

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 20 - 27, 2016. Report #5
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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

Klag Bay - The Sitka Tribe of Alaska operates the Sockeye Salmon monitoring weir at Klag Bay which is scheduled to be operational this 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.

Redoubt Lake - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which was operational June 13th. One hundred and sixty Sockeye Salmon were counted passing the weir on June 26th bringing the season total to 619. In 2015, an estimated total of 13,379 Sockeye Salmon passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake.

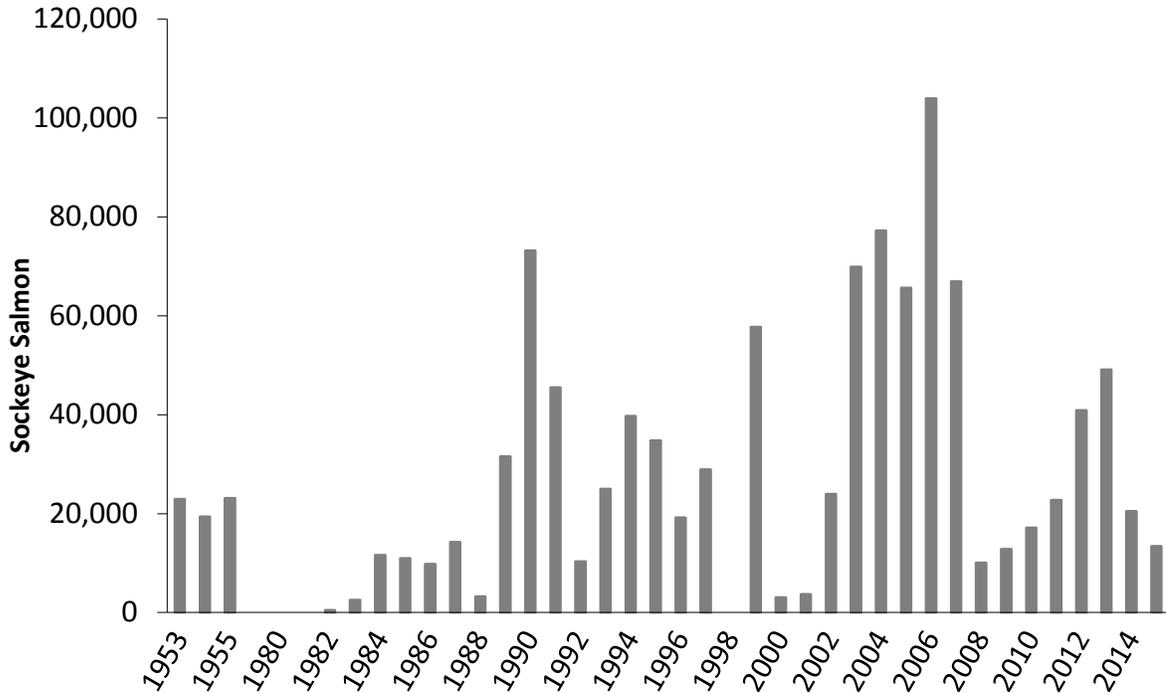


Figure 1. Annual Sockeye Salmon expanded escapement into Redoubt Lake for years with data: 1953 to 1955, 1982 to 1997, and 1999 to 2015. The weir was not operated in 1998.

Falls Lake - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake operate the Falls Lake trap and video net weir which will be operational this week. 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.

Wrangell/Petersburg Area

Stat Week 26, ending June 25

There have been 52 fishing permits issued for the Stikine River Subsistence Salmon fishery. Fishing pressure has been light due to lack of Chinook Salmon but the fishers that have participated this week have had good success in catching Sockeye Salmon. The estimated cumulative subsistence harvest is 7 Chinook and 190 Sockeye Salmon. The in-season abundance estimate for Chinook salmon is 21,311 large Chinook Salmon. This is a significant reduction from the pre-season abundance estimate of 33,900 large Chinook Salmon. Sockeye Salmon appear to be abundant for this time of year.

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
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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

As of June 23, 2016 the ADF&G sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) estimated that 506,301 salmon had migrated upstream for the season. This estimate is 23% more than the projected escapement of 410,529 for this date, or 95,772 more salmon. A daily estimate of 16,277 salmon migrated by the sonar counter on June 23.

