



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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## Winter/Spring 2026 Fisheries Report Amber Cohen, acting Subsistence Program Lead

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### SUMMARY OF KEY UPDATES

- Fisheries Biologist Dave Sarafin retired as of May 30<sup>th</sup> after 22 years of service at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.
- In 2025, the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission assumed operation of Tanada Creek Weir, with WRST collaboration and support. The minimum count passage was 11,067 sockeye and 1 Chinook salmon. Daily counts were made from June 19<sup>th</sup> to September 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Inventory of harvestable freshwater fish in waters of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST) kicked off in 2025 and has fieldwork planned for the 2026 season led by Dan Gorze of AITRC.
- Harvest opportunities continued throughout the 2025 season and the Sockeye Salmon sustainable escapement goal was achieved.
- Miles Lake sonar estimated a season total passage of 895,509 salmon, which is 48% above the management objective of 604,249 salmon (through July 28).
- No management actions were taken in Federal subsistence fisheries of the Copper River.
- Upper Copper River Federal subsistence fishery permits issued: 251 in the Chitina Subdistrict, 323 in the Glennallen Subdistrict, and 3 Batzulnetas permits.
- Historical Federal subsistence harvests in the Upper Copper River through 2025 are provided in Tables 1-4.
- Federal subsistence fishery in the Lower Copper River; 146 permits were issued with a total in-season harvest of 894 Sockeye Salmon, 21 Chinook Salmon, and 3 Coho Salmon were reported in harvest through September 3, 2025.
- Due to the 2025 regulatory change in the State management plans for the Copper River District commercial fishery and Chitina personal use fishery, the commercial fishery may only open after May 21. The Chitina personal use fishery may open June 10 or later and will be closed to Chinook Salmon harvest until after June 30.
- Wrangell-St. Elias will continue to collaborate with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Native Village of Eyak, AITRC, and other stakeholders to assess and make informed decisions regarding the Copper River salmon runs.

## **FISHERIES RESEARCH AND MONITORING PROJECTS**

### ***Tanada Creek Salmon Weir***

This year, funding through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program had been transferred to the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC) to operate the Tanada Creek salmon weir located at Batzulnetas. Weir installation was completed on June 4. While waiting for the funding to transfer, NPS staff helped monitor the weir, and their hard work is much appreciated. AITRC took over management of the weir in early July. The minimum count passage was 11,067 sockeye and 1 Chinook salmon. Daily counts were made from June 19<sup>th</sup> to September 26<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Inventory of harvestable fish in select waters of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve to inform stewardship***

Dan Gorze, AITRC fisheries biologist, is the primary investigator for this project which will document the presence, distribution, size, relative abundance, and general habitat conditions of species such as arctic grayling, burbot, Dolly Varden, lake trout, rainbow trout, and whitefish in several lakes across Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. At least ten sites have been chosen for inventory. This is in conjunction with the NPS Inventory Program which assists with a detailed implementation plan and facilitates project progress. This project kicked off with a meeting in June 2025. Fieldwork is scheduled for summer 2026 with a report published by spring 2027.

## **UPPER COPPER RIVER FISHERIES**

### ***2025 Copper River Salmon Run Strength and Management Actions***

Federal managers monitored run strength indices throughout the season to evaluate the need for appropriate fisheries management actions. No Federal Special Actions were issued by the in-season manager in the fisheries of the Copper River Drainage. Federal harvest opportunities continued throughout the season.

Regulatory changes in State management plans for the Copper River District commercial fishery and Chitina personal use fishery took effect in 2025. The commercial fishery shifted to open on May 21. The Chitina personal use fishery shifted and opened on June 10. It remained closed to the retention of Chinook Salmon for the season. The Copper River District commercial fishery manager often initiated the Expanded Inside Chinook Salmon Closure Area and limited hours for openers out of concern for Chinook salmon as well.

