

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 13-19, 2022. Report #4
Compiled by George Pappas - (907) 317-2165, George_Pappas@fws.gov Office of
Subsistence Management, USFWS.

The purpose of the weekly fisheries update is to provide the reader with an overall summary of the status of subsistence related fisheries throughout the state of Alaska. The target audience is the Federal Subsistence Board and its Staff Committee. The report was compiled with the assistance of the Federal in-season managers and OSM staff that provided weekly updated information by the close of business on Friday of the reporting week. My goal is to have the report sent by the close of business the following Monday. Web links have been included to provide additional information. You may obtain additional information on a fishery of particular interest by contacting the in-season manager, provided contacts, follow the provided web links, or contact me.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA

Sitka and Hoonah Area – Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
Jake Musslewhite, 907-789-6256 jacob.g.musslewhite@usda.gov

June 12, 2022 – Report will be updated next week.

Herring – The 2022 Sitka Sound commercial sac roe herring fishery was conducted between March 26 and April 10, and harvested approximately 25,500 tons of herring. The harvest represented 56% of the guideline harvest level of 45,164 tons set by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Aerial and boat-based surveys mapped 91.5 miles of herring spawn between March 27 and April 28. This was the fifth largest estimate since 1953 and higher than the 10-year average of 63 miles of spawn.

Sockeye Salmon – Sockeye Salmon fisheries in the area have not begun for the season.

Falls Lake – The Falls Lake weir project was operated for the 21st consecutive year in 2021. The project monitors escapement and terminal harvest of Sockeye Salmon returning to Falls Lake each year. In 2021, an estimated 1,189 Sockeye escaped to the lake, while 315 were harvested in terminal subsistence and sport fisheries (Figure 1). The escapement and harvest were lower than in recent years. However, spawn-recruit analyses indicate that maximum recruitment of Falls Lake Sockeye Salmon occurs at lower escapements – around 2,000 fish. So, the low escapements seen in 2020 and 2021 may still provide for an adequate number of returning adults in several years.

The Falls Lake project was not funded for operation in 2022.

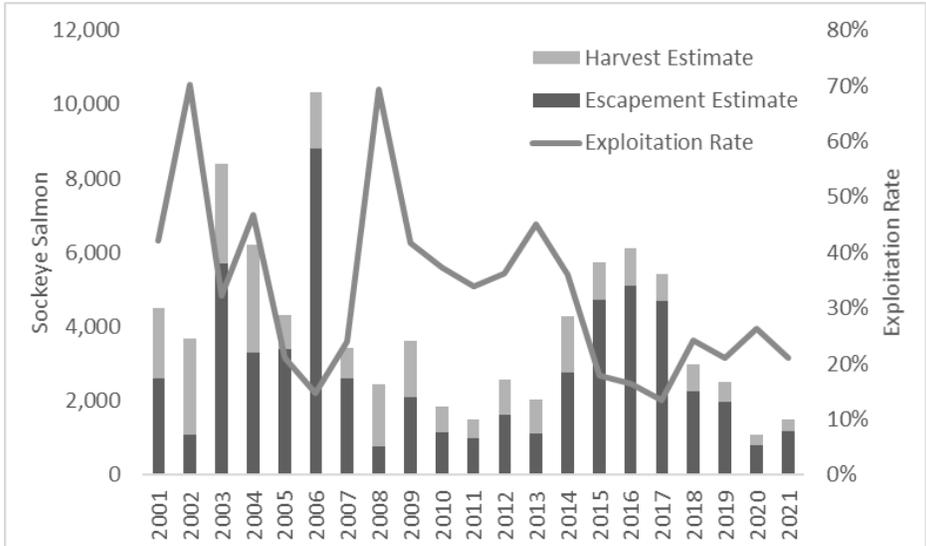


Figure 1. Escapement estimate and onsite harvest estimate for Falls Lake Sockeye Salmon, 2001-2021.

Petersburg and Wrangell Area –Andrew Sanders, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest Andrew Sanders, (907)772-3871 andrew.sanders@usda.gov

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The pre-season terminal run forecast for large Chinook Salmon in the Stikine River is 7,400 fish. This forecast is below the goal range of 14,000 to 28,000 fish. Directed commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries in the area have been closed to protect this return. Currently, all drift gillnet, purse seine and non-terminal harvest area troll fisheries are closed in district 8.

The 2022 Stikine River pre-season Sockeye Salmon forecast is 63,000 fish, with 42,00 Tahltan and 21,000 Mainstem fish. The 2020 Sockeye Salmon forecast was 103,400 fish, which included 64,500 Tahltan Lake and 38,900 Mainstem Sockeye. The escapement objective for Tahltan bound Sockeye Salmon is 18,000 to 30,000, and 20,000 to 40,000 for Mainstem fish. The 2022 forecast for Tahltan is expected to meet the escapement objective with a sufficient surplus for allowable harvest. The forecast for the mainstem is not expected to exceed the escapement goal and may result in a season closure.

The 2022 Federal Stikine River Sockeye Salmon subsistence fishery begins June 21. A total of 26 permits have been issued for the Stikine fishery and no harvest estimate is available at this time.

Juneau and Yakutat – Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
Jake Musslewhite, 907-789-6256 jacob.g.musslewhite@usda.gov

June 13, 2022 – No update for reporting period e

Sockeye Salmon - Sockeye Salmon fisheries in the area have not begun for the season. Most subsistence fisheries begin in late June, as returning fish start to show up at the mouths of streams.

The kickoff for the 2022 commercial salmon fishery in southeast Alaska begins this coming weekend, with the first purse seine and gillnet openings on June 19. Most of the early openings target hatchery produced chum salmon, which are expected to have weak returns this year. The only purse seine opening is the index fishery at Pt. Augusta, which is used to assess run strength in the area. Gillnet openings in northern southeast are in Districts 11 and 15.

Sitkoh Lake – The Sitkoh Lake weir is a cooperative project between the Forest Service and the Angoon Community Association, and monitors Sockeye Salmon escapement to the lake using a remotely monitored video weir. In 2021, we counted a total of 5,303 Sockeye Salmon through the weir. This was an improvement from the poor escapements of 2017-2019, but less than the 8,000-12,000 fish seen in previous years (Figure 1). The Sitkoh Lake project will continue to operate in 2022, with the weir to be installed in early July. Returns are likely to be on the low side, based on the poor escapements in parent years.

