



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

Federal Subsistence Board

1101 E Tudor Rd, MS 121
Anchorage Alaska 99503



Forest Service

SUBSISTENCE FISHING

SPECIAL ACTION

Under Authority of 50 CFR Part 100.10 and .19
36 CFR Part 242.10 and .19

Special Action No.: 3-KS-05-15 Issued at: Bethel, Alaska
June 5, 2015

Effective Date: June 5, 2015 6:00 p.m.

Expiration Date: July 20, 2015 5:59 am. Unless superseded by subsequent Special Action

EXPLANATION:

Kuskokwim River Mouth to Aniak

This Emergency Special Action closes all fishing to non-Federally qualified users, and closes Chinook Salmon fishing to all user groups on the Kuskokwim River and its salmon tributaries within and adjacent to the boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). All fishing will be restricted to Federally qualified users only to eliminate potential incidental mortality of Chinook Salmon caused by fishing activities by non-Federally qualified users during a time when Chinook Salmon conservation is necessary. This action follows the conservation strategy discussed with the members of local Tribes, the public, the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) over the previous 10 months.

REGULATION

50 CFR 100.27(e)(4)(ii) is amended to add:

This special action supersedes Special Action 3-KS-03-15

Effective 6:00 a.m., Thursday, June 5, 2015, All fishing is closed to non-Federally qualified users and Chinook Salmon fishing is closed to all user groups on the Kuskokwim River and its salmon tributaries within and adjacent to the boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. The lower Refuge boundary is a line from the west to the east bank of the Kuskokwim River located at the Kuskokwim River mouth. This boundary begins at a point on the west bank of the Kuskokwim River beginning at Latitude 59.999231°, Longitude -162.507352° and ends at a point on the East bank of the Kuskokwim River at Latitude 59.999238°, Longitude -162.187927°. The

upper Refuge boundary is a line from the north to the south bank of the Kuskokwim River immediately up river of Aniak. This boundary line begins at a point on the north bank of the Kuskokwim River at Latitude 61.588463°, Longitude -159.517392 and ends at a point on the south bank of the Kuskokwim River at Latitude 61.574033°, Longitude -159.517396°. Salmon tributaries include the Eek, Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, Tuluksak, and Aniak rivers and their salmon tributaries. In the Kuskokwim River and its salmon tributaries, only Federally qualified users may use set gillnets that are restricted to four-inch or less mesh, not exceeding 60-feet in length, and 45 meshes in depth; this gillnet opportunity is only allowed for 72 hours each week from 6:00 a.m. Thursday through 6:00 a.m. Sunday. Chinook Salmon and other salmon harvested incidentally in these gillnet openings may be retained. There are no gillnet restrictions 100-yards upriver of non-salmon tributaries. In the Kuskokwim River and its salmon tributaries, you may subsistence fish for non-salmon species using all other gear types aside from gillnets as allowed in permanent regulations. Chinook Salmon incidentally harvested with all other legal gear types must be immediately released.

JUSTIFICATION

Biological

Significant subsistence fishery restrictions are deemed necessary to further reduce incidental mortality of Chinook Salmon for 2015 return by restricting the gear type, fishing periods, and participation in the fishery through this and prior Special Actions released by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge in-season Manager. 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, although incidental harvest was historically low, further restrictions are warranted in 2015 to meet Chinook Salmon escapement goals and will be rescinded if information becomes available that indicates a harvestable surplus of Chinook Salmon is available.. 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. Limiting all subsistence fishing activities, which could result in incidental mortality of Chinook Salmon, to Federally qualified users only will further reduce incidental mortality of Chinook Salmon in waters under Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction. The purpose of this management action is based on conservation concerns for the 2015 and future Chinook Salmon returns and for continuance of subsistence uses by Federally qualified users.

FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD

By delegation to:



Neil Lalonde, Refuge Manager
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge