

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 2 – SEPTEMBER 8, 2018.

Report #15 - 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 – Justin Koller, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest Justin Koller, (907)747-4297 jpkoller@fs.fed.us

This will be the last Sitka and Hoonah report for the season. If you have any questions please contact Justin Koller with the above contact information.

Falls Lake Sockeye Salmon - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake operate the Falls Lake trap and video net weir which were installed June 29 and removed on August 18. During this time, 592 Sockeye Salmon have been counted at the trap and about 700 have been harvested in the subsistence fishery. Sockeye Salmon escapement through the net weir, which attempts to count all fish entering the lake, is at least 1,200. On average, 96% of the run has entered the lake by August 18. The final escapement estimate in 2017 was 4,662 Sockeye Salmon while the final subsistence and sport harvest in the marine terminal area was 732. Subsistence harvest accounted for 89% of terminal area harvest.

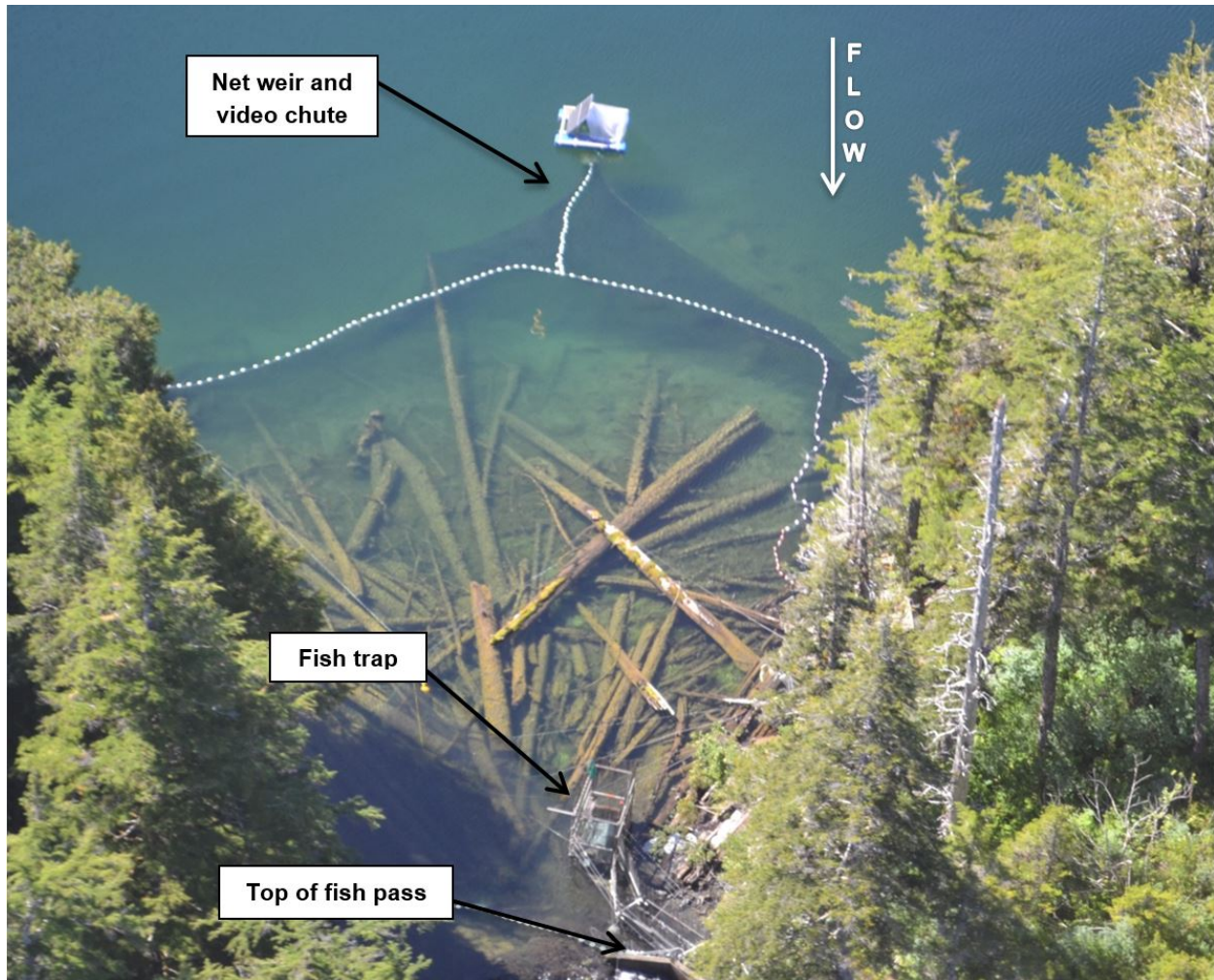


Figure 1. Aerial photo of the Falls Lake outlet illustrating the typical location of weir equipment.

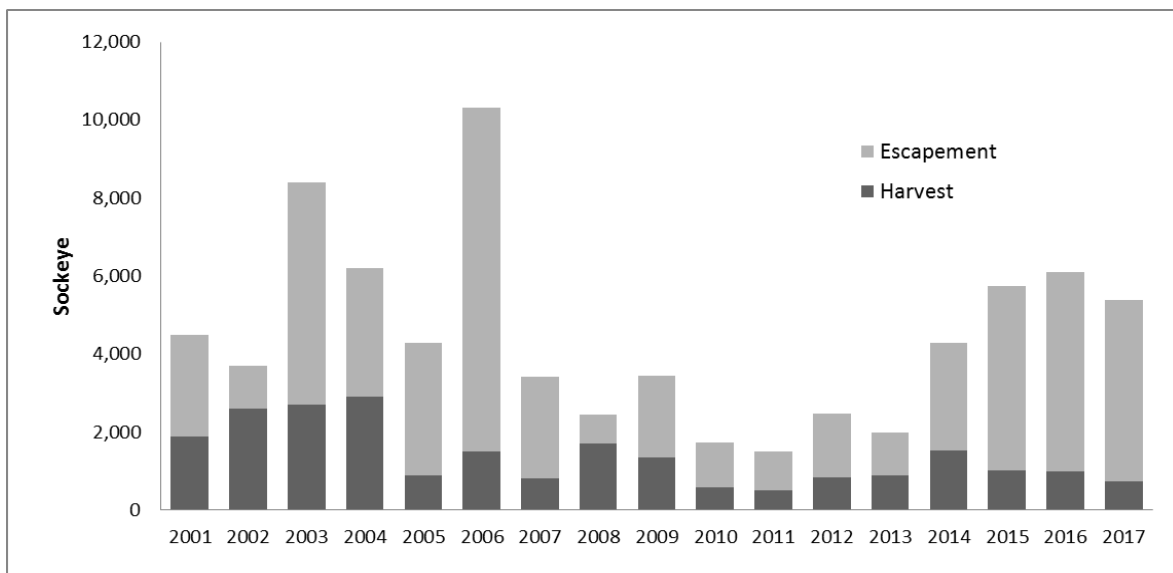


Figure 2. Escapement plus harvest equals total terminal run of Sockeye Salmon at Falls Lake, 2001-2017.

Klag Bay Sockeye Salmon - The Sitka Tribe of Alaska operates the Sockeye Salmon monitoring weir at Klag Bay, which was operating as of June 28 and will be removed this week. As of September 6, 2,442 Sockeye Salmon have been counted at the weir and 881 have been harvested in the subsistence fishery. On average, 93% of the run has entered the lake by September 6. In 2017, approximately 3,898 migrated past the weir while an estimated 1,087 were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fisheries. Subsistence harvest accounted for over 99% of terminal area harvest.

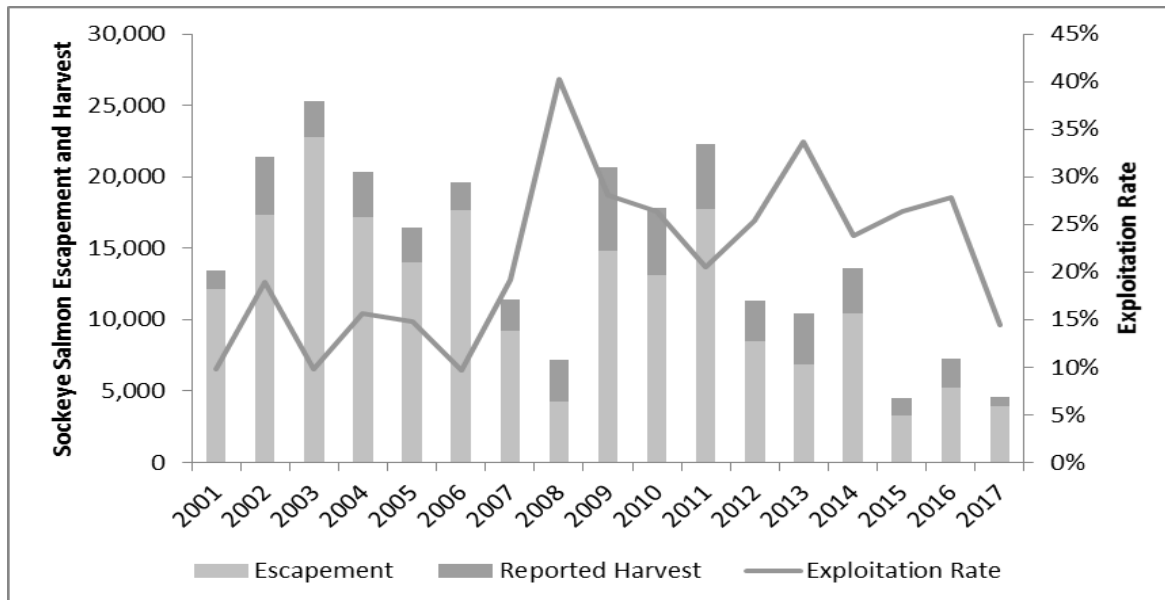


Figure 3. Reported harvest, escapement, and exploitation rate for Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon, 2001-2017.

Redoubt Lake Sockeye Salmon - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which was installed June 16 and removed September 2. The total Sockeye Salmon count for the season was 72,409 which is well above average. On July 11, in accordance with the Redoubt Bay and Lake Sockeye Salmon Management Plan, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game raised the subsistence limit from 10 daily and 50 annual per household to 25 daily and 100 annually per household. These limits were based on an in-season model prediction of about 95,000 returning. The number of Sockeye Salmon harvested is expected to be high given the level of effort observed. Total harvest will not be available until early 2019. In 2017, at least 55,702 Sockeye Salmon passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake (**Figure 4**) and 4,294 were harvested.

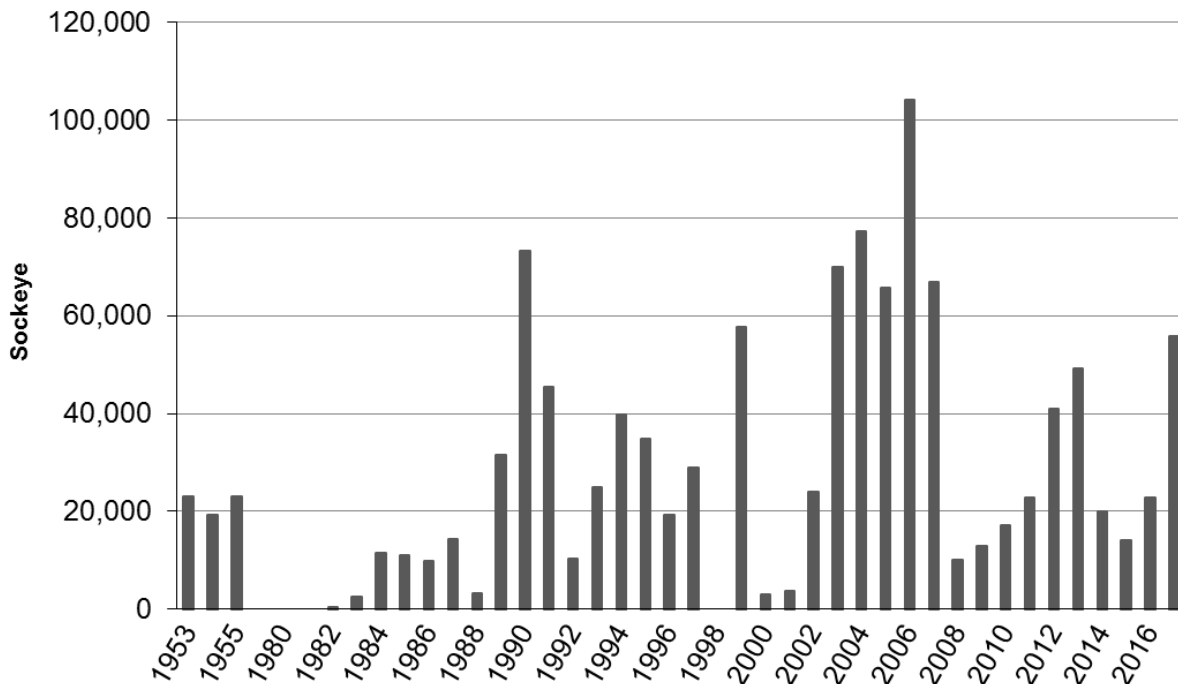


Figure 4. Annual Sockeye Salmon expanded escapement into Redoubt Lake for years with data: 1953 to 1955, 1982 to 1997, and 1999 to 2017. The weir was not operated in 1998.

Sitka Sound Pacific Herring – The commercial, subsistence, and spawning season for Pacific Herring in Sitka Sound occurs about mid-March through mid-April. According to preliminary accounts and data, the commercial and subsistence seasons were not successful in 2018 while the spawning season was marginally successful. The commercial fishery closed on April 3 with only about one third of the guideline harvest level (GHL) harvested. Accounts from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska indicate poor quantity and quality of subsistence harvest, and that their subsistence needs were not met. Other harvesters have said their catch rates were lower than the Tribes. Miles of shoreline receiving herring spawn indicates the spawning season was below average. However, preliminary estimates of spawn extent from shore and deposition are encouraging as related to the post spawn biomass calculation. This estimate will be available this Fall.

[Alaska Department of Fish and Game news release with a synopsis of the commercial season](#)

Sitka Chinook Salmon – The Chinook Salmon season in Sitka was poor for both the commercial and sport fisheries. Fishers from both groups reported below average catch rates. Management measures decreased the bag limits for resident and non-resident sport anglers and curtailed commercial fishery opportunity.

[More information on King Salmon management in Southeast Alaska.](#)

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

September 10, 2018

Yakutat area: Coho salmon returns to the Yakutat area are looking strong, which is a welcome relief after the poor Sockeye season. Most commercial fishing effort is occurring within the Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet area. Surveys have shown that escapement goals are already being attained, allowing for liberal fishing periods through the remainder of the season.

Northern Inside waters: With the end of directed pink salmon openings, the commercial purse seine fishery is limited to a handful of fall Chum Salmon fisheries. Pink Salmon escapements to streams in northern inside waters are below average, and average in the outside areas. Gillnet fisheries in the Taku and Lynn Canal areas are focusing on Coho Salmon, which appear to be returning in decent numbers.

Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon: The Sockeye Salmon return to Neva Lake is tapering off for the season, but the Coho Salmon are starting to show up. As of September 6, over 3,700 Sockeye had been counted through the video weir, along with 270 Coho. The weir will likely be pulled for the season within the next couple of weeks, depending on how long Sockeye keep trickling through.

Sitkoh Lake Sockeye Salmon: The Sockeye Salmon return to Sitkoh Lake has been poor this year, and will likely end up as the smallest return by far since monitoring began in the late 1990s. As of August 29, less than 1,000 Sockeye had been counted through the weir, compared to about 4,000 at the same time last year, and 12,000 in 2016. One of the culprits may have been a beaver dam constructed downstream of the lake, which was partially dismantled by project personnel on August 28. Within a few hours of breaching the beaver dam, over 600 Sockeye passed through the weir, more than double the number that had been seen the entire season. The surge was short-lived however, possibly due to reconstruction of the dam. The project crew will monitor the situation for the remainder of the season.

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

Prince William Sound – Copper River

Copper River, 8/18/2018 Update – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve, (907) 822-7281, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

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 Gulkana River counting tower

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/index.cfm?ADFG=main.displayResults&COUNTLOCATIONID=6&SpeciesID=410>

ADFG Emergency Orders and News Releases

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=area.list&Year=2018&AreaID=33>

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

4 September 2018

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

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

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

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

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Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

Yukon River

Gerald Maschmann and Fred Bue, Fish Biologists, USFWS Fairbanks Office.

Gerald_Maschmann@fws.gov or Fred Bue Fredrick_Bue@fws.gov

The Emmonak Field Office is closed for the season. You can contact management staff at 907-455-1849 or 907-456-0406.

The 2018 Fall Chum Salmon inseason run is projecting a total run size of over 1.2 million fish, above the median and expectations. This level of abundance is typically sufficient to meet escapement and subsistence needs, and provide a surplus for commercial and personal use purposes. The Fall Chum Salmon run is nearly over in the lower Yukon, however fishermen are still looking forward to harvesting Fall Chum Salmon in the upper Yukon. The Coho Salmon run appears to be tracking near the expected average total run size at this time.

