

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 3-9, 2019. 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 – Justin Koller, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest**

Justin Koller, (907)747-4297 jpkoller@fs.fed.us

No report submitted this week.

Petersburg and Wrangell Area – Robert Cross, Forest Service Tongass National Forest,

Robert Cross, (907)772-5944, robert.cross@usda.gov

This year's run of Chinook Salmon to the Stikine River is weak, forecasted at 8,250 fish. This forecast is well below the bottom range of the 14,000 to 28,000 fish goal. Directed commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries in the area have been closed to protect this return.

Currently, all purse seine and non-terminal harvest area troll fisheries are closed in the area. There is restricted drift gillnet opportunity in District 6 scheduled to begin June 16. District 8 drift gillnet fishery will be delayed until June 23 at the earliest.

The Federal Stikine River directed Sockeye Salmon subsistence fishery will begin June 21. The Sockeye Salmon forecast is predicting a low return of fish during the second half of the subsistence fishery (starting July 14). If the returns are as low as predicted, then an in-season closure of the Sockeye Salmon fishery may occur during the second half of the season. In-season data will be available after the first week of July. A total of 33 fishing permits have been issued for the Stikine River subsistence salmon fishery. The Stikine River Federal Salmon Factsheet was updated to reflect regulation changes effective for the 2019 fishery and was distributed to existing permit holders.

Currently 108 Federal general salmon/trout/char permits have been issued in the Southeast Alaska/Yakutat region. Of these, 16 have been issued to Federally-qualified subsistence users residing in the Petersburg/Wrangell area.

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

No report for this week, will submit report next week.

Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area – Jeff Reeves, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest. (907) 826-1649 jreeves@fs.fed.us No report for this week.

No report for this week.

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

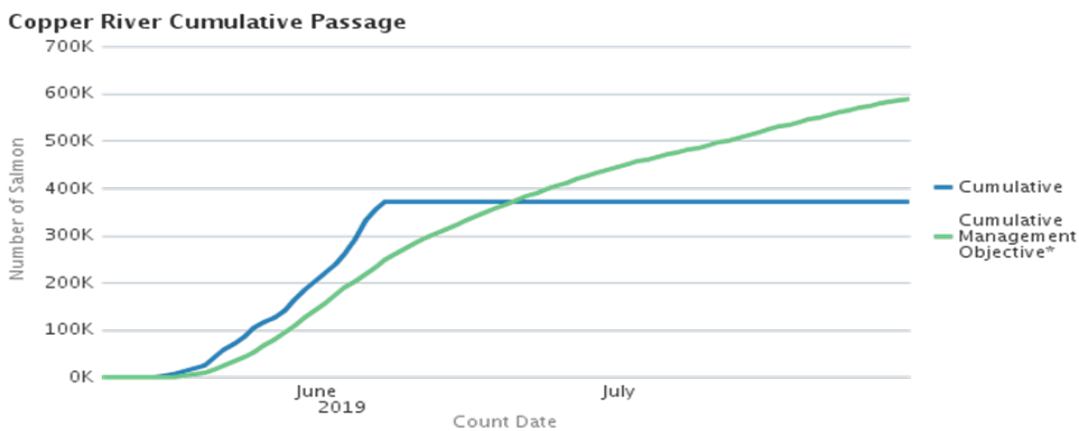
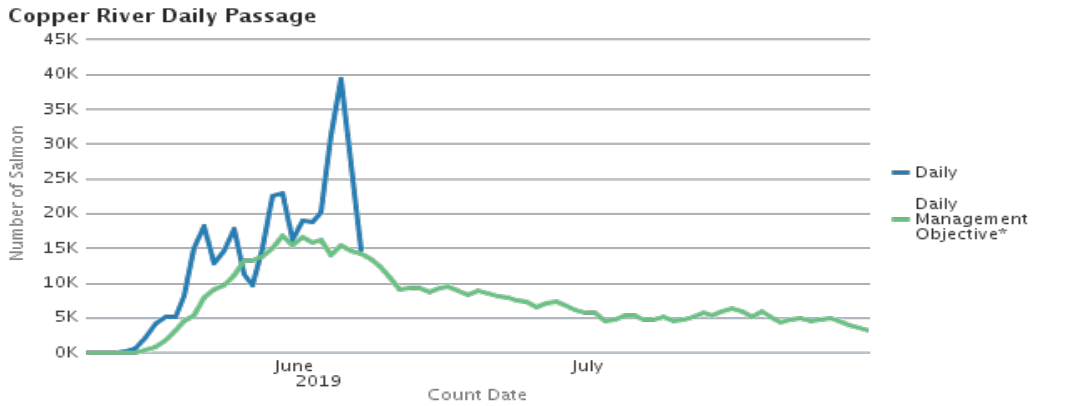
Copper River, 6/8/2019 Update – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve, (907) 822-7281, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

In January of 2019, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) provided preseason forecasts of 55,000 Copper River Chinook Salmon and 1,416,000 wild stock Copper River Sockeye Salmon. Relative to recent 10-year averages, these forecasts are above average for Chinook Salmon and below average for Sockeye Salmon.

The ADF&G sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) began recording salmon passage on May 10. As of June 7, 373,104 salmon have been estimated migrating upstream for the season. This estimate is 50% above the projected passage of 249,125 for this date, or 123,976 more salmon. A daily estimate of 14,916 salmon were estimated to pass the sonar on June 7. The Sockeye

Salmon return to the Copper River continues to be tracking above forecast. Federal managers will continue to monitor run strength indicators to evaluate the need for appropriate fisheries management actions in the Copper River Drainage.

2019 Upper Copper River Salmon Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through June 7.



Source:

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.salmon_escapement

The commercial fishery in the Copper River District has opened for 7 fishing periods between May 16 and June 8. Total commercial harvest reported for the season is 589,663 Sockeye Salmon and 14,510 Chinook Salmon.

The State subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened on June 1. The State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict opened on June 7 and is currently scheduled to remain open through June 16.

The Federal subsistence fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict opened on May 15 and is expected to remain open through September 30. One hundred twenty-one (121) 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 15 and is expected to remain open until September 30. One hundred ninety-six (196) 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 Batzulnetas fishery is open. No Federal permits have been issued.

The Native Village of Eyak Baird Canyon fish wheels captured and tagged 3,346 Chinook Salmon through June 8. The upriver fish wheels at Canyon Creek have captured and examined 1,610 Chinook Salmon through May 30, of which, 157 were recaptured fish that had been tagged at the downstream wheels.

Due to a lack of funding, the fish weirs at Tanada Creek and Long Lake will not be operated this year.

The ADF&G counting tower in the Gulkana River was set up for operation on May 31. The reported cumulative passage estimate through June 5 is 54 Chinook salmon.

No Federal Special Actions have been issued by the in-season manager this season.

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 In-season Commercial Harvest Estimates

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

ADF&G Gulkana River counting tower

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

ADF&G 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.
6 June 2017.**

(907) 424-4759 mburcham@fs.fed.us

No report submitted this week.

**COOK INLET AREA – Jeff Anderson, Field Supervisor, Kenai Fish and Wildlife
Field Office (907) 260-0132 Jeffry_Anderson@fws.gov**

The 2019 subsistence dip net fisheries for salmon will begin on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers June 15 and June 16, respectively. Seasons 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.

Permits have been issued for community gillnet fisheries on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. Regulatory dates for the Kasilof River community gillnet fishery are from June 16 through August 15. Regulatory periods for the Kenai River community gillnet fishery are from July 1 through August 15 and from September 10 – 30.

USFWS and USFS staff issued permits in Cooper Landing on June 4 and in Hope on June 6. USFWS staff issued permits in Ninilchik on May 14 and May 29.

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

Kodiak Island Area – Michael Brady, Refuge Manager, - Kodiak NWR
(907) 487-0226 or michael_brady@fws.gov or Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230
Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov

The 2019 sockeye salmon returns for Kodiak archipelago started about 2 weeks ago and are forecasted to be within the 10-year average. Many of the systems which monitor sockeye salmon returns by ADF&G have been installed and are operational at this time. Subsistence fishing is fairly slow at Litnik (Afognak Lake), Buskin River, and Karluk River. Although a report from Karluk villages indicates that the number of fish moving to that system is improving as they had a high catch per unit effort earlier in the week. Very little effort is occurring at the mouth of the Buskin River and Litnik at this time. Any additional information pertaining to subsistence harvest will be provided in next week report.

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

**BRISTOL BAY, CHIGNIK, ALASKA PENINSULA, and ALEUTIAN ISLANDS –
Jonathon 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 Salmon; as well as some of the largest commercial fisheries for salmon in Alaska. All of the assessments of salmon returns are conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and provide the basis for any inseason assessment and management. None of the adjustments in commercial fishing management throughout any of these areas are anticipated to affect subsistence fishing in Federally-managed waters.

Bristol Bay:

The 2019 Bristol Bay Sockeye Salmon run is forecast to be approximately 40 million fish for the nine river systems: Kvichak, Alagnak, Naknek, Egegik, Ugashik, Wood, Igushik, Nushagak, and Togiak. Based on the forecast 27 million fish are available for commercial inshore harvest. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has strategies in place for all mixed stock districts to address differential run strength should that occur. Gillnets are the primary gear used for most subsistence fishing for salmon. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opens June 1 by regulation and commercial fishing openings have been announced for Igushik, Bristol Bay Eastside, and Nushagak districts. As each run develops and Sockeye Salmon run characteristics become defined within individual districts, fishing time will be adjusted accordingly. In the Nushagak District, management of the Chinook Salmon fishery will govern fishing time in the early part of the season, followed by directed Sockeye Salmon management as abundance dictates.

The sustainable escapement goals (SEG) for Bristol Bay systems are:

Escapement Goals:

Kvichak	SEG = 2,000,000 – 10,000,000
Alagnak	SEG = 320,000 minimum
Naknek	SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000
Egegik	SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000
Ugashik	SEG = 500,000 – 1,400,000
Wood River	SEG = 700,000 – 1,800,000
Igushik	SEG = 150,000 – 400,000
Nushagak	SEG = 370,000 – 900,000
Togiak	SEG = 120,000 – 270,000

Chignik:

The cumulative weir count as of June 10 is 4,380 fish. The interim escapement goal for this time is 45,000 to 55,000; however, it is still early in the run timing for early run Chignik bound Sockeye Salmon. The 2019 Sockeye Salmon forecasted run size for the Chignik River Management Area (CMA) is 1,739,000 fish with a harvest estimate of 1,001,000 Sockeye Salmon. The CMA is composed of five fishing districts: Eastern, Central, Chignik Bay, Western, and Perryville. The ADF&G hosted a commercial fishing stakeholder meeting on June 3. The Federal inseason manager and OSM hosted a federal subsistence meeting in Chignik Bay on June 8 and Chignik Lagoon on June 9 with local subsistence users.

Note: The Board of Fisheries in February 2019 reduced the in-river goal from 75,000 to 20,000 Sockeye Salmon, 10,000 fish are required to pass the weir in August, in addition

to minimum escapement objectives, while the remainder are required to escape during the month of September.

Escapement Goals:

Early Run Sockeye Salmon/ Black Lake	BEG = 350,000 – 450,000
Late Run Sockeye Salmon/ Chignik Lake	SEG = 200,000 – 400,000
-In-river Goal	-10,000 in August and 10,000

in September in addition to late run escapement goals

Chinook Salmon	BEG = 1,300 – 2,700
Pink Salmon – Even year	SEG = 170,000 – 280,000
Chum Salmon	SEG = 45,000 – 110,000

Alaska Peninsula:

There are numerous salmon stocks and fisheries throughout the Alaska Peninsula, as well as the Aleutian Islands. The largest fisheries are managed under management plans. Management objectives vary by district and time. Several Sockeye Salmon escapements (mostly on the north peninsula) are monitored with weirs including Nelson, Bear, and Sandy, Inik, McLees, and Orzinski systems. Preseason forecasts are made only for the Nelson River and late-run Bear Lake stocks. The 2019 Sockeye Salmon run size projections are 217,000 – 523,000 fish for the Nelson River and 182,000 – 635,000 fish for late-run Bear Lake. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon. The cumulative weir count as of June 9 for the Nelson River is 1, Bear River is 214, Inik is 7,720, and Sandy River is 8 fish.

Escapement Goals:

Nelson River	BEG = 97,000 – 219,000
Late-run Bear Lake	BEG = 117,000 – 195,000

Aleutian Islands.

All fisheries are forecast to meet escapement goals and provide harvest opportunity.

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

Summer Season Outlook

The Summer Chum Salmon outlook is for an above average run size large enough to provide for escapement and subsistence uses. A surplus of up to 1.2 million Summer Chum Salmon is anticipated to be available for commercial harvest. However, commercial harvest opportunity will depend upon available markets and the strength of the overlapping Chinook Salmon run. The Chinook Salmon outlook is for a below average run size of 168,000 to 241,000 fish, similar to last year. The 2019 Chinook Salmon run may be large enough to provide for normal subsistence harvests. However, due to uncertainty, a cautionary approach is being taken early in the season. As fish begin entering the river, management strategies will be based on inseason run assessment information.. If assessment indicates the Chinook salmon run size is near the upper end of the outlook range and goals are projected to be met, subsistence fishing restrictions would likely be relaxed. If that occurs, commercial Chum Salmon fishermen may be given the opportunity to sell Chinook Salmon incidentally-caught in the Chum Salmon fishery. This would likely be near the tail end of the run, when the majority of Chinook Salmon have passed upriver for escapement and subsistence harvest purposes. If inseason assessment indicates a poorer than anticipated run, subsistence fishing time may be reduced or gear may be limited to selective gear types with no retention of Chinook salmon allowed.

Assessment Information

A few Subsistence fishermen in the lower Yukon River area have been fishing since ice out. High debris loads immediately following ice out hindered both subsistence fishing and lower Yukon test fishing efforts. Debris loads have decreased this week and fishing

activity is beginning to increase despite the difficult fishing conditions. The first subsistence caught Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon was reported on May 23 at Tin Can Point. Lower Yukon test fishing began between May 23 and June 6. Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon catches for both subsistence fishermen and the test fishery have been low and steady. Managers anticipate test fishery catches to increase in the coming days. The Pilot Station sonar began full operations on June 2. 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 or Chum Salmon runs. The test fishery has not yet detected what managers would consider the first pulse of Chinook Salmon which typically arrives just before the first quarter. The average first quarter point in the LYTF for Chinook Salmon is June 15, and June 19 for Summer Chum Salmon.

Management Actions

Until more assessment data become available, management decisions will be consistent with the preseason outlook and management strategies discussed with fishermen at the preseason fishermen's meeting. The northern portion of the Coastal District and District 1 will be managed as one district for 2019. Subsistence salmon fishing in District 1 will be placed on half its regulatory schedule of two, 18-hour periods per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear June 11. Subsistence salmon fishing in Districts 2 and 3 will be placed on half their regulatory schedules of two, 18-hour periods per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear on June 15 and 19, respectively. Subsistence fishing in the Innoko and Koyukuk rivers, Districts 4 and 5, Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B, Old Minto and Upper Tanana Areas are open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and restricted to 7.5-inch or less mesh gillnet and fish wheel gear. The personal use fishery in Subdistrict 6-C is open on its regulatory schedule of two, 42-hour periods per week restricted to 7.5-inch or less mesh gillnet gear and fish wheels. 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 as the Chinook Salmon migrate upstream.

Directed Summer Chum Salmon commercial fishing is anticipated to begin in District 1 on June 17. Periods will be directed towards Summer Chum Salmon using dip nets and beach seines with incidentally caught Chinook Salmon being immediately released alive.

Consultation

Extensive public outreach and consultation was performed during the fall of 2018 and spring of 2019 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, at the annual Yukon River Drainage Fishermen's Association Board meeting, and at the Yukon River InterTribal Fish Commission annual meeting. On April 24, a pre-season planning meeting was held in Fairbanks that brought together representatives from most Alaskan Yukon River communities to discuss the run outlook and management options.