As the run developed, fishing opportunities were expanded during the season. The season total commercial harvest for the Copper River District through August 11 is reported to include 838,637 Sockeye Salmon (a decrease of 561,363 salmon from 2024), and 5,492 Chinook Salmon (a decrease of 3,379 salmon from 2024).

The ADFG sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) discontinued operation on July 28. A total of 895,509 salmon were estimated in migration upstream for the season. The season passage estimate is 48% above the July 28 management objective of 604,249 salmon.

## ***2025 Upper Copper River Federal Subsistence Fishing Season, Permits, and Historical Harvests***

The Federal subsistence salmon fisheries of the Upper Copper River are open from May 15 through September 30. WRST issued 251 Chitina Subdistrict, 323 Glennallen Subdistrict, and 3 Batzulnetas permits. Tables 1 through 4 show historical reported and expanded harvests for the Federal subsistence fisheries in each subdistrict through the 2025 season.

### ***Highlights as of February 24, 2026:***

- Glennallen Subdistrict permit numbers were between the 5- and 10-year average.
- Chitina Subdistrict permit numbers (251) were 27% above the 5-year average (197) and 50% above the ten-year average (167).
- In the Glennallen Subdistrict:
  - The estimated sockeye harvest (14,030) was 6% below the 5-year average (15,015) and 19% below the 10-year average (17,378).
  - The estimated Chinook harvest (361) was 44% below the 5-year average (655) and 56% below the 10-year average (821).
  - The total harvest estimate for all species (14,425) was 8% below the 5-year average (15,718) and 21% below the 10-year average (18,355).
- In the Chitina Subdistrict:
  - The estimated sockeye harvest (4,231) was 1% below the 5-year average (4,316) and 18% above the 10-year average (3,564).
  - The estimated Chinook harvest (78) was 27% below the 5-year average (108) and 1% above the 10-year average (77).
  - The total harvest estimate for all species (4,371) was 1% below the 5-year average (4,440) and 19% above the 10-year average (3,662).
- For all Upper Copper River fisheries:
  - The total expanded estimated sockeye harvest was 18,561 fish, 4% below the 5-year average (19,435) and 11% below the 10-year average (21,087).
  - The total expanded estimated Chinook harvest was 439 fish, 42% below the 5-year average (763) and 51% below the 10-year average (898).
- 13,176 fish were harvested by fish wheel, and 5,920 fish by dip net. None were harvested by rod and reel.
- About 95% of harvest reports have been returned for the Glennallen Subdistrict.
  - Of the 307 returned harvest reports, 166 permits were fished (54%) and 141 were not fished (46%).
- About 96% of harvest reports have been returned for the Chitina Subdistrict.
  - Of the 242 returned harvest reports, 126 permits were fished (52%) and 116 were not fished (48%).

### ***2025 Lower Copper River Federal Subsistence Fishery***

The Federal subsistence salmon fishery in the Lower Copper River near Cordova is open from June 1 through September 30. In 2025 146 permits were issued, an increase from 88 permits issued last year. A total of 905 Sockeye Salmon, 21 Chinook Salmon, and 3 Coho Salmon were reported in harvest through July 28 (see Table 5).

### ***2026 Early Season Management Strategy for Federal Subsistence Fisheries***

Park staff will meet with entities such as the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Native Village of Eyak, the Chugach National Forest, and the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission for preseason coordination discussions. Federal subsistence salmon fisheries of the Upper Copper River will be open from May 15 through September 30, unless in-season run assessments prompt concerns of meeting salmon escapement goals.

