

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 30 – JUNE 5, 2016. Report #2
 Compiled by George Pappas - (907) 786-3822, 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

Klag Bay - The Sitka Tribe of Alaska operates the Sockeye Salmon monitoring weir at Klag Bay which is scheduled to be operational the last week in June. In 2015, approximately 3,304 Sockeye Salmon migrated past the weir while an estimated 1,344 Sockeye Salmon were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fishery. Subsistence harvest accounted for over 99% of terminal area harvest.

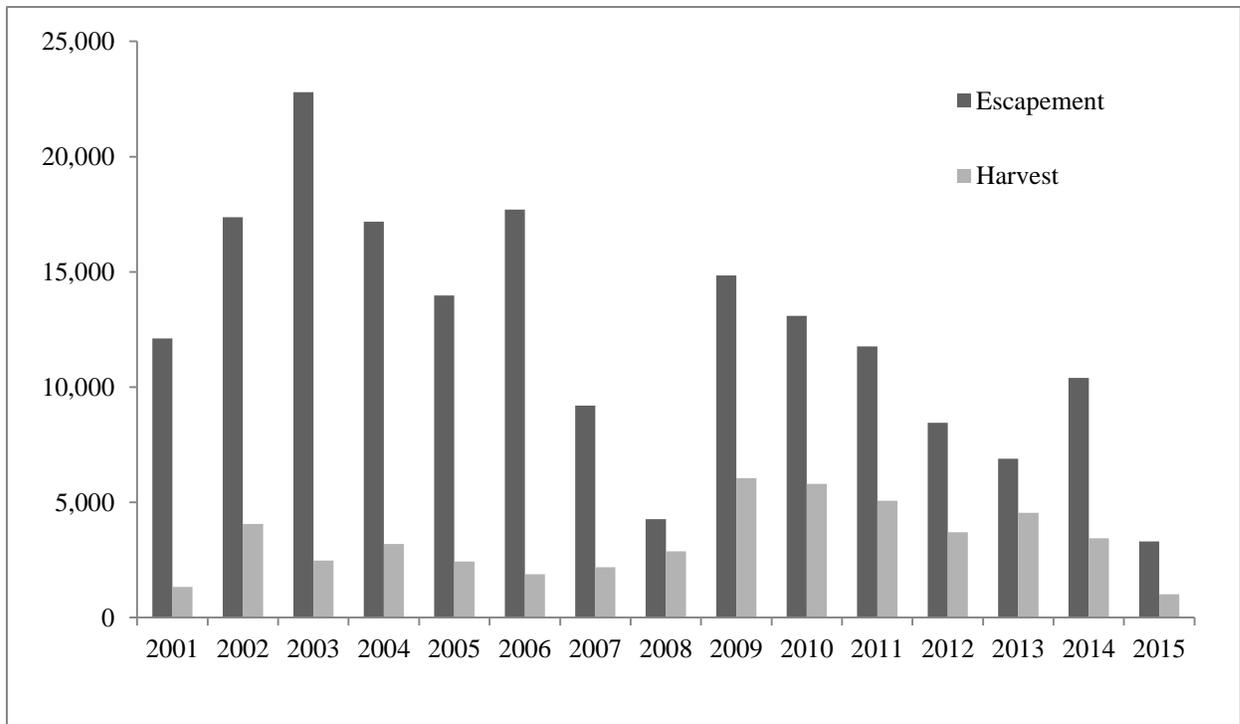


Figure 1. Escapement and harvest of Sockeye Salmon at Klag Bay, 2001-2015 (Sitka Tribe of Alaska).

Redoubt Lake - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir and video-equipped net weir which are scheduled to be operational in mid-June. In 2015, an estimated total of 13,379 Sockeye Salmon passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake. In accordance with the Redoubt Lake Management Plan, the individual/household subsistence Sockeye Salmon possession limit remained 10 and the individual/household subsistence Sockeye Salmon annual limit remained 50 throughout the season. These limits were based on an in-season model prediction of about 11,500 Sockeye Salmon returning. The preliminary subsistence Sockeye Salmon harvest was 402.



Figure 1. Aerial view (2013) of the outlet lagoon of Redoubt Lake showing the typical locations of the picket weir, net weir and block nets.

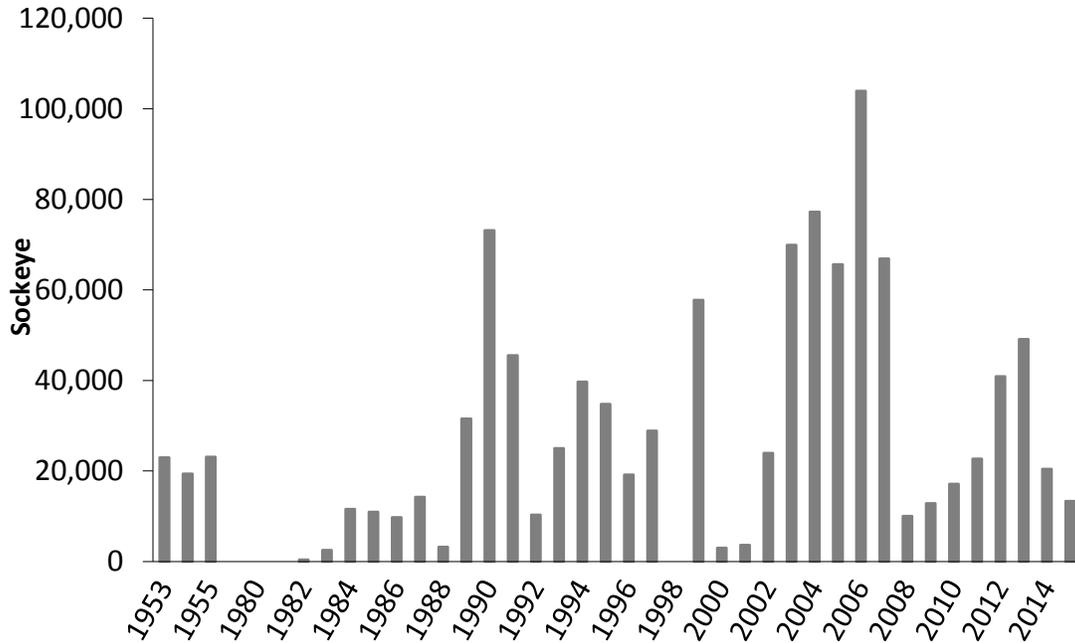


Figure 3. Annual Sockeye Salmon expanded escapement into Redoubt Lake for years with data: 1953 to 1955, 1982 to 1997, and 1999 to 2015. The weir was not operated in 1998.

Falls Lake - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake operate the Falls Lake trap and video net weirs which will be operational the first week of July. The final escapement estimate in 2015 was 4,716 Sockeye Salmon while the final subsistence and sport harvest in the marine terminal area was 1,031. Subsistence harvest accounted for 99% of terminal area harvest.

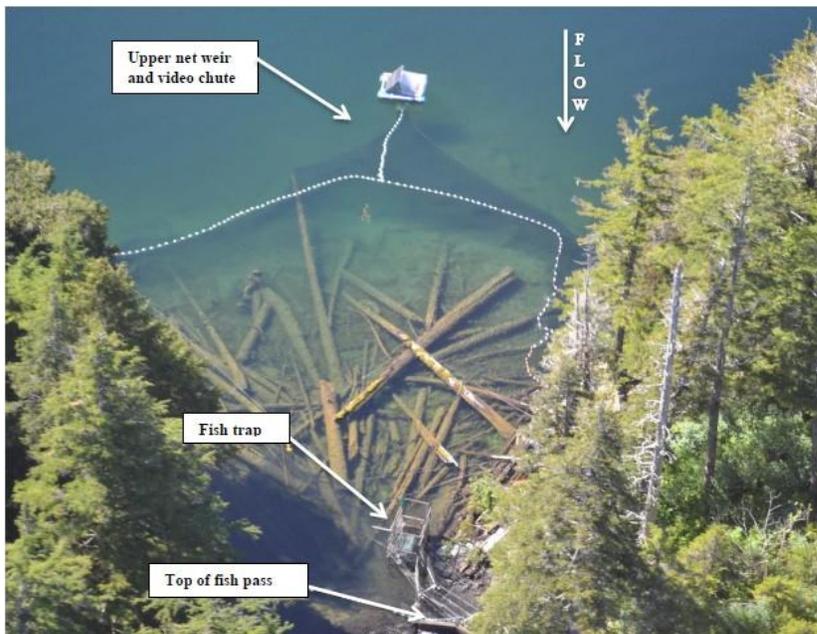


Figure 4. Aerial photo (2013) of the Falls Lake outlet illustrating the typical location of weir equipment.

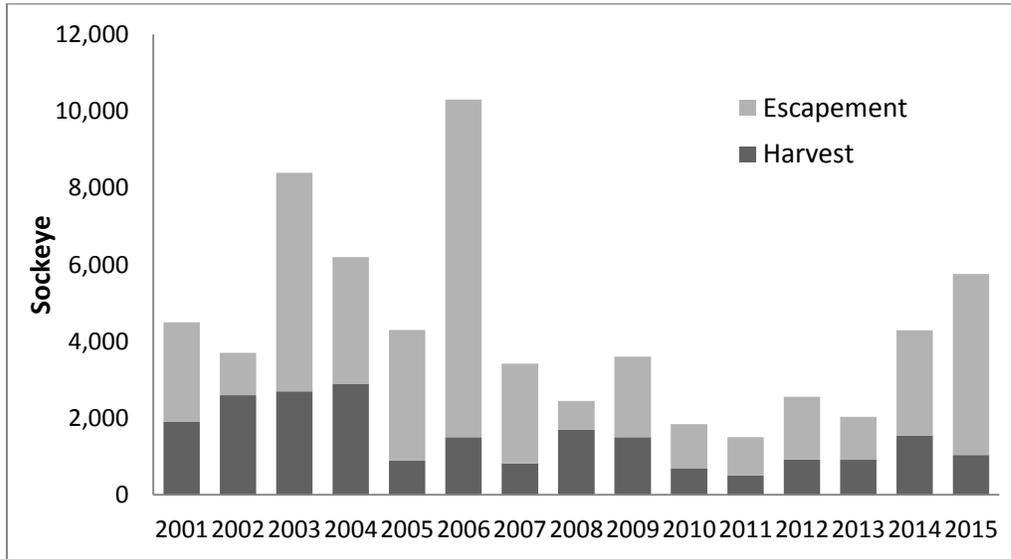


Figure 5. Escapement and harvest (terminal run) of Sockeye Salmon at Falls Lake, 2001-2015.

Wrangell/Petersburg Area

Wrangell/Petersburg Area for week ending June 4

There have been 28 fishing permits issued for the Stikine River subsistence salmon fishery. Although there has been some fishing effort, catch rates are low and the total harvest estimate for this season remains at zero. Anticipated effort is low as fishers await news of higher abundances prior to fishing. In District 8 (the Stikine River terminal fishing area) the directed commercial gillnet fishery remained closed and the number of rods allowed in the sport fishery was reduced from two to one because of low catch rates.

Yakutat, Juneau, and Admiralty areas of Northern Southeast Alaska

The Sockeye Salmon runs and subsistence fisheries have not started yet in the Admiralty and Juneau areas. Project personnel are preparing for the Sockeye Salmon monitoring projects at Kook Lake, Neva Lake, and Sitkoh Lake which are scheduled to begin in late-June. We will use pairs of swim-through video weirs to get validated counts of salmon escapements at all three locations. We are setting up a wireless bridge to remotely monitor the Neva weir while a roadway bridge that project personnel usually take to access the weir site is being inspected, repaired, or replaced. Project personnel will access the lake by hiking a trail until the bridge work is done. Pre-season safety training is planned for Angoon Community Association employees the week of June 13. Hoonah Indian Association employees participated in Hoonah Ranger District safety training the week of May 16.

In the Yakutat area, over 4,000 steelhead kelts have been counted through the Situk weir. Sockeye Salmon runs usually begin in earnest in the Yakutat area in mid-June. ADF&G forecasts a run of only 684 Chinook Salmon to the Situk River this season. In order to meet ADF&G's escapement goal range of 450 to 1,050 large Chinook Salmon ADF&G will not allow retention of Chinook Salmon in their sport and commercial set gillnet fisheries and the Forest Service will not issue permits for the subsistence take of Chinook Salmon in the river unless escapements through the weir are well within the goal. This is the seventh season that we have taken management actions to protect Chinook Salmon returning to the Situk River. There is a broad overlap in timing of these two species through the fisheries and into the river.

ADG&G has forecasted a "strong" (13-55 million) return of wild pink salmon to all of southeast Alaska this season but point out that the average harvest in northern inside waters the past five even-years has been three million with only one million in the two most recent even years. Returns of hatchery Chum Salmon are expected to be moderate in most areas. The Southeast Alaska purse seine fishery will begin on Sunday June 19 at Point Augusta, Tenakee Inlet, and Hidden Falls Hatchery area with a 15-hour opening targeting Chum and Pink Salmon. There will likely be some purse seine fishing in the Amalga Harbor special (hatchery) harvest area this season where hatchery Chum Salmon are targeted but harvests of other stocks and species are substantial.

Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area

The 2016 subsistence salmon fishery for Southeast Alaska and Yakutat areas is just beginning. To date, 104 permits have been issued.

The 2016 Prince of Wales/Kosciusko spring subsistence steelhead fishery ended on May 31st. A total of 63 permits were issued to Prince of Wales Island residents during this fishery. Permits from this fishery are being returned and are not due back until June 15. The total reported harvest to date is 10 Steelhead Trout and 5 Dolly Varden.

With a very high abundance of Chinook Salmon in local marine waters, as well as liberal sport limit, most subsistence users are still actively fishing under sport fishing regulations at this time. Although a couple of Prince of Wales Island streams have June returns of sockeye, most subsistence users are in preparation for subsistence harvest in July.

The Hydaburg Cooperative Association has begun installation of aluminum bipod weirs at both Hetta Lake and Eek Lake outlets. These weirs should have crews on site and be actively fishing by June 6. The Klawock Lake project will not begin until July 1.

Commercial seine and drift gillnet fishing in Districts 1-4 will be starting soon. Limited spring season commercial troll opportunity for Chinook is occurring to target Alaska hatchery origin salmon, however, several areas have been closed until further notice due to low Alaska hatchery contribution in the catch. The non-Alaska hatchery (treaty) harvest is approaching the limit in those areas. The department plans to re-open these

fisheries when the harvest of Alaska hatchery Chinook Salmon in the nearby spring troll areas indicates that the abundance of Alaska hatchery Chinook Salmon has increased. Commercial harvest to date is 4,596 Chinook Salmon from these terminal areas in Districts 1-4.

Sitka and Hoonah Area – Justin Koller, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
Justin Koller, (907)747-4297 jpkoller@fs.fed.us

Wrangell/Petersburg Area – Bob Larson, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
(907) 772-5930, robertlarson@fs.fed.us

Yakutat, Juneau, and Admiralty areas of Northern Southeast Alaska - Ben Van Alen
(907-789-6257; bvanalen@fs.fed.us) and Jake Musslewhite (907-789-6256;
jgmusslewhite@fs.fed.us), Forest Service, **Tongass National Forest**

Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area – Jeff Reeves, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest. (907) 826-1649 jreeves@fs.fed.us

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.R1>

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 – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve
[822-7280](tel:822-7280) Dave_Sarafin@NPS.gov

As of June 2, 2016 the ADF&G sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) estimated that 206,285 salmon had migrated

upstream for the season. This estimate is 111% of the projected escapement of 185,656 for this date, or 20,629 more salmon. An estimate of 9,358 salmon migrated by the sonar counter on June 2.

MILES LAKE SONAR ESTIMATES (TOTAL SALMON)

Year	Estimate	Year	Estimate	Year	Estimate	Year	Estimate
1978	107,011	1988	488,398	1998	866,957	2008	614,999
1979	237,173	1989	607,797	1999	848,921	2009	709,330
1980	276,538	1990	581,895	2000	587,592	2010	924,010
1981	535,263	1991	579,435	2001	833,569	2011	914,285
1982	467,306	1992	601,952	2002	819,000	2012	1,271,354
1983	545,724	1993	797,902	2003	695,233	2013	1,267,060
1984	536,806	1994	715,181	2004	669,646	2014	1,177,005
1985	436,313	1995	599,265	2005	854,268	2015	1,341,545
1986	509,275	1996	906,867	2006	959,731		
1987	483,478	1997	1,148,079	2007	926,438		

The Chitina Subdistrict is scheduled to open on June 7 and remain open for 144 hours. It is then scheduled to reopen immediately on June 13 and remain open the entire week. The state and federal fisheries usually follow identical fishing schedules which are set by the state. Fifty-one (51) Federal Chitina Subdistrict permits have been issued on the FWS online data base. Additional permits for this subdistrict have been issued in Chitina and Kennecott, NPS ranger stations that do not have internet connectivity.

The Glennallen Subdistrict opened for Federal subsistence users on May 15th and is expected to remain open until September 30th. One hundred thirty seven (137) Federal Glennallen permits have been issued on the FWS online data base. Additional permits for this subdistrict have been issued in Chitina and Kennecott, NPS ranger stations that do not have internet connectivity. The state subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict is scheduled to open on June 1.

The Batzulnetas fishery is open. No permits have been issued so far.

The Tanada Creek fish weir was installed this week on June 1. The water level in the creek is extremely low for this time of year; no salmon have yet been observed at the site.

As of June 2, 1,392 Chinook Salmon had been tagged at the two project fishwheels in Baird Canyon operated by the Native Village of Eyak and 59 had been recaptured at the Canyon Creek wheels.

ADF&G’s counting tower in the Gulkana River began operation on May 27; no Chinook Salmon have been counted as of June 2.

One Special Actions have been issued by the park this season:

- delaying the starting date of the Chitina River federal subsistence salmon fishery and setting the tentative pre-season schedule for this fishery.