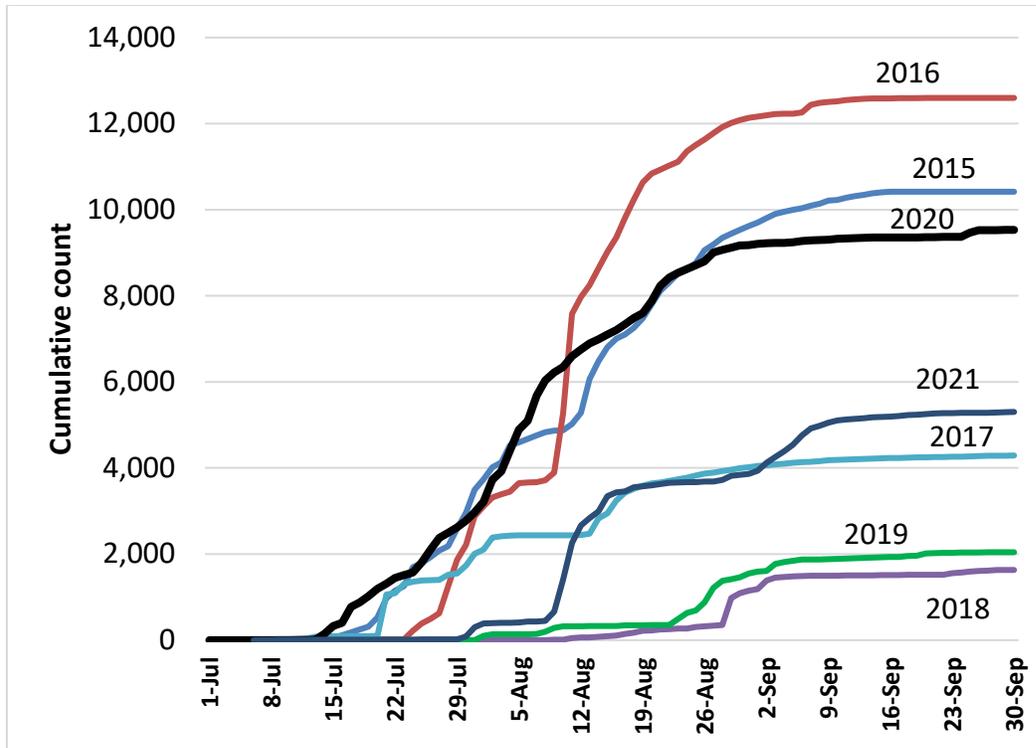


Figure 2. Estimated cumulative escapement of Sockeye Salmon into Sitkoh Lake through video weirs, 2015 to 2021.

Neva Lake – The Neva Lake weir is a cooperative project operated by the Forest Service and the Hoonah Indian Association, and uses a video weir to count Sockeye Salmon entering Neva Lake, near the community of Excursion Inlet. In 2021, we counted a total of 4,262 Sockeye Salmon through the weir. Escapements have generally improved since a low point in 2015 (Figure 2). The Neva Lake project will continue to operate in 2022, with the weir to be installed in mid June.

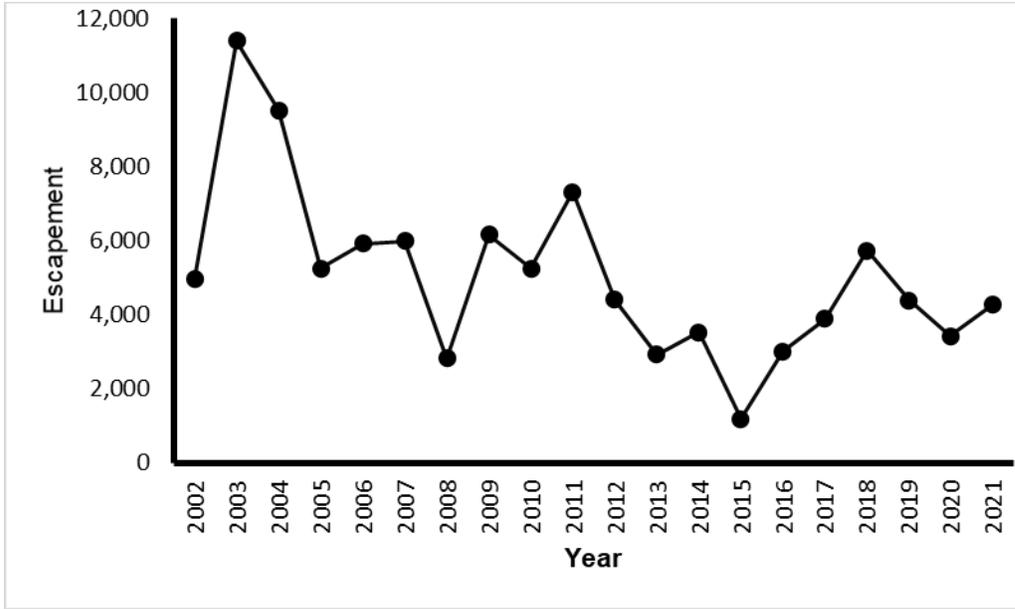


Figure 3. Estimated escapement of Sockeye Salmon at the Neva Lake weir, 2002-2021.

Yakutat- The preseason forecast for Situk River Chinook Salmon is 1,600 large fish, and the escapement goal range is 450 – 1,050 fish. In order to ensure that the escapement goal is met, subsistence and commercial fisheries on the mouth of the Situk have been closed until further notice (Figure 3). Escapement of Chinook Salmon will be monitored at the Situk weir, and fisheries may reopen if adequate escapement is seen through the weir.

Commercial fisheries in the Yakutat area have begun, with openings on the Alesk River, Yakutat Bay, and the Dangerous River beginning on June 12. Release of Chinook is requested on the Alesk River.



Figure 4. Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet waters closed to commercial and subsistence fishing in 2022.

Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area – TBA, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest. (907) 826-1649

USFS Weekly Summary Author position vacant - TBA. No reports expected this season or until alternate staffing arrangements are made.

Southeast Alaska Web Links

Tongass National Forest News Room <http://www.fs.usda.gov/news/tongass/news-events>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Southeastern Alaska Area
http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Southeast.pdf

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order Link
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=region.RI>

ADF&G Commercial Fisheries News Release and Emergency Order Link
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Southeast Alaska
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R1.home>

Statewide ADF&G Fish counts
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/>

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND – COPPER RIVER

Copper River, 6/12/2022 Update – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), (907) 822-7281, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

Report will be updated next week.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) provided preseason forecasts of 40,000 Copper River Chinook Salmon and 1,379,000 wild stock Copper River Sockeye Salmon. Relative to recent 10-year averages, these forecasts are 13% below average for Chinook Salmon and 29% below average for Sockeye Salmon. In early May, Federal and State fisheries managers met to discuss this forecast, regulatory changes, anticipated early season management strategies, and plans for maintaining communications with local stakeholders throughout the season.

The commercial fishery in the Copper River District was limited in response to low early season numbers of salmon. Six 12-hour open commercial fishing periods have occurred through June 9. ADFG reports preliminary cumulative commercial harvest to be 267,434 Sockeye Salmon and 9,672 Chinook Salmon. Commercial harvest from the most recent

12-hour period was 25,697 Sockeye Salmon and 392 Chinook Salmon. For this most recent open period, the projected harvest was 36,800 Sockeye Salmon. The Copper River District will open June 13 for a 24-hour commercial fishing period.

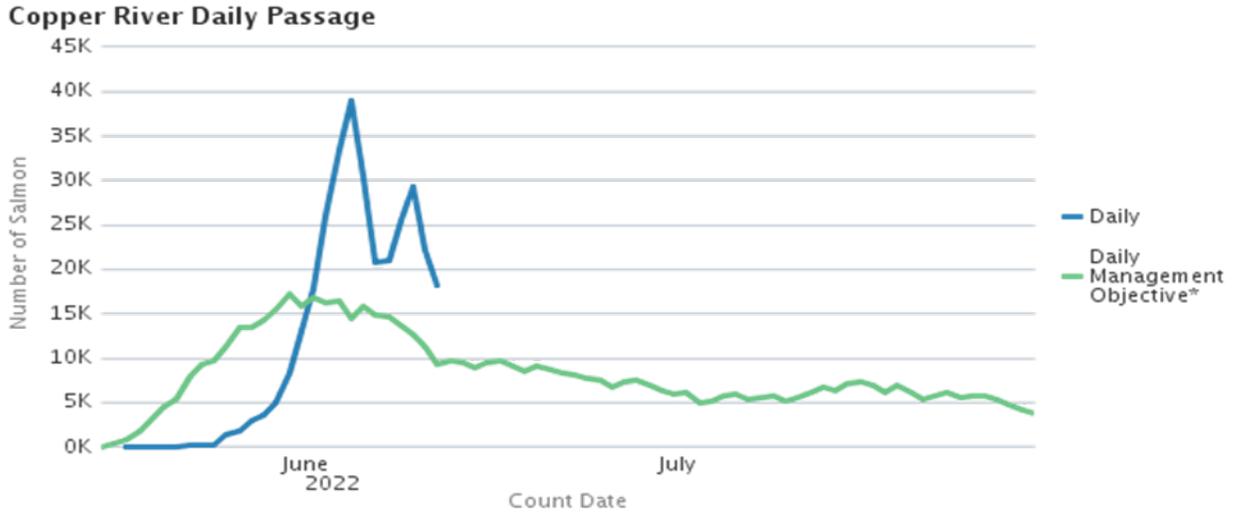
The ADFG sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) began limited operation of only the North Bank sonar on May 17. Salmon passage was first recorded on May 18. Early season ice flow delayed the operation of the South Bank sonar, which began operation on May 25. As of June 11, 320,380 salmon have been estimated migrating upstream for the season. A daily estimate of 18,154 salmon migrated by the sonar on June 11.

Performance in the commercial fishery and in river sonar salmon passage estimates are the primary early season assessments of the Sockeye Salmon return to the Copper River. Although the initial two commercial fishing periods resulted in relatively low harvest, subsequent periods resulted in significant increases in Sockeye Salmon harvest. Daily sonar estimates have exceeded projected numbers since June 1, and as of June 11, are 7% above the cumulative management objective of 300,234 for this date of the season.

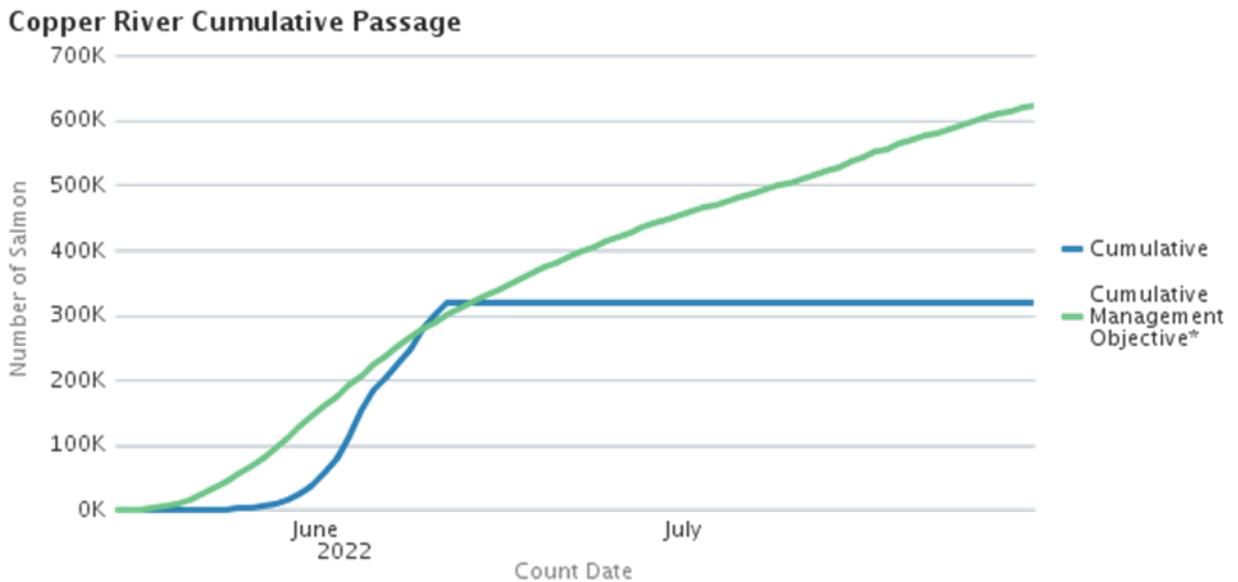
As with Sockeye Salmon, fisheries managers are also monitoring early season assessments of Chinook Salmon run strength; primary indicators are commercial harvest rates and data from the Chinook Salmon in river abundance project operated by NVE. Additional insight is gained from the recent application of updated technology at the Miles Lake sonar site to provide species apportionment data. Although still early in the season, assessments are indicative of what may be a weak inriver return.