Fall Assessment Information

Fall Chum Salmon assessment began on July 16 in the Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) and has a cumulative CPUE through September 7 of 2,948, above the median of 1,508. The Mt. Village Test Fishery (MVTF) has a cumulative CPUE through September 7 of 3,008, above the median of 2,019. The Pilot Station sonar transitioned to fall season assessment on July 19 and has a cumulative passage of 917,439 through September 6, above the median of 706,423. The run appears to be late this year based on the passage past the Pilot Station sonar. The Fall Chum Salmon genetics sampling program at the Pilot Station is showing stock proportions within expectations. The Fall Chum Salmon run is nearing the end in the lower Yukon. The Pilot Station has ceased operations for the season on September 7. The Chandalar River sonar began operations on August 12 and has an estimated passage of 18,561 Fall Chum Salmon through September 6, well below the average of 81,798. The Eagle sonar transitioned over the fall season on August 21 and has a cumulative passage estimate of 2,158 Fall Chum Salmon, well below the average of 16,323. Due to the late run timing in the lower river, low passage at both the Chandalar and Eagle sonar projects was expected and should start to increase this coming week.

Coho Salmon typically overlap the second half of the Fall Chum Salmon run. The Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) which has a cumulative Coho Salmon CPUE through September 7 of 378, below the median of 432. The Mt. Village Test Fishery (MVTF) has a cumulative Coho Salmon CPUE through September 7 of 667, below the median of 1,064. The Pilot Station sonar has a cumulative Coho Salmon passage of 134,065 through September 6, below the median of 160,272.

Fall Season Management Actions

The entire Alaska portion of the Yukon River has now transitioned to fall season management. The Coastal District and Districts 1 through 3 are open to subsistence salmon fishing 24 hours a day, seven days a week except Districts 1 and 2 are typically closed for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after each commercial fishing period. District 4 and Subdistricts 5A, 5B, and 5C have subsistence fishing opportunity increased from 5 to 7 days per week as an effort to compensate fishermen for foregone harvest when conserving Chinook Salmon earlier in the season. Subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 5D is open on its full standard schedule of 24 hours a day, seven days a week and Subdistricts 6A and 6B are on their standard schedules of two 42-hour periods per week. At this time all areas allow 7.5” or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels during salmon fishing periods. Subsistence fishing in the Alaska portion of the mainstem Porcupine River has been restricted to 4 days per week to provide protection for Fishing Branch stocks that have shown lower productivity in recent years.

Eighteen fall season commercial periods have occurred in District 1 and nineteen in District 2 so far this season with a preliminary combined harvest of 366,443 Fall Chum Salmon and 103,469 Coho Salmon. Subdistrict 4-A has had one fall season commercial period with an estimated harvest of 596 Chum Salmon. No additional commercial periods are anticipated for Subdistrict 4-A. Commercial fishing is open 24-hours per day, seven days per week in Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C. 900 Fall Chum Salmon have been harvested through August 20. This is a small scale commercial fishery with an expected harvest of around 2,000 Fall Chum Salmon. Commercial fishing began in District 6 on August 17. Preliminary harvest estimates are 150 Fall Chum Salmon and one Coho Salmon.

Consultation

Extensive public outreach and consultation was performed during the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018 to inform and seek input from Yukon River fishermen and stakeholders. Outreach efforts continued during the season. The thirteenth and final YR DFA weekly teleconference was held on August 28 with very few subsistence fishermen reporting this week. Yukon River fishermen on the Alaskan side of the border are done with summer season subsistence harvests because salmon abundance has tapered off. Fishermen are berry picking while waiting for fall chum salmon to enter their sections of river. Some fishermen were satisfied with their Chinook Salmon harvest and others were short of filling their subsistence needs. Furthermore, the fall season outlook and management strategies were discussed on recent YR DFA teleconferences. Participants communicated the importance of the fall chum salmon run in meeting their subsistence needs due the lack of Chinook salmon in this year’s harvests.

KUSKOKWIM RIVER

In Season Manager – Ken Stahlnecker, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Contact [Kenneth Stahlnecker@fws.gov](mailto:Kenneth_Stahlnecker@fws.gov); (907) 543-3151 or [Lewis Coggins@fws.gov](mailto:Lewis_Coggins@fws.gov) or author Aaron Moses [Aaron Moses@fws.gov](mailto:Aaron_Moses@fws.gov)

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

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

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

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for the Kotzebue Area

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