Links

ADF&G 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>

ADF&G Copper River Inseason Commercial Harvest Estimates

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

Gulkana River counting tower – ADF&G

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/index.cfm?ADFG=main.LocSelectYearSpecies>

PWS and Copper River Delta – Milo Burcham, Chugach National Forest, Cordova.
(907) 424-4759 mburcham@fs.fed.us

A total of 23 Federal Subsistence fishing permits have been issued for freshwaters within the Prince William Sound of Chugach National Forest to date. One-hundred and two permits were issued in 2015. Harvest by this year's permit holders will not be known until reports are returned this winter. In 2015, 878 Coho and 172 Sockeye Salmon were reported harvested on Copper River Delta fresh waters in this fishery.

Cook Inlet Area – Jeff Anderson, Field Supervisor, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office (907) 260-0132 Jeffry_Anderson@fws.gov

The 2016 subsistence dip net fisheries for salmon will begin on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers June 15 and June 16, respectively. Seasons and areas 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 opens on June 11.

USFWS and USFS staff issued over 50 permits in Cooper Landing and Hope on May 25 and 26. Totals of 61 Kenai River permits, 6 Kasilof River permits, and 4 Designated Fisher permits have been issued through June 3.

The preseason outlook for Kenai River Chinook Salmon is well below average and above average for Sockeye Salmon. Based on a preseason forecast that is well below average, and near the lower bound of the 5,300 minimum escapement goal for early-run Kenai River Chinook Salmon, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Department) issued an emergency order to close the sport fishery through June 30 and to close the sport fishery

upstream of Slikok Creek through July 31. A Federal Special Action may be issued to prevent harvest of Kenai River Chinook Salmon prior to the June 15 season opener if warranted.

Chinook Salmon are starting to enter the Kenai River. A total of 1,834 Chinook Salmon have been counted at the Department's sonar assessment site at river mile 14 from May 16 through May 30. Early-run Sockeye Salmon are also entering the lower Kenai River and the weir on the Russian River is typically operational by June 10 to monitor the return of early-run Sockeye Salmon.

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

Kodiak Island Area – Anne Marie LaRosa, Refuge Manager, - Kodiak NWR
(907) 487-2600/0230 AnneMarie.LaRosa@fws.gov or
Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230 Kevin.VanHatten@fws.gov

Sockeye Salmon returns to the Buskin River near Kodiak City are steady, with a big pulse of fish moving into the system due to multiple days of rain. As of June 3, 2016, 2,236 Sockeye Salmon have been enumerated through the weir. This escapement is above the 10 year average and biological escapement goals are likely to be reached. Subsistence fishing efforts near the mouth of this river have been intensive, but with mixed results and reports of low catch per unit effort has occurred this week.

Local residents from Kodiak, Ouzinkie, and Port Lions have been accessing the Sockeye Salmon returns to Afognak Lake over the past couple of weeks, with reports of high catch per unit effort. As of June 3, 2016 15,007 Sockeye Salmon have been enumerated through the weir. Due to the strong Sockeye Salmon returns the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service posted special actions to reduce the closed areas within Afognak Bay. The special action took effect at noon on June 3, 2016 and remains in effect till midnight on July 5, 2016.

The Sockeye Salmon returns to other monitored systems are very strong with 48,613 Sockeye Salmon being enumerated at Karluk River weir, 13,376 Sockeye Salmon enumerated at Ayakulik River weir, and 7,782 Sockeye Salmon at Upper Station (Olga Lakes). Village residents in other areas of the island have had success harvesting salmon for subsistence purposes.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kodiak Area
<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/pdf/fishregs13/kodiak.pdf>

Bristol Bay and Chignik – Johnathon Gerken Fisheries Branch Chief Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office

(907) 271-2776 Jonathon_Gerken@fws.gov

These areas support abundant returns of salmon, particularly sockeye; as well as some of the largest commercial fisheries for salmon in Alaska. All of the assessments of salmon returns are conducted by the State of Alaska, and provide the basis for any inseason assessment. None of the adjustments in commercial fishing management throughout any of these areas are anticipated to affect subsistence fishing in Federally-managed waters, and these subsistence fisheries commence later in June and July.

Bristol Bay:

There are a number of regulation changes that were adopted or modified at the December 2015 and March 2016 BOF meetings that can be found here:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dfnewsrelease/650190311.pdf>

Preseason forecasts for sockeye salmon run returns to Bristol Bay, Chignik, and the Alaska Peninsula predict that there will be harvestable surpluses in all districts, and that escapement goals will be achieved in all systems.

For Bristol Bay, the forecast is for 46.6 million Sockeye Salmon, which is lower than the preseason forecast of 54 million for 2015. Most of the sustainable escapement goals (SEG) for Bristol Bay systems were recently revised to increase the upper ranges:

System	SEG
Ugashik	500,000 – 1,400,000
Egegik	800,000 – 2,000,000
Naknek	800,000 – 2,000,000
Wood River	800,000 – 1,800,000
Nushagak	370,000 – 900,000
Igushik	150,000 – 400,000

Harvestable surpluses are projected for all systems. ADFG Commercial Fisheries Division has strategies in place for all mixed stock districts to address differential run strength should that occur. The salmon commercial fishing season opens by regulation June 1 and weekly fishing schedules are in place until mid-June.

Chinook Salmon returns have been poor to moderate in recent years throughout most of Alaska, including Bristol Bay. Commercial fishing for Nushagak Chinook Salmon is managed for an inriver return of 95,000. Some conservation measures are in place to conserve Chinook Salmon, including maximum mesh size restriction to 5 ½ inches through mid to late July in Naknek/Kvichak, Ugashik, and Togiak districts. The Chinook Salmon return to Togiak is anticipated to be poor and reduced fishing time from scheduled periods is anticipated.

Gillnets are the primary gear used for most subsistence fishing for salmon. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Chignik:

The 2016 total Sockeye Salmon *Oncorhynchus nerka* forecasted run for the Chignik River watershed is approximately 2,910,000 fish. Approximately 2,190,000 Sockeye Salmon are expected to be harvested in Chignik Management Area. In June, the first commercial fishing period in the Chignik Bay, Central, and Eastern districts and the Inner Castle Cape Subsection of the Western District may occur after approximately 20,000 Sockeye Salmon have escaped or are expected to escape into the Chignik River. Two fishing periods of up to 48 hours in length, separated by at least 48 hours, may occur in the Western District concurrent with the Chignik Bay and Central districts during June and early July. All subsequent Western District fishing periods and the first commercial fishing period in the Perryville District may occur on July 6. Fishing periods in the outer portions of these districts will depend on the Chignik River Sockeye Salmon interim escapement objectives being met as well as the strength of the local pink and chum salmon runs. Beginning July 6 through August, inner bay fisheries may occur in the Western and Perryville districts to target Pink and Chum Salmon. From the end of the transition period (approximately late-June through mid-July) until the end of the fishing season, ADF&G shall manage CMA based on its evaluation of the local pink *O. gorbuscha*, chum *O. keta*, and coho *O. kisutch* salmon runs, as well as the Chignik watershed late-run Sockeye Salmon escapement. Current counts through the Chignik weir are 8,552 sockeye salmon as of 5-30-16.

Alaska Peninsula:

There are numerous salmon stocks and fisheries throughout the Alaska Peninsula, as well as the Aleutian Islands. Several Sockeye Salmon escapements (mostly on the north peninsula) are monitored with weirs including Nelson, Bear, Sandy, Ilnik, McLees, and Orzinski rivers. Preseason forecasts are made for only the Nelson (692 thousand) and late-run Bear (424 thousand) River Sockeye Salmon stocks. The largest fisheries are managed under management plans. Management objectives vary by district and time; and include: local Sockeye Salmon escapements; more distant Sockeye Salmon returns to Bristol Bay or Chignik; and local Pink, Chum, or Coho Salmon returns.

A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Bristol Bay Area

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

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Chignik Area

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

Southcentral Alaska Web Links

Federal Subsistence Management Fisheries News Releases

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

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

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingSportFishingInfo.R2>

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 Southcentral Alaska

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R2.Home>

Statewide ADF&G Fish counts:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/>

Yukon River – Gerald Maschmann, Fish Biologist USFWS Fairbanks Office.

Gerald_Maschmann@fws.gov or

Fred Bue Fredrick_Bue@fws.gov

Emmonak Summer Office (907) 949-1798

Emmonak Summer Office (907) 949-1798

The Emmonak Field Office is open for summer management activities. The office can be contacted by calling (907) 949-1798.

Summer Season Outlook and Management Strategies

The Summer Chum Salmon run is projected to be average to above average and to provide for escapement and subsistence uses. A surplus of 450,000 to 950,000 Summer Chum Salmon is anticipated to be available for commercial harvest, however the commercial harvest opportunity will depend upon available markets and the strength of the overlapping Chinook Salmon run. The Chinook Salmon outlook is projecting a below average run. The run size is projected to be between 130,000 to 175,000 Chinook Salmon with managers anticipating the run near the low end based upon recent productivity; however the 2015 run came in unexpectedly near the upper end this projection, possibly indicating an improvement in productivity. Subsistence conservation measures will be required to spread out the available subsistence harvest and meet escapement goals. No directed Chinook Salmon commercial fishery is anticipated. Public meetings were held throughout the winter and spring to inform fishers of the outlook. The following management strategies were formulated after extensive public input:

- Before Chinook Salmon enter the river, subsistence fishing opportunity for non-Salmon species will be provided with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets.
- As the Chinook Salmon run begins to build, subsistence salmon fishing will close chronologically in each district based on the migration timing of Chinook Salmon to protect the first pulse of Chinook Salmon as mandated by regulation.