Federal managers will continue to monitor run strength indices to evaluate the need for appropriate fisheries management actions in the Copper River Drainage. No Federal Special Actions have been issued by the in-season manager this season.

The State subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened June 1. The State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict was recently open for a 24-hour fishing period that began on June 11. This initial open period was delayed from the scheduled date of June 7 due to poor early season run assessments.



Graph of Copper River Salmon Daily Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through June 11, 2022



Graph of Copper River Salmon Cumulative Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through June 11, 2022

Source:

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.salmon_escapement

The Federal subsistence fisheries in the Chitina Subdistrict, the Glennallen Subdistrict, and the Batzulnetas vicinity opened on May 15 and are expected to remain open through September 30. Through the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Federal subsistence permit website, ninety-five (95) Chitina Subdistrict permits, one hundred

thirty-three (133) Glennallen Subdistrict permits, and zero (0) Batzulnetas permits have been issued to date.

In April 2022, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) adopted a proposal to allow subsistence salmon harvest opportunities in the Lower Copper River near Cordova. The season was adopted to be open from June 1 through September 30. As regulations of this new fishery would not be in effect until later in the year when the Federal Register was published, a Fisheries Special Action Request, was considered and adopted by the Board on May 19 which put these regulations in place temporarily for the 2022 season. This fishery opened on June 1. Permits are available at the Cordova Ranger Station (Chugach National Forest). Salmon harvest is only allowed in the Copper River within ½ mile of the Copper River Highway, only by dip net or rod and reel, dip netting from boats is prohibited, and all salmon harvest must be reported within 48 hours. Reports are being directed to a drop box at the Cordova Ranger Station. As of June 12, there have been 56 Sockeye Salmon and 3 Chinook Salmon reported in harvest.

With funding through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP), WRST is planning to operate the Tanada Creek salmon weir located at Batzulnetas. Due to record winter snowfall and delayed warming this spring, groundwater and creek level conditions have limited our ability to initiate the project. The weir site was visited on June 7 to begin installation; however, the water level was too high to work in the creek. Another attempt is planned for June 14.

Links:

ADFG Miles Lake daily sonar estimates

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.salmon_escapement

NVE's Chinook Escapement Monitoring project in the Copper River

<http://eyak.fishscan.com/Summary/DailySummary.aspx>

ADFG Copper River Inseason Commercial Harvest Estimates

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.harvestsummary>

ADFG Sport Fish Emergency Orders and News Releases

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=main.home>

PWS and Copper River Delta – Milo Burcham, Chugach National Forest, Cordova. (907) 424-4759 milo.burcham@usda.gov

June 20, 2022

Thirty Federal Subsistence fishing permits have been issued for freshwaters within the Chugach National Forest portion of the Prince William Sound area (FFPW01) to date. Harvest statistics of this year's permit holders will not be

known until reports are returned this winter. Most harvest under these permits takes place during the coho fishery in fresh waters of the Copper River Delta in August and September. Seventy-four permits were issued in 2021 and 28 were fished. Reported harvest was 459 Coho Salmon, 19 Sockeye Salmon and 4 Cutthroat Trout.

The new dip net fishery in the Lower Copper River Area (FFPW05) began on June 1, 2022. Fifty-eight permits have been issued so far and given the 48-hour reporting requirement, in-season harvest updates will be presented throughout the season. Most effort and all harvest has taken place at 36-Mile of the Copper River Highway. Sixty-six Sockeye and three Chinook Salmon have been harvested in this fishery thus far.

COOK INLET AREA – Kenneth Gates, Senior Fish Biologist, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (907) 260-0132 Kenneth_Gates@FWS.GOV

The 2022 Cook Inlet Federal subsistence fishing is underway. Federal subsistence fisheries on Kenai and Kasilof rivers began June 15 and June 16, respectively. Regulatory dates for the Kasilof River community gillnet fishery are from June 16 through August 15. Regulatory periods for the Kenai River community gillnet fishery are from July 1 through August 15 and from September 10 – 30.

Seasons for subsistence fishing with rod and reel are the same as for the taking of fish under Alaska sport fishing regulations. Most of the initial rod and reel subsistence effort will be focused at Sockeye Salmon in the Upper Kenai and Russian Rivers which opened June 11.

A total of 369 permits have been issued to date to residents of Cooper Landing, Hope, and Ninilchik. Permit types include a general fishing, household, designated fisher, and community gillnet permits. To date, 72 Sockeye Salmon have been reported as being harvested in the Kasilof River in the gillnet fishery.

No special actions have been issued for Cook Inlet Federal fisheries. However, escapement is extremely poor for Chinook Salmon returning to upper Cook Inlet requiring State fisheries managers to close all saltwater fisheries north of Bluff Point targeting Chinook Salmon including all State managed Kenai and Kasilof in-river fisheries. Current in-season passage of large early-run Chinook Salmon in the lower Kenai River is 1,400 fish well below the minimum OEG

of 3,900 fish. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates a Chinook Salmon escapement project in the Funny River, a tributary supporting ~ 20% of the early-run Chinook Salmon returning to the Kenai River. This is the only weir escapement project operated between the Kenai and Kasilof rivers that monitors wild Chinook Salmon. Through June 16, passage is five Chinook Salmon in the Funny River.

