

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF AUGUST 9-15, 2015.

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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

Klag Bay - The Sitka Tribe of Alaska operates the Sockeye Salmon monitoring weir at Klag Bay which is operational as of July 1st. As of August 11th, 1,951 sockeye have passed the weir while appx. 1,000 have been harvested in the subsistence fishery. In 2014, approximately 10,400 sockeye migrated past the weir while an estimated 4,729 sockeye were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fishery. Subsistence harvest accounted for over 99% of terminal area harvest.

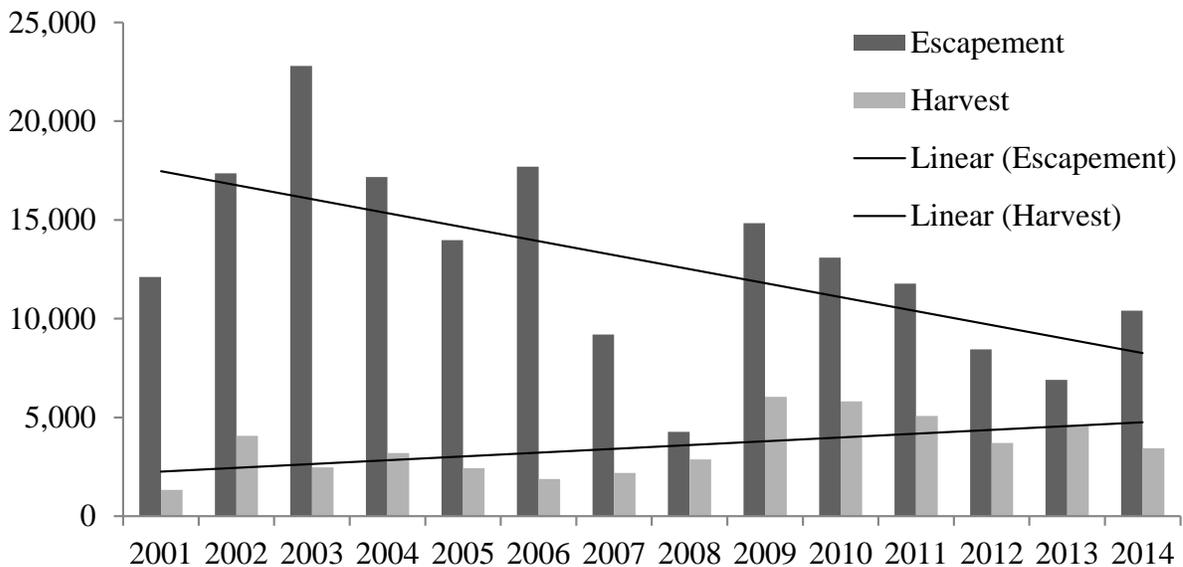


Figure 1. Escapement and harvest of sockeye at Klag Bay, 2001-2014 (Sitka Tribe of Alaska).

Redoubt Lake - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir and video-equipped net weir which were operational June 16th. As of August 12th, 9,382 sockeye and 2,061

coho have passed the weir. High water at the weir on July 28th and 29th resulted in no fish being passed. The weir was not totally inundated and there is no reason to suspect that fish entered the system uncounted. The in-season model is predicting that around 11,000 sockeye will return this season. Coho numbers are eight times higher than the long term average for August 12th. Subsistence harvest is unknown until it is reported to ADF&G. In 2014, an estimated total of 20,549 sockeye passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake. The preliminary subsistence sockeye harvest was 1,313.

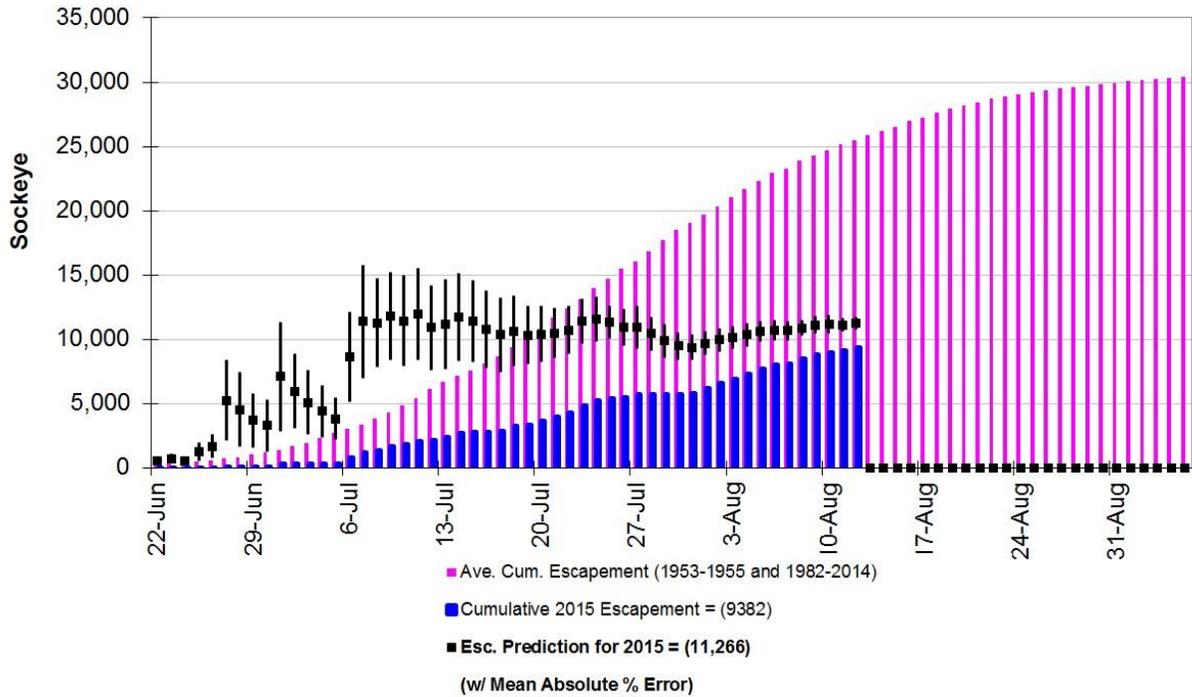


Figure 2. In-season predictions of the final Redoubt Lake sockeye escapement. Based on weir counts through 8/6/2015. The prediction dropped slightly because no fish were allowed to pass during the high water event.

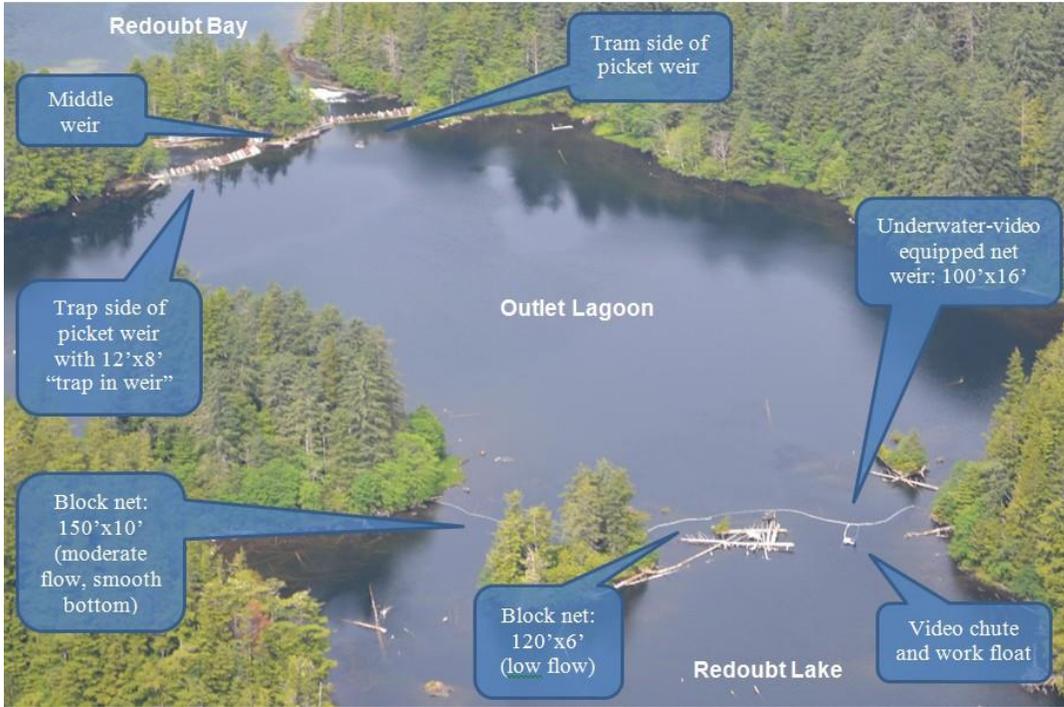


Figure 3. Aerial view (2013) of the outlet lagoon of Redoubt Lake showing the typical locations of the picket weir, net weir and block nets.