Additional closures may be necessary if run assessment indicates a weaker than expected run.

- Similar to 2015, Subdistrict 5-D will be open to fish on the early trickle of Chinook Salmon with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets prior to the first pulse closure.
- During subsistence salmon fishing closures, non-salmon species may be harvested using 4-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets not exceeding 60-feet in length.
- When Summer Chum Salmon become abundant, subsistence and commercial fishing opportunities will initially be provided with selective gear such as dip nets, beach seines, and manned fish wheels that require the immediate and careful release of all Chinook Salmon alive.
- When confidence is high that the Chinook Salmon run is adequate and escapement goals are likely to be met, the use of 6-inch gillnets, and possibly 7.5-inch gillnets, on a reduced regulatory schedule may be considered.
- Fishermen are reminded that whenever gillnets are allowed, they may choose to use *smaller* mesh gillnets than specified.
- The sport fishery for Chinook Salmon is closed throughout the U.S. portion of the Yukon River drainage, excluding the Tanana River drainage. Chinook Salmon may not be retained or possessed. Restrictions for the Tanana River drainage will be announced in early June.
- The Fall Chum Salmon run is anticipated to be of sufficient size to provide for full subsistence harvest opportunity with a potential surplus for commercial harvest.

Assessment Information

Ice out on the lower Yukon River occurred on May 3, approximately twenty days earlier than the historical average, and the earliest on record. Additionally, Bering Sea ice retreated off the coast early, leaving the Yukon River mouth ice free. With ice out earlier than average and climate modeling provided by NOAA, ADF&G, and AOOS, managers are anticipating earlier entry timing for Chinook Salmon and Summer Chum Salmon. Subsistence fishermen in the lower Yukon have been reporting catches since ice out. The first subsistence caught Chinook Salmon was reported on May 23. Preliminary lower Yukon test fishing began on May 17 at the Big Eddy. The first Chinook Salmon caught in the test fishery was May 23. Test fishing at Middle Mouth started on June 2. Chinook Salmon and Summer Chum Salmon catches for both subsistence fishermen and the test fishery have been sporadic, however, Chinook Salmon began trickling in on May 29, and Summer Chum Salmon began trickling in on May 31. Managers anticipate test fishery catches to increase in the coming days. The Pilot Station sonar began full operations on June 1. Efforts are being made to release Chinook Salmon alive that are caught in the test fishery in order to conserve Chinook Salmon. At this time it is too early to assess the overall strength of either the Chinook Salmon or the Chum Salmon runs. The average first quarter point in the LYTF for Chinook Salmon is June 15, and June 19 for Summer Chum Salmon.

Management Actions

Until assessment data become available, management decisions will be consistent with the preseason projections. At this time, subsistence salmon fishing in the southern portion of the Coastal District is open 24 hours per day seven days per week restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. The northern portion of the Coastal District is closed to subsistence fishing until further notice. Subsistence salmon fishing in Districts 1, 2, and 3 is open 24 hours per day, seven days per week restricted to the use of dipnets and beach seines only. Lower Subdistrict 4-A and Upper Subdistrict 4-A will close to subsistence salmon fishing on June 6 and June 10 respectively, and reopen to dipnets and live-release fish wheels 24 hours later. All Chinook Salmon caught in dipnets, beach seines, and live-release fish wheels must be immediately released alive back into the water. During subsistence salmon fishing closures, gillnets that have mesh size 4-inches or smaller not exceeding 60 feet in length may be used to target non-Salmon species. The sequential activation of subsistence fishing restrictions will continue in all districts moving upstream.

Consultation

Extensive public outreach and consultation was performed during the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016 to inform and seek input from Yukon River fishermen and stakeholders. Run outlook and possible management strategies were discussed at Federal RAC meetings and State AC meetings, the Yukon River Panel meeting and at the annual Yukon River Drainage Fishermen's Association Board meeting. In April, a pre-season planning meeting was held in Anchorage that brought together representatives from most Alaskan Yukon River communities to discuss the run outlook and management options.

