

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF AUGUST 29-SEPTEMBER 5, 2016.

Report #16

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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**

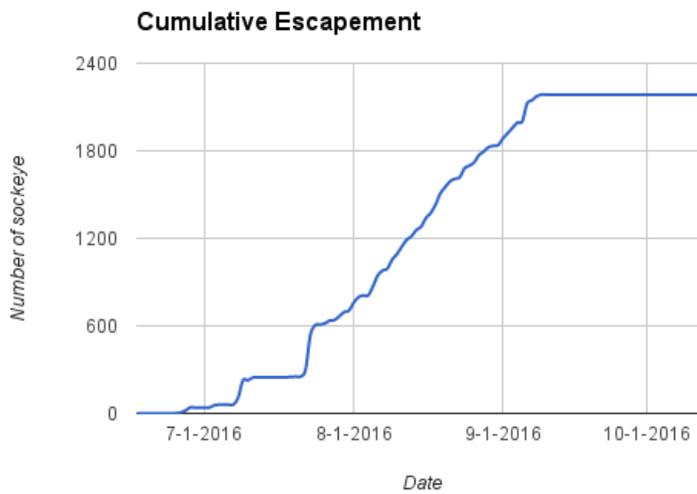
Weekly reporting complete for 2016.

Yakutat, Juneau, and Admiralty areas of Northern Southeast Alaska

Neva Lake. On August 25, the Hoonah Indian Association crew that runs the pair of video weirs at the outlet of Neva Lake had to move out of their cabin when the Ocean Beauty Seafood plant closed for the season. The video recording and review computer was then moved from Excursion Inlet to the HIA office in Hoonah where project personnel have continued to count the number of salmon, trout, and Dolly Varden char that migrate into Neva Lake each hour. As of 0800hr on September 9, the escapement of Sockeye Salmon into Neva Lake was 2,185. Approximately 95% of the Sockeye Salmon are through the weir now based on past weir counts so the total escapement will be about 2,300 this season – the lowest observed. Counts of other species now total 862 Coho Salmon, 18 Pink Salmon, and 3,091 Dolly Varden Char.

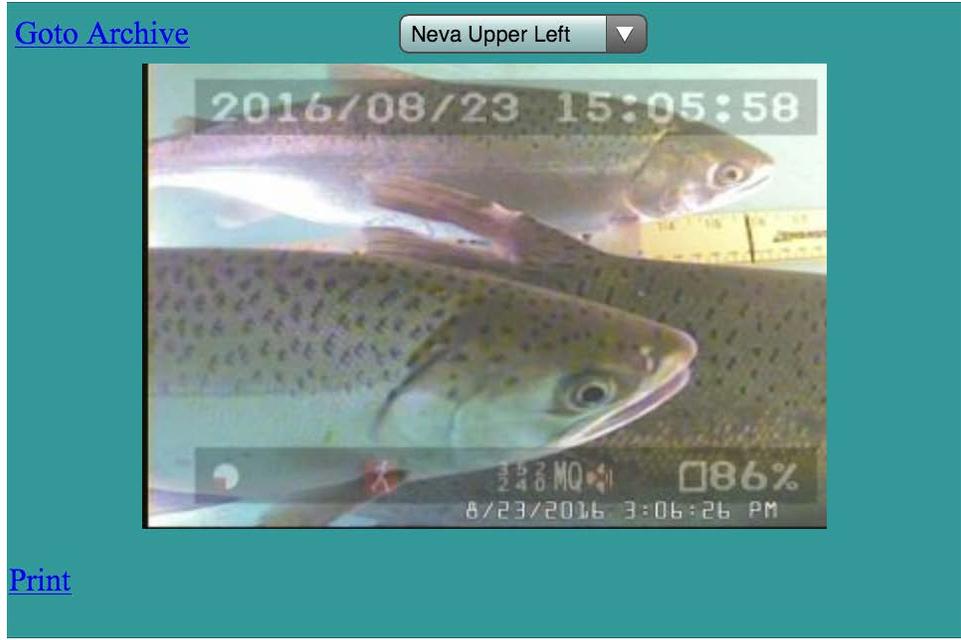


Photograph of crew. (L-R) George Mills, Gerard White, and Michael Williams, Sr. at their cabin in Excursion Inlet with the always-on computer in the background that is used to remotely monitor the Neva Lake video weirs and record and review motion triggered



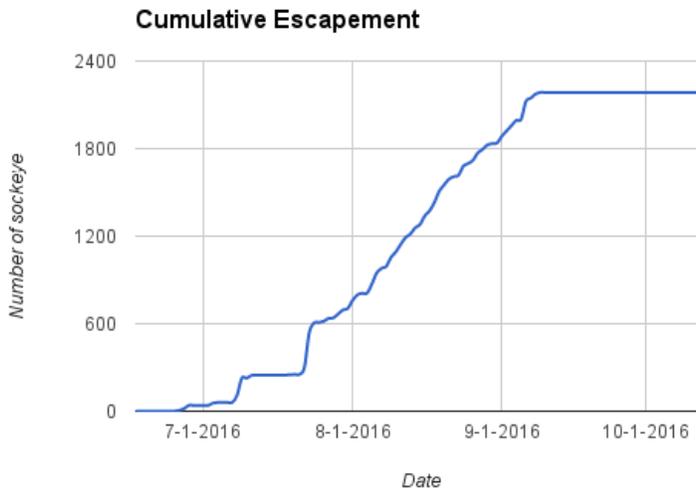
footage from the four video chute cameras and four site surveillance cameras.

| Graph of 2016 daily Sockeye Salmon escapements have been fairly steady since late-July.

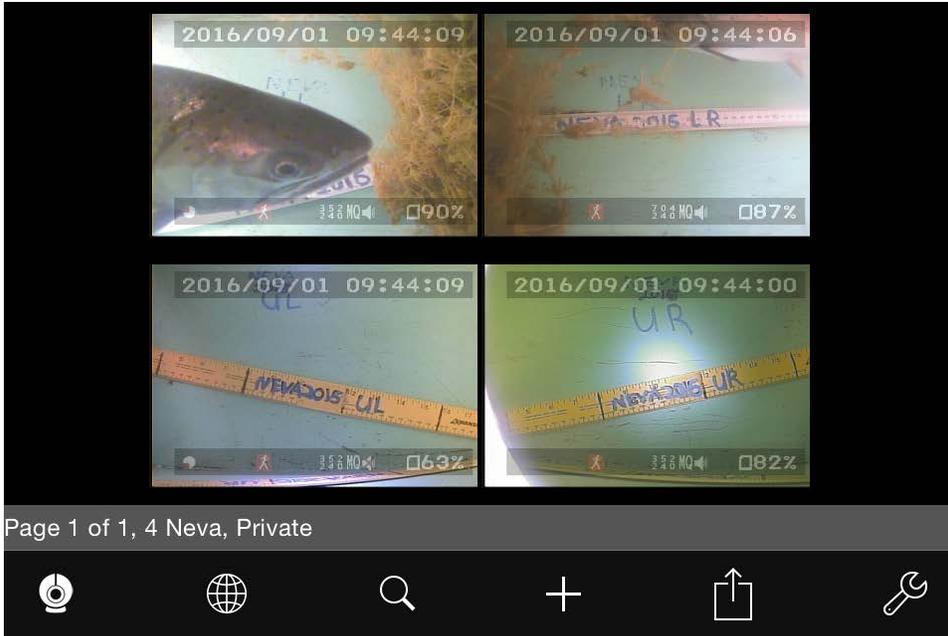


Frame grab images of Coho Salmon tend to pass through the Neva video weirs in schools. Photo from one of the video chute cameras on August 23.

On September 1, project personnel modified the “beaver baffler” on the weir to hopefully keep beavers from putting aquatic vegetation in the chutes. The channel and picket beaver baffler on the face of the weir was enlarged and the lower channel was raised 4” off the bottom so beavers would have a harder time dislodging the pickets. There has been no debris in the chutes since. Note that we also initially used 4”x4”-square



galvanized fencing, with 4”x8” fish passage openings, on the outside of the pickets and used this fencing to make a beaver excluder on the downstream side of the weir. But, this galvanized fencing was removed the next morning after a large Coho Salmon got stuck in one of the 4”x4” holes.



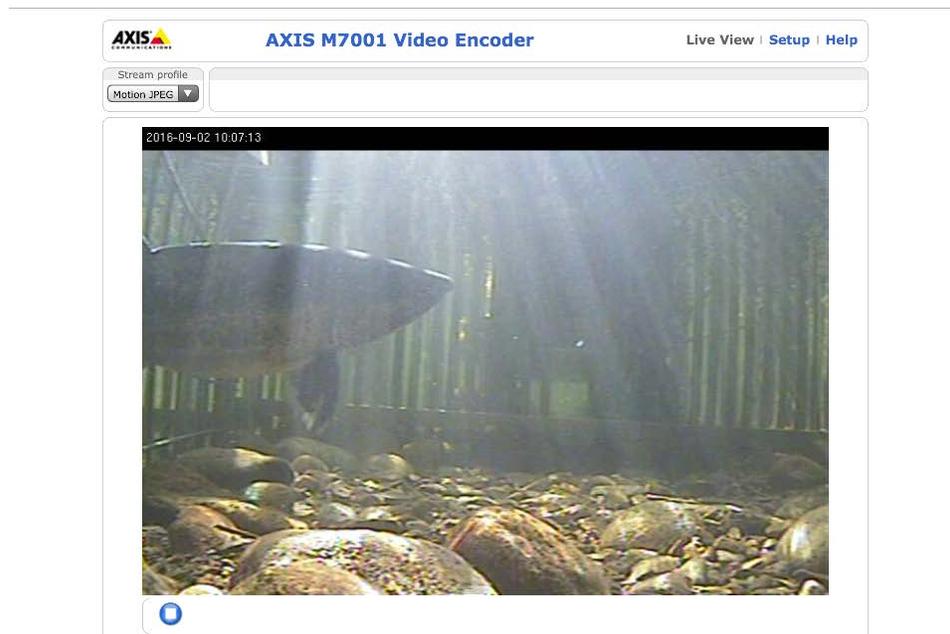
Cell phone surveillance photo showing aquatic vegetation that beavers were occasionally putting in the Neva video chutes. The beaver debris never stopped fish passage but could have if we didn't keep beavers out of the chutes.



Image of the new and enlarged “Beaver Baffler” (fence barrier which keeps beavers out but allows fish passage) on the upstream side of the Neva Lake video weirs, September 1, 2016.



Image of Galvanized 4"x4" grid fencing, with 4"x8" fish passage slots, that was tested for use as a "beaver baffle" on the downstream side of the Neva Lake video weirs. The fencing was installed on September 1 and removed, from both sides of the weir, on September 2 after a large Coho Salmon got stuck trying to pass.



Picture from an underwater surveillance camera of the Coho Salmon stuck and released from the 4"x4" grid of the "Beaver Baffle" below the Neva video weirs on September 2.

This beaver baffler fencing was removed that morning when it was apparent that not all fish would chose to swim through the 4"x8" fish passage slots.

Kook Lake. Angoon Community Association employees have now counted 3,814 Sockeye Salmon through the pair of video net weirs at the outlet of Kook Lake as of September 8. The floating camp and net weirs were undamaged by the high water and high winds at Kook Lake on September 8 and 9. Project personnel are starting to sample beach spawners in the lake for age, sex, and length data.

Sitkoh Lake. The ACA employees, who work at Kook Lake, have counted 9,131 Sockeye Salmon through the pair of video net weirs at the outlet of Sitkoh Lake as of August 26. Personnel at Kook Lake are now reviewing video on the SD cards retrieved from Sitkoh Lake for the August 26 to September 8 period.



Image of pair of remotely monitored video net weirs at the outlet of Sitkoh Lake, September 8, 2016.

On September 8, project personnel began their first of four trips into Sitkoh Lake to get a mark-recapture-based index of the abundance of Sockeye Salmon spawning in the lake. We marked 286 sockeye and recaptured 130 out of 263 examined to get an estimate of 579 Sockeye Salmon in the "study area". The abundance of Sockeye Salmon on this trip was the 10th highest in the 17 years of this project.



Image of beach seining and opercule-punch marking Sockeye Salmon at Sitkoh Lake, September 8.

Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area

Reporting complete for 2016.

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
Reporting complete for 2016, please contact author with questions.

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

Deployed in field, will return in two weeks.

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

Reporting complete for 2016, please contact author with questions.

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

Reporting complete for 2016, please contact author with questions.

Kodiak Island Area – Anne Marie La Rosa, Refuge Manager, - Kodiak NWR
(907) 487-2600/0230 AnneMarie_LaRosa@fws.gov or
Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230 Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov

Reporting for the 2016 season is complete. Please contact the Refuge manager with any questions.

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

Reporting complete for 2016, please contact author with questions.

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

The Emmonak Field Office is closed for the season. For management questions call the Fairbanks office at (907) 455-1849.

Fall Season Outlook and Management Strategies

The Fall Chum Salmon season is over in the lower Yukon. The current 2016 Fall Chum Salmon inseason run projection is for a run size of nearly 1,400,000 fish. The Coho Salmon season is nearly over in the lower Yukon, and is projecting an above average run size. This level of abundance should be sufficient to provide for escapement, an above average subsistence harvest, and a surplus available for commercial and personal use purposes. Subsistence salmon fishing was initially relaxed to the normal regulatory salmon fishing schedule and gear which allows gillnets with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh. Commercial fishing was generally continued on a standard schedule of 2 periods per week in each of Districts 1 and 2 with some juggling to target pulses of Fall Chum Salmon as warranted based on assessment. The Fall Chum commercial season ended in the lower Yukon on August 31 and a directed Coho Salmon commercial fishery continued until the regulatory end of September 10.