Fish counts at some Alaska Department of Fish and Game-operated assessment projects are available on-line at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/index.cfm?ADFG=main.home>

Kodiak Island Area – Michael Brady, Refuge Manager, - Kodiak NWR

(907) 487-2600/0230 michael_brady@fws.gov or

Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230 Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov

The Buskin River Sockeye Salmon counts have been slow but picked up over the last week. It is not anticipated that the lower escapement goal will be reached, and all fishing activities have been closed. To date, the 2022 escapement is 1,488 fish.

The 2022 Afognak Lake (Litnik) Sockeye Salmon escapement started strong but has slowed considerably the past couple of weeks. Due to the low numbers, it is anticipated that fishery managers will close this drainage to all fishing activity in the next week. To date, the 2022 Sockeye Salmon escapement is 8,034 fish.

The Karluk and Ayakulik River Sockeye Salmon escapements are medium in strength with both systems passing over 30,000 fish in the past week. Commercial fishing openings have occurred for these areas, which may be impacting subsistence users' ability to harvest fish. The catch per unit effort is medium to strong for Karluk, with an abundant number of Sockeye Salmon being within the Karluk Lagoon.

The Chinook Salmon counts on the Karluk and Ayakulik Rivers have been well below adequate levels. As of June 17, the Chinook Salmon counts for both the Ayakulik (1,310 fish) and Karluk Rivers (1,273 fish) are not anticipated to meet their respective lower escapement goals.

The Akalura remote video study has been installed and recording data. The Kodiak fishery biologist will visit the site this week and start reviewing the data. Information from this project will be submitted the following week.

Any additional information that is received by our office will be amended to this report or be incorporated into next weeks' report.

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF June 13, 2022.

***BRISTOL BAY, CHIGNIK, ALASKA PENINSULA, and ALEUTIAN ISLANDS –
Jonathon Gerken Fisheries Branch Chief Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office***

These areas support abundant returns of salmon, particularly Sockeye Salmon; as well as some of the largest commercial fisheries for salmon in Alaska. All of the assessments of salmon returns are conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and provide the basis for any inseason assessment and management. None of the adjustments in commercial fishing management throughout any of these areas are anticipated to affect subsistence fishing in waters under Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction.

Bristol Bay:

The 2022 Bristol Bay Sockeye Salmon run is forecast to be approximately 73 million fish for the nine river systems: Kvichak, Alagnak, Naknek, Egegik, Ugashik, Wood, Igushik, Nushagak, and Togiak. Based on the forecast 60 million fish are available for commercial inshore harvest. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has strategies in place for all mixed stock districts to address differential run strength should that occur. Gillnets are the primary gear used for most subsistence fishing for salmon. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Escapement projects are currently being installed throughout the area. Current counts for Sockeye Salmon at installed escapement projects for June 19:

Egegik = 49,200

Nushagak = 115,599

Wood River = 68,364

The Sockeye Salmon sustainable escapement goals (SEG) for Bristol Bay systems are:

Escapement Goals:

Kvichak SEG = 2,000,000 – 10,000,000

Alagnak SEG = 320,000 minimum

Naknek SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000

Egegik SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000

Ugashik SEG = 500,000 – 1,400,000

Wood River SEG = 700,000 – 1,800,000

Igushik SEG = 150,000 – 400,000

Nushagak SEG = 370,000 – 900,000

Nushagak SEG = 55,000 – 270,000 Chinook Salmon

Togiak SEG = 120,000 – 270,000

Chignik:

The Chignik River cumulative weir count as of June 20 is 70,366 Sockeye Salmon. The interim escapement objective for June 20 is around 150,000 fish. The 2022 Sockeye Salmon forecasted total-run size for the Chignik River Management Area (CMA) is

1,272,000 fish with a harvest estimate of 562,000 Sockeye Salmon. No Chinook Salmon have been counted at the ADFG weir as of June 20.

Escapement Goals:

Early Run Sockeye Salmon/ Black Lake BEG = 350,000 – 450,000

Late Run Sockeye Salmon/ Chignik Lake SEG = 200,000 – 400,000

-In-river Goal -10,000 in August and 10,000 in September in addition to minimum escapement objectives

Chinook Salmon BEG = 1,300 – 2,700

Pink Salmon – Even year SEG = 170,000 – 280,000

Chum Salmon SEG = 45,000 – 110,000

Alaska Peninsula:

There are numerous salmon stocks and fisheries throughout the Alaska Peninsula, as well as the Aleutian Islands. The largest fisheries are managed under management plans. Management objectives vary by district and time. Several Sockeye Salmon escapements (mostly on the north peninsula) are monitored with weirs including Nelson, Bear, Sandy, Ilnik, McLees, and Orzinski systems. Preseason forecasts are made only for the Nelson River and late-run (post July 31) Bear Lake stocks. The 2022 Sockeye Salmon run size projections are 285,000 fish for the Nelson River and 394,000 fish for late-run Bear Lake. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Current counts for Sockeye Salmon at installed escapement projects for June 19:

Nelson = 81; Chinook = 38

Bear = 8,983

Ilnik = 28,043

Orzinski = 14

Sandy = 522

McLees = 32

Escapement Goals:

Nelson River BEG = 97,000 – 219,000

Late-run Bear Lake BEG = 117,000 – 195,000

Aleutian Islands.

All fisheries are forecast to meet escapement goals and provide harvest opportunity.

Yukon River –USFWS Fairbanks Office. June 6-12, 2022

Federal Manager, Holly Carroll (907) 351-3029, holly_carroll@fws.gov

Summer Season Outlook and Management Strategies

The drainagewide Chinook salmon outlook is for a run size of 99,000 to 150,000 fish, and the Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run size outlook is for a run of 41,000 to 62,000 fish. Therefore the 2022 run is likely to be similar to 2021. Because of the poor projected run size, salmon fishing closures are required until inseason run strength estimates indicate a harvestable surplus above escapement needs. This will likely require closures at least through the midpoint of the run.