Kuskokwim River – Ray Born, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Contact Vernon_Born@fws.gov; (907) 543-3151 or Lewis_Coggins@fws.gov

Summary:

The Federal In-season Manager has closed Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River to Federally qualified subsistence users effective immediately. This closure will be in place until run assessment suggests a harvest opportunity for Chinook and chum salmon can be provided to Federally qualified subsistence users on the Federal public waters.

On June 1, the Federal Subsistence Board closed Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River drainage to the harvest of Chinook and chum salmon except by Federally qualified subsistence users identified in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Section 804 Subsistence User Prioritization analysis. Federally qualified subsistence users will include residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefornek, Kipnuk, Kwigillignok, and Kongiganek.

For species other than Chinook and Chum salmon, subsistence fishing with gillnets is closed in the Kuskokwim River and select tributaries under State regulations, following State Emergency Order 3-S-WR-01-16.

This restriction has been implemented by Federal Emergency Special Action (3-KS-01a-16) under the delegated authority of the Federal Subsistence Board.

Access up-to-date information on fishing opportunities by visiting the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Yukon-Delta-National-Wildlife-Refuge-1039425076133926/>).

Test Fisheries:

As of June 6, the cumulative catch per unit of effort (CPUE) of Chinook salmon at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Bethel Test Fishery is 53. Cumulative CPUE on this date during 2015 and 2014 were 23 and 68 respectively. Cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE at the Aniak Test Fishery is 251 as compared to 64 in 2015. Note that comparisons between the Bethel and Aniak test fisheries are not informative since they are on different scales.

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/>

Northwest Alaska – Ken Adkisson, National Park Service, Nome.
(907) 443-2522 Ken_Adkisson@nps.gov

Norton Sound Area

Chinook Salmon are expected to again arrive early this season. While the Chinook Salmon runs are expected to show improvement from the record low levels observed as recently as 2013, the runs are still forecast to be below average. Based on the forecast, the ADF&G will be implementing restrictions to subsistence fishing beginning June 6 in order to achieve escapement needs. However, the Chinook Salmon runs are expected to still be able to provide a small harvestable surplus for subsistence users. Specific details regarding the fishing schedules will be provided in the coming weeks.

The ADF&G has also restricted the sport fish bag limit for Chinook Salmon in the Unalakleet River and Shaktoolik River drainages by Emergency Order (EO) effective May 9. The bag and annual limit in the Unalakleet River drainage was reduced from two to one fish. The EO set the annual limit at one Chinook Salmon in all waters of the Shaktoolik River drainage.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for the Kotzebue Area
<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/pdf/fishregs11/norton.pdf>

2016 Outlook:

ADF&G bases its salmon outlooks on qualitative assessments of parent-year escapements, sibling relationships, and subjective determinations of freshwater overwintering and ocean survival. Southeastern Norton Sound Chinook Salmon stocks and northern Norton Sound chum salmon stocks are classified as *stocks of yield concern* under 5 AAC 39.222 *Policy for the management of sustainable salmon fisheries*.

The Chinook Salmon run is expected to be both early this year and weak compared to historical levels. The ADF&G began meetings last week in the communities of Koyuk, Shaktoolik and Unalakleet to discuss the upcoming season and options for possible restrictions for allowing limited Chinook Salmon subsistence harvest opportunities while still ensuring Chinook Salmon escapement needs will be achieved. It has been eleven years since the last directed Chinook Salmon commercial fishing periods have occurred in southern Norton Sound. However, runs of Chinook Salmon showed considerable improvement in 2014 and 2015 over the exceptionally weak runs of from 2010 to 2013. Additionally, juvenile Chinook Salmon abundance and size condition indices from 2013-2014 Northern Bering Sea surveys suggest good ocean survival for at least the 2011-2012 brood years, and the possibility of improved adult Chinook Salmon returns beginning this season.

The run of herring into Norton Sound has come a week earlier this year than last season's very early run. Significant spawning activity was observed at Klikitarik Point during a

May 11 aerial survey. Also ripe and spawned out herring were harvested in subsistence nets earlier in the week near Unalakleet. Consequently ADF&G opened a commercial herring bait fishery to set gillnets on May 13 until further notice. This opening was followed by another opening May 17 to allow a small number of Norton Sound herring permit holders to undertake a commercial spawn on wild kelp fishery only if they had not participated in the sac roe, bait or pound kelp herring fisheries.

Kotzebue Sound Area

2016 Outlook:

The outlook for the Kotzebue District chum salmon run is based on parent year escapement and returning age classes observed in the commercial fishery and in the test fish samples from the Kobuk River in 2015. The 2016 outlook for commercial salmon harvest is 300,000-500,000 Chum Salmon; and no commercial harvest for Chinook, Sockeye, Pink, or Coho salmon.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for the Kotzebue Area

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