The first YRDFA weekly teleconference occurred on June 4. Most reports were of high debris loads coming down river with a few reports of salmon being caught in the lower Yukon.

KUSKOKWIM RIVER

In Season Manager – Vernon “Ray” Born, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Contact Vernon_Born@fws.gov (907) 543-3151 or Lewis_Coggins@fws.gov

Summary:

In consultation with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR) in-season manager has announced four fishing opportunities within the YDNWR from the boundary at the mouth of the Kuskokwim River upriver to the boundary above the village of Aniak. These opportunities are for federally qualified users that are residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefornek, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Kongiganek to the harvest of Chinook Salmon.

The first fishing opportunity will be on June 8th, 2019 from 10:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. This opportunity is limited to **SET NET** gillnets only on the Kuskokwim River main stem. Drift gillnets are prohibited during this opportunity. Set net restrictions on June 8th include:

- 6 inch or less set gillnets for federally qualified users,
- Must be attached to bank and oriented perpendicular to river,
- May not exceed 60 feet in length in water, 45 mesh deep, may not be operated more than 100 feet from ordinary high water mark.

The next three fishing opportunities are scheduled for June 12, 15, and 19, 2019 from 06:00 A.M. to 06:00 P.M. These three opportunities are for **BOTH** set and drift gillnets on the Kuskokwim main stem. Gillnet restrictions on June 12, 15, and 19 are as follows:

- 6 inch or less gillnets for federally qualified users, 45 mesh deep,
- Net length 150 feet (25 Fathoms) above Johnson River,
- Net length 300 feet (50 Fathoms) below Johnson River.

Reminder: After each opportunity has ended, the Kuskokwim River main stem will be **CLOSED** to all gillnets until next opportunity.

Chinook Salmon retention using dip nets, beach seines, fish wheels, and rod and reel on federal public waters of the main stem of the Kuskokwim River and non-salmon tributaries is allowed even when gillnets are closed.

The following areas are closed to all methods and means of Chinook Salmon harvest effective June 1, 2019:

- The Eek River;
- The Kwethluk River drainage at its confluence with Kuskokuak Slough
- The Kasigluk and Kisaralik river drainages including Old Kuskokuak Slough to ADF&G regulatory markers at the confluence of Old Kuskokuak Slough with Kuskokuak Slough;
- The Tuluksak River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately 1-mile to ADF&G regulatory markers; and
- The Aniak River drainage to ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River;
- The Aniak Box described as waters of the Kuskokwim River main stem from the Yukon Delta NWR boundary at Aniak downstream to a line formed from the northwest corner of the runway (latitude 61° 35' 16" N, longitude 159° 33' 28" W), due north to a point on the southeast corner of the sandbar (latitude 61° 35' 37" N, longitude 159° 33' 16" W)

These harvest opportunities are to provide for the continuation of subsistence uses of Chinook Salmon that are critical to cultural and traditional needs. While the Chinook run is expected to be smaller than average, it is strong enough to allow these limited opportunities for a directed harvest for federally qualified subsistence users.

These limited opportunities have been implemented by Federal Emergency Special Actions (**3-KS-05-19** and **3-KS-06-19**) under the delegated authority of the Federal Subsistence Board.

Test Fisheries:

As of June 09, 2019 the CPUE for Chinook at the Bethel test fish is at 119. 2018 and 2017 Chinook CPUE for this day were at 29 and 9 respectively.

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) 443-6104 Ken_Adkisson@nps.gov

Norton Sound District.

Sport Fishing: The Division of Sport Fish will be closing all fresh waters from Bald Head to Point Romanof to sport fishing for king salmon effective 12:01 a.m., June 15, 2019. This closure includes, but is not limited to, the Unalakleet, Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Ungalik, Inglutalik, and Golsovia river drainages. In addition, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used in these drainages. These temporary regulations will remain in effect through August 15, 2019, or until there are indications of a harvestable surplus above escapement objectives, which are indexed by a counting tower on the North River, a tributary of the Unalakleet River.