The drainagewide summer Chum salmon outlook is for a run size of 333,000 fish, with a range of 162,000 to 542,000 fish. This outlook is poor, and unless the run comes in at the upper end, the fishery will likely require closures for most of the run.

The drainagewide fall Chum salmon outlook is for a run size of 110,000 fish, with a range of 78,100 to 148,000 fish. The fall Chum salmon projection will be revised in mid-July based on the 2022 summer Chum salmon run size.

Assessment Information

As of June 16, at Pilot station approximately 4,300 Chinook Salmon have passed the sonar compared to a historical average for this time of about 39,000 fish. Approximately 3,700 summer Chum Salmon have passed the sonar compared to a historical average for this time of about 27,000 fish. The first quarter points for both Chinook and Summer chum are usually after June 19 for both species, therefore we are still pretty early in the run. But both runs appear to be poor and/or weak at this time, and closures to salmon fishing continue to be warranted.

Assessment and management updates will be given on the YR DFA weekly teleconferences each Tuesday at 1:00 pm at the following number: 1-800-315-6338, Passcode: 98566#. To hear the fishing schedule and fish counts please call the toll-free Fishing Schedule and Fish Counts hotline: 866-479-7387.

Management Actions

Under the Delegated letter of Authority, and in consultation with Regional Advisory Council chairs and Office of Subsistence management staff, the Federal In-season Manager began issuing emergency special actions to close salmon fishing in each district, starting on June 2, and moving the closures upriver based on salmon migration timing.

Fishing for non-salmon species with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets will be allowed under State and Federal regulations during salmon fishing closures; however, net length is restricted to a maximum of 60 feet. If a Chinook or Chum salmon is caught in 4-inch mesh gillnets, it should be released alive if possible, or if dead, may be kept. If fishermen are encountering salmon in a particular area, they should move their net and avoid areas where salmon are running. Other non-salmon gear types, including dip net, hook and line, longline, jigging gear, hand line, beach seine, fyke net, spear, or lead may be used to fish for non-salmon species all year, even during salmon fishing closures, but all Chinook and summer Chum salmon caught must be released alive from these gears. Pink Salmon or Sockeye Salmon may be retained in these gears if caught. Fish wheels may not be operated during salmon fishing closures.

Subsistence salmon fishing has been or will be closed in Federal public waters by Emergency Special Action in the following Districts and Subdistricts: · Coastal District and District 1, June 2 (2-KS-01-22) · District 2, June 4 (2-KS-01-22) · District 3, June 7 (2-KS-02-22) · Subdistrict 4-A Lower, June 12 (2-KS-03-22) · Subdistrict 4-A Upper, June 15 (2-KS-03-22) · Subdistricts 4-B/C, June 17 (2-KS-04-22) · Innoko River, June 17 (2-KS-05-22) · Subdistricts 5-A/B/C, June 21 (2-KS-06-22)

· Koyukuk River, June 25 (2-KS-07-22) · Subdistrict 5-D Lower, June 25 (2-KS-08-22) · Subdistrict 5-D Middle, June 28 (2-KS-08-22) · Subdistrict 5-D Upper, June 30 (2-KS-08-22)

· Subdistrict 6A, June 23, Upper Tanana June 28 (2-KS-09-22)

Until closed, subsistence salmon fishing in the remainder of Yukon River drainage is open 24 hours per day, seven days per week, with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

These management actions were taken in consultation with Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). State-managed waters in these areas have been closed concurrently by ADF&G.

For detailed information on management actions and weekly assessment updates, subscribe to ADF&G advisory announcements at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.search> For daily counts and State Advisory announcements like the ADF&G Yukon River Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG/

Recent Fishery special actions are posted here: Fisheries Special Actions | U.S. Department of the Interior ([doi.gov](https://www.doi.gov))

If you'd like to receive emails and notifications on the Federal Subsistence Management Program you may subscribe for regular updates by emailing fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov

For Federal News Releases and Emergency Special actions, like www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

KUSKOKWIM RIVER

In Season Manager – Boyd Blihovde, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Contact Boyd_Blihovde@fws.gov; (907) 543-3151 or aaron_moses@fws.gov

Summary:

Pursuant to authority delegated by the Federal Subsistence Board, the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, as In-Season Manager, hereby announces additional gillnet fishing opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users. These additional openings reflect revisions to Emergency Special Action (ESA) 3-KS-01-22, issued May 02, 2022, which closed certain waters within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR) to the harvest of salmon and certain fishing methods in order to ensure the continued viability of, and subsistence use of Chinook Salmon. ESA 3-KS-01-22 further provided several Chinook and Chum Salmon harvest opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users, the latest of which occurred on June 16, 2022. Since that time, the In-Season manager has continued to review data and information reported by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), The Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), and other parties, and has engaged in numerous discussions with stakeholders concerning the prospect of providing additional harvest opportunities.

Subsistence Fishing Opportunities:

Downstream of Kalskag at the south edge of Uknavig Slough and then due east to the edge of the Kalskag bluff line and upstream to the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge to the downstream boundary of the Aniak Box (as described in

ESA 3-KS-01-22. This portion is opening to the use of gillnets, by Federally qualified subsistence users effective:

June 20, 2022 beginning at 6:00 am, until further notice.

· In the Kuskokwim River main stem from the mouth of the Kuskokwim River to the Refuge boundary at the edge of Uknavik Slough and due east to the Kalskag Bluff line, drift or set gillnets will be allowed effective June 22, 2022 from 6:00 am through 6:00 pm for Federally qualified subsistence users residing along the Kuskokwim River. When this harvest opportunity expires, Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River, Downstream of Kalskag Bluffs and to the mouth of the Kuskokwim River will return to closed to the use of gillnets by all users for the protection of Chinook and Chum Salmon.

These actions are in effect until superseded by subsequent emergency special action(s).

In both above-mentioned actions, subsistence users will be allowed to use gillnets with 6-inch or less mesh which may not exceed 45 meshes in depth; 25 fathoms (150 feet) in length above the Johnson River; and may not exceed 50 fathoms (300 feet) in length below the Johnson River.