The Chitina Subdistrict is open and is scheduled to remain open through June 26. It is then scheduled to reopen immediately on June 27 and remain open the entire week. The state and federal fisheries usually follow identical fishing schedules which are set by the

state. Seventy-two (72) 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. Two hundred thirty-two (232) 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 opened on June 1.

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

The Tanada Creek fish weir was installed on June 1. The water level in the creek is extremely low for this time of year and remains impassable for adult salmon migration; no returning salmon have yet been observed at the site. As occurred during the early period of the past two seasons, the extremely low water level of the creek may have a substantial effect on the survival of out-migrant smolt; which typically pass the weir site during this same time period on their journey downstream.

As of June 23, 2,353 Chinook Salmon had been tagged at the two project fishwheels in Baird Canyon operated by the Native Village of Eyak. The upriver fishwheels at Canyon Creek have captured 908 Chinook Salmon, of which, 141 were recaptured fish that had been tagged at the downstream wheels.

ADF&G's counting tower in the Gulkana River began operation on May 27; two hundred fifty-eight (258) Chinook Salmon have been counted as of June 22.

One Special Action has been issued by the park this season:

- delaying the starting date of the Chitina Subdistrict 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

Deployed in field, expecting update next week.

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

The 2016 subsistence dip net fisheries on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers began on June 15 and June 16, respectively. The rod and reel subsistence and sport fisheries for the Upper Kenai River and Russian River also opened on June 11. Harvest of 264 Sockeye Salmon from the Russian River Falls dip net fishery and 4 Sockeye Salmon in the Kasilof River dip net fishery have been reported through June 24. Totals of 98 Kenai River permits, 25 Kasilof River permits, and 9 Designated Fisher permits have been issued through June 24.

The operational plan for the Kasilof River experimental community gillnet fishery has been finalized. The Ninilchik Traditional Council will operate a net on behalf of Ninilchik residents in the upper Kasilof River to harvest Sockeye Salmon starting on July 1. The Kenai Plan is still being reviewed. No operational plan has been submitted for the Kasilof River community fishwheel.

The early-run of Kenai River Chinook Salmon is coming in above projections and the lower bound of the early-run escapement goal has been achieved. A total of 8,130 Chinook Salmon have been counted at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's sonar assessment site at river mile 14 through June 23. The Department opened the early-run Chinook Salmon sport fishery to harvest downstream of Slikok Creek regulatory markers starting on June 18, while the remainder of the river below Skilak Lake is open to fishing under catch and release regulations.

Through June 23, a total of 12,590 early-run Sockeye Salmon have been counted past the Russian River weir. A total of 47,774 Sockeye Salmon have been counted past the Department's sonar on the Kasilof River through June 23.

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
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Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230 Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov

Sockeye Salmon returns continue to be strong along the west side of Kodiak Island. As of Thursday, June 23, 2016, the Karluk, Ayakulik, Upper Station (Olga Lake), Afognak, and Buskin River systems have met their lower escapement goals for Sockeye Salmon

The Sockeye Salmon returning to Buskin and Litnik (Afognak) Rivers have slowed considerable over the past week. Very few if any boats have subsistence fished this area.

System	June 23, 2016 Count	Escapement Goal Range
Karluk River	115,841	110,000 – 250,000
Ayakulik River	84, 839	60,000 – 120,000
Dog Salmon	40,304	
Frazer Lake	14,676	50,000 – 170,000
Upper Station (Olga Lake)	34,773	25,000 – 93,000
Litnik (Afognak) River	25,457	20,000 – 50,000
Buskin River	6,146	5,000 – 8,000

Chinook Salmon returns are still weak but higher numbers than in the past 5 years, with 1,985 Chinook Salmon counted at Karluk River and 2,710 Chinook Salmon counted at Ayakulik River. It is unlikely, based on the current rate of escapement, that the lower range of the escapement goals (3,000 and 4000 Chinook Salmon respectively) will be achieved. Chinook Salmon escapement will continue to be monitored daily. Subsistence salmon fishing opportunities may be adjusted based on changes in the run strengths.

Earlier in the week gillnetters at the mouth of the Buskin River were reporting good catches with 7 – 10 boats fishing at a time. Litnik salmon numbers up river have slowed this week but additional fishing activity is expected there over the weekend. At Port Lions, gillnetters are still making steady effort to fish in the lagoon, although reports are that this run is slowing down. Residents of Larsen Bay and the village of Karluk are gillnetting in Karluk Lagoon. Akhiok residents have been getting their subsistence salmon around Trappers Point or Kempf Bay. Commercial salmon fishing is delayed in the Alitak Bay District giving subsistence harvesters who normally commercial fish, more free time to engage in subsistence harvests.

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

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/dcfnewsrelease/650190311.pdf>

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. ADF&G 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 opened by regulation on June 1. The following cumulative escapement and harvest numbers are current as of June 25. The Egegik District commercial fishery has a cumulative escapement of 244,000 and a commercial harvest of 291,000 Sockeye Salmon. Commercial fishing openings are scheduled. The Ugashik District escapement projects are anticipated to become operational on June 27 and the cumulative harvest is 103,000 Sockeye Salmon. In consultation with the USFWS, to protect walrus haul out areas, the north line of the Ugashik District was moved one mile south to provide a larger buffer zone, becoming effective June 13. The Naknek River escapement is 38,262 and the Kvichak River escapement is 6,096 Sockeye Salmon. No commercial fishing openings are currently scheduled. The Nushagak River escapement is 149,974 Sockeye Salmon and 81,229 Chinook Salmon. Commercial harvest for the Nushagak District is 416,000 Sockeye Salmon. The Wood River escapement is 169,263 and the Igushik River escapement is 5,406 Sockeye Salmon. Conservation measures are in place to conserve Chinook Salmon, including maximum mesh size restriction to 5 ½ inches in Naknek/Kvichak, and Ugashik districts. The Chinook Salmon return to Togiak is anticipated to be poor and reduced fishing time from scheduled periods is anticipated. Subsistence fishing in the commercial fishing district is open as of June 1 until further notice.

Gillnets are the primary gear used for most subsistence fishing for salmon. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon for both the State and Federal subsistence fisheries.

Chignik:

Sockeye Salmon	Escapement Goal
Early Run – Black Lake	BEG = 350,000 – 450,000
Late Run – Chignik Lake	SEG = 200,000 – 400,000
Inriver Subsistence Goal	25,000 in August and 50,000 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

The 2016 total Sockeye Salmon forecast run for the Chignik River watershed is approximately 2,910,000 fish. Current escapement estimates through the Chignik weir are 256,371 Sockeye Salmon as of June 26. Approximately 2,190,000 Sockeye Salmon are expected to be harvested in Chignik Management Area. As of June 26, 2016 the commercial catch is estimated at 454,245 Sockeye Salmon, 1,808 Chinook Salmon, 23,417 Pink Salmon, and 28,548 Chum Salmon through June 26. Commercial fishing periods started in the Chignik Bay, Central, and Eastern districts and the Inner Castle Cape Subsection of the Western District beginning June 4. Subsistence fishing is closed for salmon 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours following a commercial fishing period. The Western District of the Chignik Management Area opened to commercial fishing on June 16. Additional commercial fishing opportunities may occur during June and early July.

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 the 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.

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 (692,000) and late-run Bear (424,000) river Sockeye 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 with a few exceptions. Please check your regulations book or contact your local area manager.

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 and Management Strategies

The 2016 Chinook Salmon current in-season run projection is for a run of approximately 150,000 Chinook Salmon. This is within the pre-season outlook range of 130,000 to 175,000. This range is similar in size to the run observed in 2015 and has required subsistence harvest restrictions in order to meet minimum escapement objectives. As in recent years, initial management has been based on the expectation that the 2016 Chinook Salmon run size would likely be near the lower end of this range. Management strategies have followed those agreed to during pre-season management meetings. Early subsistence fishing opportunities have targeted non-Chinook Salmon species, such as whitefish and Summer Chum Salmon. As the season progresses, fishing restrictions are being relaxed. The majority of the Chinook Salmon run has been protected to some extent with closures and restrictive fishing gear all the way upriver and into the spawning areas.

The Summer Chum Salmon run was projected to be average to above average and to provide for escapement and subsistence uses with a surplus of 450,000 to 950,000 anticipated to be available for commercial harvest. The Summer Chum Salmon run appears to be entering early and above average.

Public meetings were held throughout the winter and spring to inform fishers of the outlook. Management actions have been based on the pre-season outlook and are now

switching to in-season assessment as managers are gaining confidence in the assessment information.