The 2019 preseason outlook for the Unalakleet River drainage king salmon run is low, and the number of returning king salmon may be insufficient to meet escapement objectives and provide a harvestable surplus for both the subsistence and sport fisheries. According to the Subdistricts 5 and 6 of the Norton Sound District and the Unalakleet River King Salmon Management Plan, when the inriver subsistence fishery is closed to the retention of king salmon, sport fishing for king salmon will be closed. The Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Ungalik, Inglutalik, and Golsovia river drainages are closed as well because the department does not have reliable information for these stocks. However, they are known to trend with Unalakleet River stocks that are assessed by the North River counting tower and a floating weir which is located on the mainstem Unalakleet River. The department will continue to evaluate inseason run strength and take appropriate

management actions to ensure that escapement requirements are met. If inseason stock assessment information indicates that the king salmon escapement goal in the Unalakleet River will be met, restrictions will be relaxed.

Commercial Fishing: The ADF&G is gearing up for the commercial fishing season. Being this far north, fishing seasons tend to begin and end a little later than those to the south. Strong chum and silver salmon runs are expected similar to last year when the chum run was the strongest since 1983, and the silver run set a record. ADF&G expects the commercial chum harvest to be about 170,000 to 220,000 fish. The silver salmon harvest is expected to be around 190,000 to 240,000 fish. The king salmon run, however, is projected to be weak with no commercial fishing targeting king salmon in Norton Sound.

Subsistence Fishing: Similar to last year, restrictions on subsistence fishing time in Subdistrict 4 (Norton bay) in order to protect king salmon will be needed. Various fishing restrictions may also be necessary in Subdistrict 5 (Shaktoolik), Subdistrict 6 (Unalakleet) and the St. Michael and Stebbins area as well in order to protect king salmon. Details will be provided in future updates as the restrictions are put into place.

Other Waters (Saint Michael and Stebbins)

Subsistence Fishing: Subsistence fishing is open seven days per week in southern Norton Sound from Point Romanoff to the Subdistrict 6 boundary. Regulation allows for the restriction of gillnet mesh size in the subsistence fisheries throughout Norton Sound. In order to conserve Chinook salmon for spawning escapement and future uses by fishers, it may be necessary to consider reducing harvest of Chinook salmon migrating through the Saint Michael and Stebbins areas by having closures or gillnet mesh size restrictions in the subsistence fishery.

Subdistricts 6 (Unalakleet) and 5 (Shaktoolik)

Subsistence Fishing: According to the ADF&G management information in previous years, to protect Chinook salmon, a restricted subsistence fishing schedule went into effect in mid-June and subdistricts 5 and 6. The subsistence fishing schedule in the marine waters of the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet subdistricts had been from 6 PM Monday until 6 PM Wednesday and from 6 PM Thursday until 6 PM Saturday. The schedule in the Unalakleet River is from 8 AM Monday until 8 PM Tuesday and from 8 AM Friday until 8 PM Saturday however in recent years it is been difficult reaching the North River Chinook salmon escapement goal in the subsistence fishing schedule has been suspended in order to reach Chinook salmon escapement goals for the first time since 2010, the North River escapement goal range of 1200 to 2600 Chinook salmon was reached in 2014 and 2015 with an escapement count of 3,454 and 1,950 fish respectively. The escapement goal range was not reached in 2016 and 2017, but was reached in 2018. A combination of targeted subsistence gillnet fishing closures mesh size restrictions, closing subsistence fishing in the lower Unalakleet River, and marine water fishing period

reductions will likely be needed to reach the escapement goal range in 2019 according to ADF&G.