The opening of the Kalskag line between the Kalskag bluffs to Aniak is unlikely to compromise attaining the established escapement goal range by using Chinook Salmon conservation gear (6-inch or less stretched mesh gillnets). The in season manager does not expect Chinook Salmon harvest from this area of the river to be any more than 2,000 to 5,000 Chinook Salmon based on historical harvest estimates during times of restrictions. This action is inherently a conservative management action that protects the viability of the Chinook Salmon population while allowing the continuation of subsistence uses.

The data indicates that this season's Chinook Salmon run is similar to 2021, which had a total run of 129,751 Chinook Salmon and an escapement of 101,000 fish. This indicates that a conservation concern continues to exist. However, the data also indicates, and ADF&G and the KRITFC agree, that limited openings can be provided without jeopardizing the viability of future Chinook salmon runs. Based on historical information, the drift gillnet opportunity announced is expected to generate a harvest of between 5,000 to 7,000 Chinook Salmon. In addition, ADF&G data indicates that the Chum Salmon run is in its early stages and a harvest opportunity on the 22nd will result in minimal Chum harvest. Pursuant to Section 804 of ANILCA, these

limited re-openings will be afforded only to Federally qualified subsistence users.

Access up-to-date information on fishing opportunities by calling 907-543-1008 or 907-543-3151 or visit the Refuge Facebook page or www.fws.gov/refuge/yukon_delta/.

Test Fisheries and Harvest Estimate:

As of June 20, 2022 the CPUE for Chinook at the Bethel test fish is at 152. The 2021 and 2020 Chinook CPUE for this day were at 185 and 154, respectively.

Cumulative harvest of Chinook salmon on the Kuskokwim as of 6/16 is currently at 12,610.

As of June 20, 2022 the CPUE for Chum at the Bethel test fish is at 9. The 2021 and 2020 Chinook CPUE for this day were at 14 and 17, respectively.

As of June 20, 2022 the CPUE for Sockeye at the Bethel test fish is at 53. The 2021 and 2020 Chinook CPUE for this day were at 72 and 28, respectively.

Yukon-Kuskokwim-Interior Alaska Web Links

Federal Subsistence Management Fisheries News Releases:

<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/news/fishing/index.cfm>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Yukon–Northern Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Yukon.pdf

NEW = Kuskokwim River Updates Hosted on OSM Website

<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/kuskokwim.cfm>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kuskokwim Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Kusko.pdf

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order

link: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=region.R3>

ADF&G Commercial Fisheries News Release and Emergency Order Link:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Interior Alaska:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R3.home>

Statewide ADF&G Fish counts: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts>

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FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 5-12, 2022. REPORT #4

The waters south of Wales, AK are now largely ice free. However, communities like Shishmaref, Wales, Little Diomedede, the St. Lawrence Island communities of Gambell and Savoonga, and further north are still heavily engaged in marine mammal hunting. Several communities are adding into their subsistence activities the harvest of birds and collecting their eggs.

Norton Sound District

St. Michael and Stebbins

Subsistence fishing is open 7 days per week in southern Norton Sound from Pt. Romanof to Black Point. Regulation does allow for the restriction of gillnet mesh size in the subsistence fisheries throughout Norton Sound if it is necessary to conserve Chinook salmon.

Southern Norton Sound: Subdistrict (6) Unalakleet and Subdistrict (5) Shaktoolik

By Board of Fisheries regulation, the King Salmon Management Plan for Subdistricts 5 and 6, the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts, and the Unalakleet River went into effect beginning on June 15. Before June 15 subsistence fishing remained open 7 days a week.

In the Unalakleet River beginning on June 15, the subsistence gillnet fishing schedule is from 8 a.m. Mondays until 8 p.m. Tuesdays and from 8 a.m. Fridays until 8 p.m. Saturdays. There are no gillnet mesh size restrictions. This schedule is in effect through July 15 unless changed by emergency order.

The first closure to subsistence fishing in the Unalakleet River was at midnight on the evening of June 14. Except for the scheduled subsistence fishing periods, the Unalakleet River drainage from downstream of the North River and the North River drainage will close to all subsistence fishing, except for dip nets and cast nets. Any king salmon caught in a cast net or dip net must be immediately returned to the water. The subsistence net fishing closure will extend out to the marine waters within 500 yards of the Unalakleet River

mouth. Also, gillnets with a mesh size greater than 4 inches will not be allowed in the Unalakleet River upstream of the North River confluence except during the subsistence fishing periods. Set gillnets with a mesh size of 4 inches or less may continue to be fished daily in the Unalakleet River drainage upstream of the North River confluence.

From June 15, the marine waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6, the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts, will be open to subsistence fishing for two 48-hour periods each week. The marine water subsistence fishing schedule will be from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Thursdays until 6:00 p.m. Saturdays. There are no gillnet mesh size restrictions. This schedule is in effect unless changed by emergency order in late June. The first closure to the marine fishing schedule in Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts was at 6:00 p.m. June 15.

Beach seining for salmon in all of Subdistricts 5 and 6 waters is closed until July 1, and then will be open through August 10 with mesh size restricted to 4 ½ inches, or smaller, and all king salmon must be released to the water immediately unharmed.

Northern Norton Sound: Subdistricts (4) Norton Bay (3) Elim, (2) Golovin. (1) Nome

A subsistence salmon permit is required when subsistence salmon fishing in northern Norton Sound. Permits are required for all marine and fresh waters of Subdistricts 1 through 3 (Nome, Golovin, and Elim), Cape Woolley Subdistrict of the Norton Sound District, and the Port Clarence District. A separate permit for Pilgrim River and Salmon Lake is required when fishing there. Catch limits in effect are listed on the permit for the rivers that have subsistence catch limits.

Rod and reel are legal subsistence fishing gear in northern Norton Sound and a subsistence salmon permit or sport fish license is required when fishing with rod and reel for salmon.

Rod and reel are not legal subsistence fishing gear in southern Norton Sound and a sport fish license is required when fishing with a rod and reel in State of Alaska open waters. However, no subsistence salmon permits are required in Southern Norton Sound waters when fishing with a net including the Norton Bay Subdistrict beginning at Bald Head, between Elim and Koyuk, to the southern Norton Sound District boundary at Point Romanof.