Assessment Information

Assessment projects began in the lower Yukon in late May. The Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) has detected the early arriving, as well as the first three pulses of Chinook and two pulses of Summer Chum Salmon. The cumulative CPUE for both sites combined through June 25 is 29.46, which is above the historical average of 22.98. Operations at LYTF have been altered from previous years, so caution should be taken when comparing current catch rates to historical catch rates. The 8.25-inch drift gillnet test fishery for Chinook Salmon has been fully operational at the Big Eddy site since May 23. The cumulative CPUE as of June 25 is 450.71, which is above the historical average of 308.92. The 5.5-inch drift gill net test fisheries for Summer Chum Salmon at the Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites have been fully operational since May 19 and June 4, respectively. The combined cumulative CPUE for both sites as of June 25 is 7,302.66 which is well above the historical median of 3,738.31 for this date. The Pilot Station sonar began full operations on June 1 and has detected the early arriving as well as the first pulses of Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon. The second pulse of Chinook Salmon began passing the Pilot Station sonar on June 15 and 16 with a two day passage of over 25,000 fish. The third pulse is completing its passage past the sonar at this time with an estimate passage of 41,000 Chinook Salmon. Cumulative passage estimates of Chinook Salmon past the Pilot Station sonar through June 25 is 123,733 fish, above the average of 96,622 fish, but below the early year average of 154,505 for this date. The passage estimates of Summer Chum Salmon past the Pilot Station sonar through June 25 is 1,033,720, well above the average for this date of 632,102 fish, and the fifth highest passage estimate for this date since 1995. Information from the LYTF and Pilot Station sonar are in alignment and are performing as expected. The early trickle of Chinook Salmon is in Subdistrict 5-D, pulse one is passing through Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C, and pulse two is passing through lower Subdistrict 4-A. Pulse three is passing through Districts 3. Subsistence harvest and fishing reports has been important information for managers when considering early season management actions.

Management Actions

In Districts 1 through Subdistrict 5-C, as the Chinook Salmon abundance increased, subsistence salmon fishing with gill nets was closed in order to protect the early trickle of Chinook Salmon entering the river prior to the first pulse. Twenty-four hours after the closing of subsistence salmon fishing, subsistence fishing was reopened to target Summer Chum Salmon with fishing gear restricted to dip nets and beach seines with the condition that all Chinook Salmon incidentally encountered must be immediately released back into the water. This early opportunity was provided because the Summer Chum Salmon outlook is for an average to above average run size that can support a full subsistence harvest level and because the impact to Chinook Salmon by non-retention gear has demonstrated to be low in recent years of use. Additionally, during subsistence Chinook Salmon fishing closures, gill nets with a mesh size 4-inches or smaller with a length of no more than 60 feet will be allowed to target non-salmon species. In Subdistrict 5-D, beginning with the lower portion on June 19, subsistence fishing was restricted to fish

wheels and gillnets with 6-inch or smaller mesh gear to conserve the early portion of the Chinook Salmon run. It was agreed to as part of the pre-season management plan to allow 5-D to harvest some Chinook Salmon early in the season. As the first pulse reaches Subdistrict 5-D, subsistence salmon fishing is being closed to protect the first pulse of Chinook Salmon through the district. Subsistence fishing in the Innoko River drainage and Koyukuk River drainage was also restricted to gillnets with 6-inch or smaller mesh gear to conserve Chinook Salmon. Any salmon incidentally caught with 6-inch or smaller mesh gill net gear may be retained. The Chinook Salmon harvest in the Innoko and Koyukuk Rivers is expected to be low as there are few Chinook Salmon bound for these rivers and limiting gillnet gear to 6-inch or smaller mesh size, would direct the harvest to smaller males.

At this time, Chinook Salmon appear to be demonstrating a run strength above escapement needs, thus warranting an initial relaxation of subsistence fishing that allows some incidental Chinook Salmon harvest while targeting Chum Salmon. Subsistence salmon fishing with selective gear in Districts 1-3, and lower Subdistrict 4-A has been closed and subsistence fishing with 6-inch or less mesh gillnet gear has been opened on half their regulatory schedule. Subsistence salmon fishing with selective gear in upper Subdistrict 4-A will be closed and subsistence fishing with 6-inch or less mesh gillnet gear will be opened on half their regulatory schedule on June 27, and in Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C on July 3. Both the Innoko River and Koyukuk River drainages will be relaxed back to their regulatory schedules of 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller gillnet gear. As the Chinook Salmon run is past the $\frac{3}{4}$ point in the lower Yukon, subsistence salmon fishing is being relaxed back to 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear starting in the southern portion of the Coastal District. Opportunities to harvest Chinook Salmon with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear in Districts 1 and 2 are being evaluated. Opportunities will most likely be “surgical” in nature until managers are confident that the Chinook Salmon run can handle the anticipated harvest.