ADF&G personnel plan to meet with Shaktoolik and Unalakleet residence and go over likely subsistence fishing restrictions for the upcoming season. Based on the recent 5 year trend in run performance and sibling relationships, the 2019 Chinook's run to southern Norton Sound is expected to be similar to 2018. If that occurs, there is a possibility of limited subsistence opportunity to target Chinook salmon. Near mid-June, ADF&G will again close the Unalakleet River drainage downstream of North River and the North River to all subsistence net fishing, except for dip nets and cast nets. Any Chinook salmon caught in a dip net or cast net must be immediately released unharmed. Likewise, effective June 15, all marine and freshwaters of both the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts will close to all subsistence fishing. ADF&G will allow at least one 24-hour subsistence fishing period in the marine waters each week with gillnets restricted to six inches or less mesh size during favorable weather conditions.

Later in June and early July, ADF&G will allow beach seine fishing periods in fresh waters to provide opportunity for subsistence users to utilize chum and pink salmon during optimal weather periods. Regulations allow beach seines with a maximum mesh size of 4 1/2 inches to be used from July 1 through August 10 to harvest salmon other than Chinook salmon. However ADF&G can allow the use of beach seines earlier by emergency order after factoring in weather and run timing patterns.

Commercial Fishing: Chum and pink salmon directed commercial gillnet fishing periods are expected in July. Because of the expected restrictions to Chinook salmon subsistence fishing, the department plans to prohibit the sale of Chinook salmon during other salmon directed fishing periods through most of July. Chum and pink salmon runs are expected to be above average. In Subdistricts 5 and 6, the commercial chum and pink salmon fishery may occur only if it is determined there is a harvestable surplus of chum or pink salmon and that directed chum or pink salmon commercial fishery will not have a significant impact on escapement or subsistence use of Chinook salmon. If gillnet mesh size is or fishing time is restricted in the Chinook salmon subsistence fishery, commercial chum and pink salmon gillnet fisheries will not occur prior to July 1.

Subdistrict 4 (Norton Bay)

Subsistence Fishing: Restrictions on subsistence fishing time to protect Chinook salmon will be needed again according to the ADF&G. Like last year, the department will implement a subsistence salmon fishing schedule beginning in the second or third week of June. All flowing waters draining the Inglutalik and Ungalik Rivers and all marine waters of the Norton Bay Subdistrict will be placed on a subsistence fishing schedule of two 36- hour periods per week. Periods will be from 6 AM Monday to 6 PM Tuesdays and from 6 AM Saturdays to 6 PM Sundays. During the openings from Mondays to Tuesdays, subsistence users will be restricted to set gillnets with a stretched mesh size of six inches or less. For weekend openings from Saturdays to Sundays, there will be no restrictions on mesh size.

Subdistrict 3 (Elim)

Subsistence Fishing: Except in 2014 when hook and line subsistence fishing for Chinook salmon was closed, there have been no other subsistence fishing restrictions in over 25 years in Subdistrict 3 (Elim). Subsistence permits are required when subsistence salmon fishing in the Elim Subdistrict. Other than the possibility of inseason Chinook restrictions, the department foresees no other restrictions.

Subdistrict 2 (Golovin)

Subsistence Fishing: No restrictions on fishing time are anticipated.

Subdistrict 1 (Nome)

Subsistence Fishing: Subsistence salmon fishing permits are required, and stream specific harvest limits are listed on the permit. These include: Cripple River - no chum catch allowed; Penny River - no chum catch allowed; Nome River - 100 coho per household; Salmon River - 40 chum per household and 20 coho per household. There are no catch limits in the marine waters.

Port Clarence District

Subsistence Fishing: Gillnet and beach seining are open seven days a week. Subsistence salmon fishing permits are required for the Port Clarence District, Pilgrim River drainage and Salmon Lake. Catch limits are listed on the subsistence permits. These are: Pilgrim River - 3 king salmon per household and 25 sockeye salmon per household; Salmon Lake: open by emergency order only: 200 sockeye salmon per household.

Commercial Fishing: The department expects the commercial fishery to remain closed because of a lack of buyer interest despite the in-river goal of 30,000 sockeye salmon in the Pilgrim River being expected to be reached.

Kotzebue District

Subsistence Fishing: No subsistence fishing restrictions are expected in 2019.

Commercial Fishing: The department intends to open the commercial fishery any time after July 9 when the buyers are ready or permit holders indicate they are ready to fish and a market is available.

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