All marine waters and fresh waters are open to subsistence salmon fishing in Norton Sound until mid-June. On June 15, the subsistence fishing schedule will go into effect for the Nome Subdistrict and marine and fresh waters will be open to subsistence salmon fishing from 6 p.m. Wednesday until 6 p.m. Monday, except for the marine waters east of Cape Nome which will remain open 7 days a week.

Subdistrict (1) Nome

By Alaska Board of Fisheries regulation, on June 15 the summer subsistence salmon gillnet fishing schedule went into effect in the Nome Subdistrict. The marine waters east of Cape Nome will be open 7 days per week. All Nome Subdistrict freshwater subsistence areas and the marine waters west of Cape Nome will be open to gillnet fishing for five days each week from 6 p.m. Wednesdays until 6 p.m. Mondays. Effective June 15, beach seining for salmon will be open in all subsistence areas of the Nome Subdistrict whenever subsistence gillnet fishing is open. Unless closed by emergency order, beach seining will remain open during gillnet fishing periods through August 15. Dip nets and cast nets can also be used at any time gillnet fishing is open.

The first-time nets were required to be removed from all fresh-water Nome Subdistrict subsistence areas at midnight on Monday evening, June 14. Likewise, all nets were required to be removed from Nome Subdistrict marine waters west of Cape Nome on Monday evening, June 14, at midnight. Also, effective June 15, all gillnet and beach seine fishing upstream of Boulder Creek on the Sinuk River was closed. This closure is in effect to protect migrating sockeye salmon that hold in the Sinuk River bridge area before reaching the spawning grounds.

Kotzebue District

The Kotzebue District salmon fisheries management outlook is to inform fishermen, processors, and other interested people of the management strategies for the commercial salmon fishery. The Kotzebue District includes all waters from Cape Prince of Wales to Point Hope. The Kotzebue District is divided into three subdistricts. Subdistrict 2, near the mouth of the Noatak River is closed to commercial fishing by regulation. Most fishing occurs in Subdistrict 1, which is subdivided into six statistical areas to help managers determine catch location.

Within the Kotzebue District, chum salmon *Oncorhynchus keta* are the most abundant anadromous fish. Other salmon species (*Chinook O. tshawytscha*,

pink *O. gorbuscha*, coho *O. kisutch*, and sockeye salmon *O. nerka*) occur in lesser numbers, as do Dolly Varden *Salvelinus malma*, and sheefish (*Inconnu*) *Stenodus leucichthys*.

Historical Fishing Effort

Subsistence Fishery

Subsistence fishing has long been an important food gathering activity for people of the Kotzebue Sound drainages. The most recent subsistence survey of salmon harvest is from 2014 that estimated a total of 30,640 chum salmon that were harvested from the Kobuk River, and 6,577 chum salmon that were harvested from the Noatak River and Kotzebue residents reported a harvest of 21,144 chum salmon with the majority harvested in marine waters. Over 90% of the subsistence salmon harvests are chum salmon.

Commercial Fishery

There have been two major buyers in the commercial fishery in recent years. In 2018, there was a record harvest of 695,153 chum salmon caught by 95 permit holders that sold chum salmon for an average price of \$0.40 per pound. The 2019 harvest was 494,593 chum salmon caught by 92 permit holders that sold chum salmon for an average price of \$0.39 per pound and in 2020 only 149,808 chum salmon were harvested by 68 permit holders for an average price of \$0.45 per pound. During the 2021 season, 96,492 chum salmon were harvested by 52 permit holders for an average price of \$0.46 per pound.

2022 Run Outlook

The outlook for the 2022 season is based on the parent-year escapements and returning age classes observed in the commercial fishery. The 5-year-old component of the run is expected to be well below average based on the 4-year-old return in 2021. The 4-year-old component of the run is expected to be below average based on the 3-year-old return last year. The 3-year-old and 6-year-old age classes are much smaller components of the run and are expected to be below average. The commercial harvest is expected to fall within the range of 100,000 to 200,000 chum salmon. Two major buyers are expected in July and a lower volume, value-added buyer has expressed interest in buying fish.

Management Strategies

The fishery is scheduled to open on July 10 with two buyers expected on the Kotzebue north shore. The fishery closes on August 31 unless extended by emergency order because of a strong unexpected late run.

Primary commercial fishery management objectives are to provide adequate chum salmon passage through the commercial fishery: (1) to ensure sustained runs by allowing adequate escapement, and (2) to meet subsistence harvest uses. Fishery management will be dependent on comparing period and cumulative season catch rates to prior years and test fishing results on the Kobuk River.

Age composition of commercial salmon catches will be monitored to determine the strength of age classes in the run. If there is a low abundance of older salmon, which tend to migrate into freshwater first, catch rates will likely be weak early in the season. A stronger than expected 4-year-old return may cause midseason catches to rise. During the first week of the fishery, there are expected to be daily 8-hour fishing periods, except Saturday. Because of the poor expected return of fish, the department may limit fishing time in the following weeks depending on commercial catches, upriver subsistence catch reports, and test fish catches at the Kobuk River test fish project. If commercial catches indicate adequate run strength and test fish catches are sufficient, the department will allow commercial fishing to continue based on market conditions and escapement indicators. Likewise, in August as the Noatak River chum salmon run passes through the district, the department will consider fishing restrictions if commercial catches indicate a weak run.

Like last year, if poor run strength necessitates fishing restrictions, the department will establish periodic closures of the fishery and fishing time may be reduced to every other day or less. If concern arises about salmon runs, the department will notify the fishermen and the buyers about the need to reduce commercial fishing time.

Last year during the second week of the fishing season, the department reduced fishing to 5 days a week and then further reduced fishing to 3 days a week for the remainder of the season, except in the late August when the buyers notified the department that they would cease operations before the last week of the season and 5 days a week fishing was allowed for the final week the buyers were present.

No subsistence fishing restrictions are expected in 2022.

<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/pdf/fishregs11/norton.pdf>