**Table 1. Federal Subsistence Fish Harvest in All Upper Copper River Fisheries, including Harvest by Gear Type<sup>1</sup>**

Year	Expanded Harvest Estimates <sup>2</sup>										All Species, Approximate Harvest by Gear Type					
	Steelhead/ Rainbow					Other					Fish					
	Sockeye	Chinook	Coho	Trout	Species	Total	Harvest	Wheel %	Total	Dip Net %	Total	Rod and Reel %	Rod and Reel Total			
2002	10,933	745	20	77	N.A.	11,775										
2003	17,393	687	259	16	N.A.	18,355										
2004	24,217	815	216	15	N.A.	25,264										
2005	24,781	412	55	7	37	25,292										
2006	20,737	507	55	17	37	21,353										
2007	19,108	704	85	7	25	19,929										
2008	14,865	892	268	21	54	16,100										
2009	14,821	590	52	22	36	15,521										
2010	17,156	362	111	46	25	17,700	90.3%	15,978	9.6%	1,697	0.1%	25				
2011	18,214	814	70	6	283	19,387	88.4%	17,142	11.4%	2,206	0.2%	39				
2012	17,297	410	93	45	113	17,958	90.4%	16,228	9.4%	1,684	0.3%	45				
2013	20,850	396	36	8	93	21,382	85.9%	18,369	14.1%	3,013	0.0%	0				
2014	25,659	456	97	14	57	26,284	89.3%	23,458	10.8%	2,825	0.0%	3				
2015	29,157	430	29	15	218	29,849	90.1%	26,900	9.7%	2,883	0.2%	66				
2016	21,106	465	52	6	406	22,035	90.0%	19,820	10.0%	2,197	0.1%	18				
2017	20,497	485	10	8	549	21,550	96.2%	20,724	3.7%	804	0.1%	19				
2018	20,634	2,763	31	4	45	23,476	83.4%	19,579	16.5%	3,878	0.1%	19				
2019	22,302	1,025	22	3	59	23,411	79.0%	18,485	21.0%	4,909	0.1%	16				
2020	16,337	837	26	7	60	17,266	75.9%	13,098	24.1%	4,159	0.1%	9				
2021	20,481	610	3	6	32	21,132	70.8%	14,951	29.2%	6,175	0.0%	6				
2022	17,489	994	45	16	60	18,603	80.2%	14,919	19.8%	3,676	0.0%	7				
2023	21,364	823	15	11	19	22,231	70.6%	15,695	29.4%	6,536	0.0%	1				
2024	21,504	550	1	0	21	22,076	77.5%	17,109	22.5%	4,967	0.0%	0				
2025	18,561	439	85	0	11	19,095	69.0%	13,176	31.0%	5,920	0.0%	0				
5-yr. Avg. 2015-2025	19,435	763	18	8	38	20,262	75.0%	15,154	25.0%	5,103	0.0%	5				
10-yr. Avg. 2024-2025	21,087	898	23	8	147	22,163	81.4%	18,128	18.6%	4,018	0.1%	16				

<sup>1</sup> This table reflects entries to the online database from 2011 through 2/24/2026. Data prior to 2011 relies on NPS records. Data for all years subject to changes resulting from entry error corrections.

<sup>2</sup> Expanded Harvest estimate derived from a basic, direct ratio expansion based on the percentage of permits that reported.