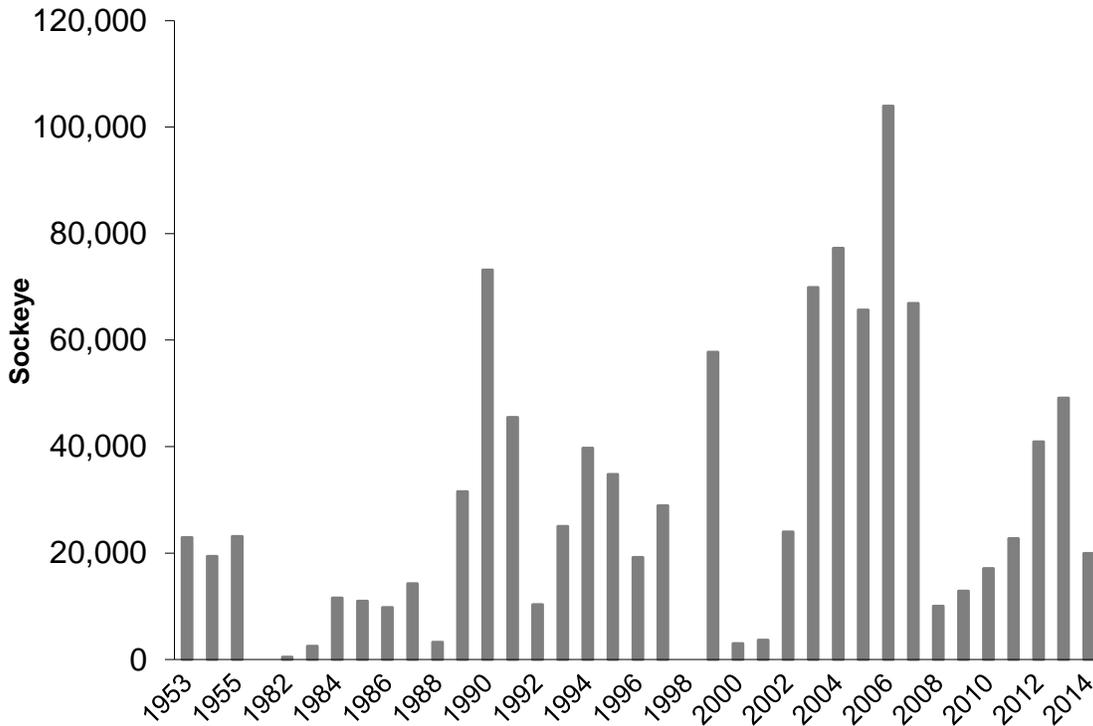


Figure 4. Annual sockeye expanded escapement into Redoubt Lake for years with data: 1953 to 1955, 1982 to 1997, and 1999 to 2014. The weir was not operated in 1998.

Falls Lake - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake operate the Falls Lake trap and video net weir which were operational June 30th. As of August 12th, 1,657 sockeye have been trapped above the fish pass while about 1,100 have been harvested in the subsistence fishery. Based on the annual average percentage of fish using the fish pass and fish video, we estimate the total escapement to date is around 3,500. The subsistence fishery is closed annually from July 14-22 to protect the early portion of the run. Little subsistence harvest has taken place since August 1st. The final escapement estimate in 2014 was 2,748 sockeye while the final subsistence and sport harvest in the marine terminal area was 1,542. Subsistence harvest accounted for over 95% of terminal area harvest.

