



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bureau of Land Management  
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Forest Service

## 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 5**

Effective 6:00 p.m., Friday, June 5, 2015, Chinook Salmon fishing is closed to all user groups within and adjacent to the boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. All fishing in Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River and its salmon tributaries is closed to non Federally qualified users. This closure will remain in effect until July 20, 2015 for the Kuskokwim River as well as the Eek River and its salmon tributaries. All fishing will be restricted to Federally qualified users only in order 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.

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, subsistence fishing is permitted for non-salmon species using all gear types, except for gillnets, as allowed in permanent regulations. Chinook Salmon incidentally harvested with all other legal gear types must be immediately released.

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 ADF&G 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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