**Table 2. Glennallen Subdistrict Federal Reported and Expanded Subsistence Fishery Harvests<sup>1</sup>**

Year	Permits Issued	Percentage Reported	Sockeye			Chinook			Coho			Steelhead/Rainbow Trout			Other Species			All Species				
			Reported Harvest	Harvest Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Reported Harvest	Harvest Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Reported Harvest	Harvest Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Reported Harvest	Harvest Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Reported Harvest	Harvest Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Reported Harvest	Harvest Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Reported Harvest	Harvest Estimate <sup>2</sup>
			Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>
2002	201	80.6	8,009	9,937	700	564	16	20	62	77	35	43	10,777									
2003	221	83.3	13,623	16,354	665	554	145	174	13	16	20	24	17,233									
2004	261	78.9	17,704	22,439	806	636	152	193	12	15	12	15	23,468									
2005	267	85.8	19,973	23,279	386	331	47	55	6	7	32	37	23,763									
2006	254	87.4	16,711	19,120	492	430	28	32	15	17	32	37	19,698									
2007	281	84.3	15,225	18,060	675	569	34	40	6	7	21	25	18,808									
2008	269	81.4	11,347	13,940	866	705	148	182	17	21	44	54	15,063									
2009	274	85.0	11,836	13,925	581	494	34	40	19	22	31	36	14,605									
2010	269	87.7	12,849	14,651	342	300	64	73	39	44	22	25	15,136									
2011	277	87.7	14,163	16,145	799	701	53	60	5	6	248	283	17,293									
2012	275	92.0	14,461	15,718	403	371	78	85	40	43	104	113	16,363									
2013	273	89.0	15,834	17,789	372	331	24	27	6	7	62	70	18,264									
2014	315	90.5	21,603	23,877	441	399	23	25	10	11	52	57	24,412									
2015	325	92.3	24,695	26,753	416	384	13	14	7	8	201	218	27,408									
2016	320	82.8	15,884	19,181	446	369	9	11	5	6	332	401	20,044									
2017	338	85.2	15,691	18,415	468	399	1	1	7	8	468	549	19,442									
2018	335	91.3	15,287	16,736	2,662	2,432	0	0	4	4	41	45	19,448									
2019	343	90.1	15,873	17,620	942	849	0	0	3	3	53	59	18,624									
2020	376	90.7	11,456	12,632	752	682	0	0	6	7	54	60	13,450									
2021	355	86.5	13,117	15,168	502	434	0	0	5	6	28	32	15,708									
2022	297	83.5	12,133	14,530	890	743	2	2	13	16	48	57	15,495									
2023	290	85.2	12,971	15,229	672	572	8	9	9	11	16	19	15,939									
2024	293	80.9	14,170	17,518	457	370	0	0	0	0	16	20	17,995									
2025	323	95.0	13,335	14,030	361	343	22	23	0	0	10	11	14,425									
5-yr. Avg. 2020-2024	322	85	12,769	15,015	560	560	2	2	7	8	32	38	15,718									
10-yr. Avg. 2015-2024	327	87	15,128	17,378	821	723	3	4	6	7	126	146	18,355									

<sup>1</sup> This table reflects entries to the online database from 2011 through 2/24/2026. Data prior to 2011 relies on NPS records. Data for all years subject to changes resulting from entry error corrections.

<sup>2</sup> Expanded Harvest estimate derived from a basic, direct ratio expansion based on the percentage of permits that reported.

**Table 3. Chitina Subdistrict Federal Reported and Expanded Subsistence Fishery Harvests<sup>1</sup>**

Year	Percentage		Sockeye			Chinook			Coho			Steelhead/Rainbow Trout			Other Species			All Species		
	Permits Issued	Reported	Reported	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Reported	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Reported	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Reported	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Reported	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Reported	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>
			Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Harvest	Estimate <sup>2</sup>
2002	122	73.0	575	788	45	33	45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	833
2003	100	82.0	717	874	22	18	22	70	85	0	0	0	0	0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	982
2004	109	76.1	1,215	1,597	9	7	9	18	24	0	0	0	0	0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	1,629
2005	76	84.2	1,265	1,502	26	22	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,529
2006	75	85.3	1,379	1,617	15	13	15	20	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,655
2007	98	88.8	929	1,046	29	26	29	40	45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,120
2008	82	85.4	789	924	26	22	26	74	87	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,036
2009	68	91.2	817	896	9	8	9	11	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	917
2010	92	85.9	2,061	2,399	20	17	20	33	38	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2,459
2011	85	85.9	1,766	2,056	15	13	15	8	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,081
2012	89	93.3	1,332	1,427	6	6	6	8	9	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1,443
2013	99	90.9	1,999	2,199	19	17	19	8	9	1	1	1	1	1	10	11	11	11	11	2,239
2014	113	94.7	1,549	1,636	15	14	15	68	72	3	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1,726
2015	111	92.8	2,231	2,404	14	13	14	14	15	7	7	7	8	8	0	0	0	0	0	2,441
2016	128	80.5	1,549	1,925	20	16	20	33	41	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	5	5	5	1,991
2017	132	79.5	1,454	1,828	15	12	15	7	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,852
2018	132	91.7	3,144	3,430	100	92	100	28	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,561
2019	181	90.6	4,053	4,473	83	75	83	20	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,578
2020	215	89.3	3,249	3,638	85	76	85	23	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,749
2021	194	91.8	4,765	5,193	108	99	108	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5,304
2022	177	87.6	2,555	2,918	104	91	104	37	42	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	3,066
2023	196	86.7	5,138	5,924	151	131	151	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,081
2024	202	88.6	3,461	3,906	93	82	93	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,999
2025	251	96.4	4,079	4,231	78	75	78	60	62	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,371
5-yr. Avg. 2020-2024	197	89	3,834	4,316	108	96	108	14	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,440
10-yr. Avg. 2015-2024	167	88	3,160	3,564	77	69	77	17	20	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3,662