Assessment

The Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) fall season assessment through September 8 has a cumulative Fall Chum CPUE of 1,890.12 which is below the average of 2,090.78. The Mt. Village Test Fishery (MVTF) has a cumulative CPUE of 2,919.39, above the average at this time of 1,993.80. The Pilot Station sonar shifted to fall season assessment on July 19 and has a cumulative estimated passage thru August 31, the last day of sonar operations, of 991,919 Fall Chum Salmon which is well above the median estimated passage of 669,483. This is the third largest Fall Chum Salmon passage past the sonar on record. The first pulse of approximately 366,000 Fall Chum passed the sonar on July 19 through 28. The second pulse of approximately 90,000 Fall Chum Salmon passed the sonar on August 1-4. A third, large pulse of approximately 372,000 passed the sonar for eight days on August 14-21. A fourth pulse of approximately 92,000 fall chum passed the sonar on August 23-24, and a fifth pulse of approximately 69,000 fall chum passed on August 26-27.

The Chandalar River sonar began operations on August 8 and has an estimated passage through September 8 of 103,466 Fall Chum Salmon, well above the average of 77,164 fish.

The Eagle sonar switched to Fall Chum Salmon assessment on August 18. The cumulative estimated passage through September 8 is 24,605 above the average of 19,582.

The Canadian Porcupine River sonar at Old Crow has an estimated cumulative passage of 20,259 Fall Chum Salmon. This is well above the 2011-2015 average of 6,811 Fall Chum Salmon. This is a relatively new project and its relationship to the Fishing Branch weir is not clear at this time.

The first four pulses of Fall Chum Salmon have been genetically analyzed. None of the reporting groups have deviated from expectations, which, indicates no weakness in the major stock portions of the run.

Coho Salmon passage rates started to increase on August 12 at LYTF. Through September 8, the cumulative Coho CPUE is 514.93 is below the average of 503.14. The Mt. Village Test Fishery (MVTF) has a cumulative CPUE of 764.02, below the average at this time of 1,068.23. The Pilot Station sonar has a cumulative estimated Coho passage through August 31 of 167,960 fish, above the median estimated passage of 132,929.

Management Actions

Subsistence fishing in the Coastal District, Districts 1- 3, and Subdistrict 5D has been relaxed to their normal schedule of 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear at the beginning of their fall season. District 4 and Subdistricts 5A, 5B, and 5C were liberalized to 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear when it became apparent that surplus Fall Chum were available which could mitigate lost summer season opportunities. District 6 remains on its normal regulatory schedule. Commercial fishing for Fall Chum Salmon began in District 1 on July 18 and District 2 on July 20. Twenty-six periods in District 1 have an estimated harvest of 222,393 Fall Chum Salmon and 106,298 Coho Salmon. Twenty-three periods in District 2 have an estimated harvest of 206,027 Fall Chum Salmon and 62,379 Coho Salmon. A total of 428,420 Fall Chum Salmon and 168,677 have been harvested in Districts 1 & 2 so far this season, this is the largest Fall Chum and Coho Salmon commercial harvests on record. One commercial fishing period in Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C has an estimated harvest of 2,106 fall chum salmon. Nine commercial fishing periods in Subdistricts 6-A, 6-B, and 6-C has an estimated harvest of 701 Fall Chum Salmon and 16 Coho Salmon.

The Porcupine River fall chum salmon stock abundance has been low in recent years when compared to other stocks in the Yukon River drainage. Fall chum salmon escapements into the Canadian Fishing Branch River, a tributary of the Porcupine River, have fallen short of meeting the escapement objective agreed upon by U.S. and Canadian representatives in 4 of the last 6 years despite other Yukon River stocks meeting or exceeding their escapement goals or objectives. Similar to the action taken last year, in an attempt to improve fall chum escapement into the spawning grounds in Canada, subsistence salmon fishing in the Alaska portion of the mainstem Porcupine River was closed on August 31. Porcupine River tributaries in Alaska remain open for subsistence salmon fishing and subsistence fishing for non-salmon species in the mainstem Porcupine River is allowed with gillnets having a mesh size 4-inches or smaller. If in season information from the mainstem Porcupine River sonar and from the Fishing Branch River

escapement monitoring projects indicate the fall chum salmon goal will be met, the department may relax subsistence fishing restrictions.

Consultation

Extensive public outreach and consultation occurred 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. Assessment and management actions were discussed on the twelfth (and final) YRDFA teleconference on August 30. Alaska members of the Yukon River Panel, their alternates, and advisors (YAG) teleconferenced with State and Federal managers on June 22 and July 12. Participants were brought up to date on current run assessment, mid-season run expectations, and summarized management actions to date. Management options and strategies were discussed with concerns and suggestions identified for management consideration. A teleconference was held on Tuesday, August 30, with managers and fishermen from Fort Yukon and Chalkysik to discuss the Porcupine River subsistence closure. Fishermen were generally disappointed with the closure, but also understood the need for the closure.

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

Reporting complete for the season, please contact manager with questions.

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

Reporting complete for 2016, please contact author with questions.

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