Commercial fishing has been opened in Districts 1 and 2 with dipnets and beach seines targeting Summer Chum Salmon. Through June 25, there have been thirteen commercial openings targeting Summer Chum Salmon utilizing dipnets and beach seines in District 1, and eight in District 2. Preliminary harvests are 173,000 Summer Chum Salmon with 7,137 Chinook Salmon caught and released. One 9 hour, 5.5-inch or less mesh gillnet gear opening occurred in District 1 with a preliminary harvest of 27,000 Summer Chum and 785 Chinook Salmon incidentally harvested and retained for subsistence purposes. A 4 hour, 6-inch or less mesh gillnet opening is scheduled for District 2, with incidentally caught Chinook Salmon retained for subsistence use and not sold. Managers anticipate additional gillnet gear openings for the rest of the season, depending on the incidental Chinook Salmon harvest.

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. Assessment and management actions were discussed on the third YR DFA teleconference on June 21. Alaska members of the Yukon River Panel, their alternates, and advisors (YAG) teleconferenced with State and Federal managers on June 22. 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.

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:

Opening of Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River to the Harvest of Chinook and Chum Salmon by Federally Qualified Subsistence Users.

In consultation with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) and the State of Alaska, the Federal In-season Manager has opened Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River main-stem within the refuge boundary, to the harvest of Chinook and chum salmon, by Federally qualified subsistence users for 72 hours effective June 21, 2016 from 12:01 p.m. (noon) until 11:59 a.m. (noon) on June 24, 2016 from the Kuskokwim River mouth to the Kalskag Line. North of the Kalskag Line, harvest of Chinook and chum salmon by Federally qualified subsistence users will be allowed until changed by Federal Special Action.

Approved gear types will include drift and set gillnets with the following restrictions:

- 6-inch or less mesh;
- May not exceed 45 meshes in depth;
- May not exceed 25 fathoms (150 feet) in length above the Johnson River to the border of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge at Aniak;
- May not exceed 50 fathoms (300 feet) below the Johnson River to the mouth of the Kuskokwim River.

These opportunities are based on the need to conserve a lower than average Chinook salmon run. While the Chinook run is expected to be smaller than average, managers feel that it is strong enough to allow a limited opportunity for a directed harvest for Federally qualified subsistence users. Please report your harvest to your KRITFC commissioner to ensure that salmon harvest needs are met now and in the future.

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 include residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefornek, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Kongiganek.

These limited opportunities have been implemented by Federal Emergency Special Actions (3-KS-05-16 and 3-KS-06-16) under the delegated authority of the Federal Subsistence Board.

Fishing effort and harvest data associated with this harvest opportunity are currently being tabulated by USFWS and the KRITFC to estimate Chinook harvest during the June 21-24 opportunity.

Closing of Kuskokwim River Tributaries to Gill Nets in Federal public waters

In consultation with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) and the State of Alaska, the Federal In-season Manager has closed the salmon spawning tributaries of Federal public waters, within the Refuge boundary to gill net fishing. The salmon spawning tributaries include the Eek, Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, Tuluksak, and Aniak rivers and their salmon tributaries. The closure is in effect from June 12, 2016 at 12:01 p.m. (noon) until August 11, 2016 at 11:59 p.m. (noon) unless superseded by another federal special action.

This closure is based on the need to conserve Chinook Salmon, which continue to return in low numbers.

Fisheries management below the Refuge boundary at the Kuskokwim River mouth and above the Refuge boundary on the Kuskokwim River at Aniak is under the authority of the State in-season manager. For more information regarding subsistence fishing in these areas, please contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at 907-543-2433.

This restriction has been implemented by Federal Emergency Special Action (3-KS-03-16) 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 25, the cumulative catch per unit of effort (CPUE) of Chinook Salmon at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Bethel Test Fishery is 398. Cumulative CPUE on this date during 2015 and 2014 were 347 and 524, respectively. The cumulative Chinook Salmon CPUE at the Aniak Test Fishery on June 25 was 1515 as compared to 1884 on this date in 2015.

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/>

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Norton Sound District

Sport Fishing: The harvest restrictions for Chinook Salmon in the Unalakleet River drainage and the Shaktoolik River drainage will remain in place through August 15, 2016 unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

Other Eastern Norton Sound Coastal Waters

All water from Wood Point west to Point Romanof remain open to subsistence salmon fishing seven days a week. However, all marine waters from the western tip of Cape Denbigh east to Point Dexter and all marine waters from Black Point south to Wood Point, east of Saint Michael remain closed to subsistence salmon fishing through June 30.

