



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bureau of Land Management  
National Park Service  
Bureau of Indian Affairs



## Federal Subsistence Board News Release

**For Immediate Release:**  
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### **Federal Public Waters within the Boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge**

#### **2015 Kuskokwim Area Salmon Fishery News Release 4**

The Refuge Manager has issued three previous Special Actions on the federal public waters within and adjacent to Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. The following actions remain in effect until July 20, 2015. Chinook salmon fishery is closed to non-federally qualified users. Chinook salmon fishing on all of the Kuskokwim River and its salmon tributaries remains closed to all user groups. In addition, this closure will prohibit the use of all gill nets on the Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, Tuluksak, and Aniak Rivers and their salmon tributaries to provide for escapement.

Special Action **3KS-04-15** will close all gill net use on the Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, Tuluksak, and Aniak rivers and their salmon tributaries within the boundaries of Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. This closure will begin at 6:01 a.m. June 7 through 5:59 a.m. July 20, 2015 (see Figure 6 on-line). Special Action 3-KS-03-15 remain in effect for the Kuskokwim river as well as the Eek river and its salmon tributaries. In those areas, non-salmon species may be targeted using set gill nets that are restricted to four-inch or less mesh, not exceeding 60-feet in length, and 45 meshes in depth; this gill net opportunity is only allowed for 72 hours each week from 6:00 a.m. Thursday through 6:00 a.m. Sunday.

Sport fishermen may target species other than Chinook salmon using methods and means and limits set in permanent and emergency regulations under the State of Alaska sport fishing regulations. Subsistence fishermen may target species other than Chinook salmon using other legal gear type set in permanent regulation. Legal gear types for other species include dip-net, beach seine, fish wheel, and rod and reel. All Chinook salmon caught with other legal gear types must be released alive and immediately returned to the water.

Management of the Chinook salmon fishery below the Refuge boundary at the Kuskokwim River mouth and above the Refuge boundary on the Kuskokwim River at Aniak is under the authority of the State in-season manager. For more information regarding subsistence fishing in these areas please contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at (907) 543-2433.

### **Biological Rationale**

Due to the low Chinook salmon returns for over the last several years and the failure to meet escapement goals 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.

A dedicated message line with up-to-date fishing regulations on the federal waters of the Kuskokwim drainage can be reached at 907-543-1037. Maps pertaining to this federal closure can be obtained at [http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/topics/kuskokwim\\_2015.cfm](http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/topics/kuskokwim_2015.cfm) or by contacting Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge at (907) 543-3151 or at (800) 621-5804.

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