kuskokwim rivers. Salmon tributaries included in this closure are the Eek, Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, and Tuluksak rivers and their salmon tributaries. Fishing from the regulatory markers near Tuluksak upstream to the refuge border at Aniak is allowed with unrestricted gill nets through 5:59 a.m., Thursday, May 28, 2015.

Sport fisherman may target species other than Chinook salmon using methods and means and bag limits set in permanent and emergency regulations under the State of Alaska sport fishing regulations. State subsistence fisherman (Alaska Residents) may target species other than Chinook salmon using method and means (other than gill nets) and limits set in permanent regulation.

Biological Rationale

Due to the low Chinook salmon returns for the last several years and escapement goals not met at two of three weir projects in 2014, conservation measures are warranted in 2015. The 2014 State of Alaska Chinook salmon drainage-wide return was estimated at 136,000 fish, well below the annual average of 243,000 fish over the last 25 years. The subsistence harvest in 2014 was estimated to be 12,000 Chinook salmon, a historically low harvest. The escapement for 2014 was estimated at 124,000 Chinook salmon drainage-wide. The State of Alaska drainage-wide escapement goal is 65,000–120,000 Chinook salmon, and the 2015 return is forecasted to be between 96,000 and 163,000 Chinook salmon. At the upper end of that range, there would be enough fish to meet escapement goals and provide for a moderate Chinook salmon subsistence harvest. At the lower end of the projected run, however, even a very limited subsistence harvest could impact the likelihood of achieving escapement goals. Given several consecutive years of low Chinook salmon returns and that escapement goals were not met at two of three weir projects in 2014, conservation measures are warranted in 2015.

Additional information including maps and fact sheets concerning this federal closure and news release can be found at http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/topics/kuskokwim_2015.cfm

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