On July 1, subsistence salmon fishing in these marine waters will revert back to 24 hours a day, seven days a week with no restrictions.

Unalakleet (Subdistrict 6)

There were two subsistence gillnet fishing periods in the marine waters of the Unalakleet Subdistrict this week.

The first was a 48 hour period from 6 p.m. Monday, June 20 until 6 p.m. Wednesday. Gillnets were limited to 6 inch or less stretched mesh and 50 fathoms in length. Weather conditions prevented some subsistence fishers from fishing during this fishing period. The seas and winds were expected to improve by the start of the second period Thursday evening.

The second fishing period was a 48 hour period from 6 p.m. Thursday, June 23 until 6 p.m. Saturday, June 25, Gillnets were restricted to 50 fathoms in length with no mesh size restrictions.

Chinook Salmon have begun to pass at the Unalakleet River weir. 53 Chinooks have passed as of early morning June 22 which is the highest number by that date in the seven years of counting. No Chinook Salmon were observed at the North River counting tower as of the same date; however, in only two of the last ten years have Chinook Salmon been observed this early in the season.

Shaktoolik (Subdistrict 5)

There were two subsistence gillnet fishing periods in the marine waters of the Shaktoolik Subdistrict this week.

The first was a 24 hour period from 6 p.m. Tuesday, June 21 until 6 p.m. Wednesday, June 22. Gillnets were limited to 50 fathoms in length, but there were no mesh size restriction. Weather conditions prevented some subsistence fishers from fishing during this fishing period. The seas and winds were expected to improve by the start of the second period Thursday evening.

The second fishing period was a 48 hour period from 6 p.m. Thursday, June 23 until 6 p.m. Saturday, June 25, Gillnets were restricted to 50 fathoms in length with no mesh size restrictions.

As of early morning June 22, 21 Chinook salmon have passed at the Shaktoolik River counting tower and counts are similar to those for the last two years.

Norton Bay (Subdistrict 4)

The subdistrict remains on a subsistence gillnet fishing schedule of two 48-hour periods per week. Periods will be from 6 p.m. Mondays to 6 p.m. Wednesdays, and from 6 p.m.

Fridays to 6 p.m. Sundays. During the Monday to Wednesday period, subsistence users will be restricted to set gillnets with a stretched measure size of 6 inches or less. For weekend 48-hour openings from Fridays to Sundays, there will be no restrictions on mesh size. This schedule will remain in place until midnight Sunday evening, July 3. The Koyuk River drainage is not affected by this action and will remain open to subsistence fishing with no restrictions in place.

Nome (Subdistrict 1)

The Nome Subdistrict subsistence salmon gillnet fishing schedule went into effect June 15, 2016.

A Nome Subdistrict subsistence permit is required to harvest salmon when subsistence fishing in all marine waters and freshwaters flowing into Norton Sound from Cape Rodney to Rocky Point. Freshwater subsistence areas are listed on the back of the permit. Household catch limits for the freshwater subsistence areas are also found on the permit and vary by river.

The weekly gillnet fishing schedule for all marine waters of the Nome Subdistrict west of Cape Nome is from 6 p.m. Wednesday until 6 p.m. Monday. The marine waters east of Cape Nome will remain open seven days a week for subsistence gillnet fishing. Gillnets up to 300 feet in length are allowed in marine waters. No drift setting is allowed.

The weekly gillnet fishing schedule for all freshwaters of the Nome Subdistrict is from 6 p.m. Wednesday until 6 p.m. Monday. The freshwater areas open to gillnet fishing are listed on the permit. Gillnets up to 50 feet in length are allowed. No more than one half of any channel may be blocked by gillnets and no drift setting is allowed. Beach staking is allowed during the subsistence gillnet fishing periods from June 15 through August 15. Dip nets and cast nets can be used during gillnet fishing periods only in the subsistence areas.

Subsistence hook and line fishing is open at all times. Sport fish bag limits apply when subsistence fishing with hook and line outside of Nome subdistrict subsistence areas which are listed on the back of the Nome subdistrict subsistence fishing permit. The Penny and Cripple Rivers are closed to both sport and subsistence chum salmon fishing.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for the Kotzebue Area

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