<sup>1</sup> This table reflects entries to the online database from 2011 through 2/24/2026. Data prior to 2011 relies on NPS records. Data for all years subject to changes resulting from entry error corrections.

<sup>2</sup> Expanded Harvest estimate derived from a basic, direct ratio expansion based on the percentage of permits that reported.

**Table 4. Batzulnetas Federal Reported and Expanded Subsistence Fishery Harvests<sup>1</sup>**

Year	Sockeye				Chinook		Other Species	
	Permits Issued	Percentage	Reported Harvest	Harvest Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Reported Harvest	Harvest Estimate <sup>2</sup>	Reported Harvest	Harvest Estimate <sup>2</sup>
		of Permits Reported						
2001	1	100	62	62	0	0	0	0
2002	1	100.0	208	208	0	0	0	0
2003	1	100.0	164	164	0	0	0	0
2004	1	100.0	182	182	0	0	0	0
2005	1	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2006	0	N.A.	0	0	0	0	0	0
2007	1	100.0	1	1	0	0	0	0
2008	1	100.0	1	1	0	0	0	0
2009	0	N.A.	0	0	0	0	0	0
2010	3	100.0	106	106	0	0	0	0
2011	3	66.7	9	14	0	0	0	0
2012	3	66.7	101	152	0	0	0	0
2013	3	100.0	862	862	5	5	12	12
2014	2	100.0	146	146	0	0	0	0
2015	4	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2016	0	N.A.	0	0	0	0	0	0
2017	1	100.0	254	254	2	2	0	0
2018	1	100.0	468	468	0	0	0	0
2019	1	100.0	209	209	0	0	0	0
2020	1	100.0	67	67	0	0	0	0
2021	1	100.0	120	120	0	0	0	0
2022	2	100.0	41	41	0	0	0	0
2023	2	100.0	211	211	0	0	0	0
2024	2	100.0	80	80	0	0	1	1
2025	3	100.0	300	300	0	0	0	0
5-yr. Avg. 2020-2024	1	100	130	130	0	0	0	0
10-yr. Avg. 2020-2024	2	100	152	152	0	0	0	0

<sup>1</sup> This table reflects entries to the online database from 2011 through 2/11/2026. Data prior to 2011 relies on NPS records. Data for all years subject to changes resulting from entry error corrections.

<sup>2</sup> Expanded Harvest estimate derived from a basic, direct ratio expansion based on the percentage of permits that reported.

**Table 5: Lower Copper River Federal Subsistence Fishery Permits Issued and Harvest by Year**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Permits Issued</b>	<b>Sockeye Harvest</b>	<b>Chinook Harvest</b>	<b>Coho Harvest</b>
2022	69	104	3	
2023	71	197	4	
2024	88	425	2	
2025*	146	905	21	3

Source: Chugach National Forest

\*Harvest data as of 9/3/2025