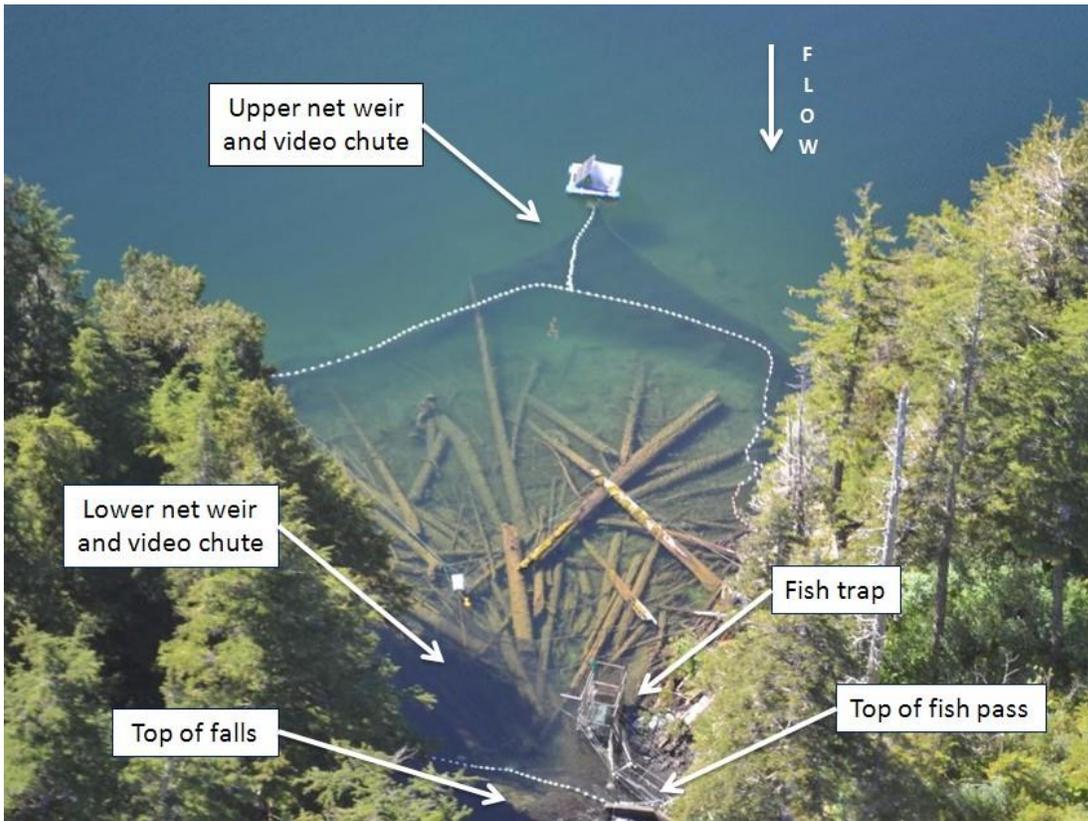


Figure 5. Aerial photo (2013) of the Falls Lake outlet illustrating the typical location of weir equipment.

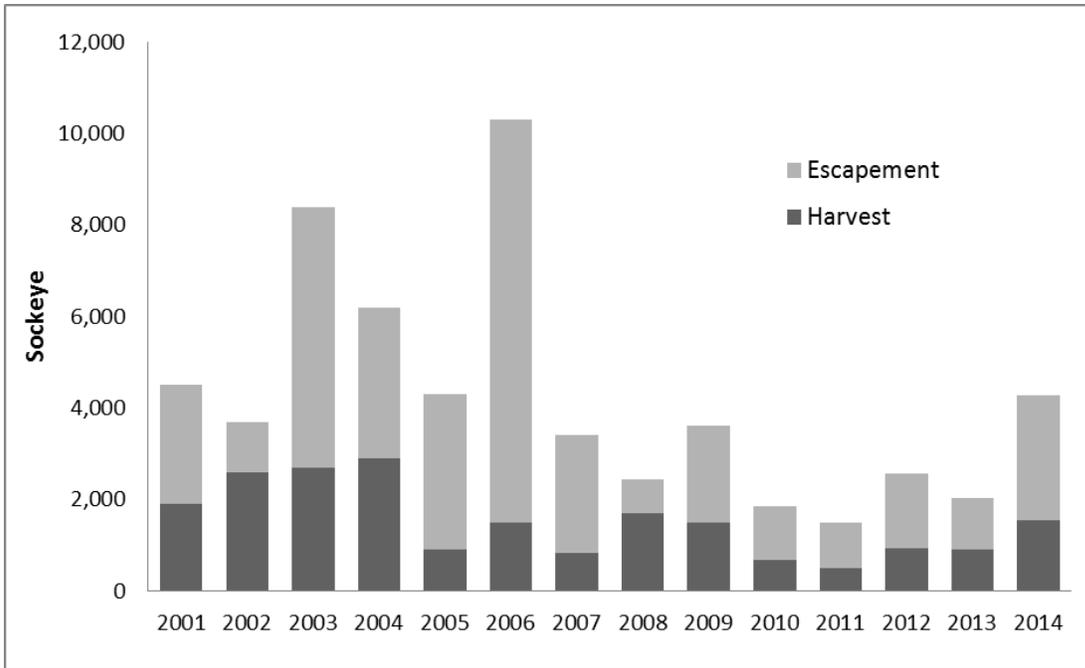


Figure 6. Escapement and harvest of Sockeye Salmon at Falls Lake, 2001-2014.

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

Reporting concluded for 2015 season. Please contact author directly with questions.

The following link is the ADF&G weekly salmon commercial fishery update for Yakutat and Southeast Alaska.

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.salmonfishery_updates

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

In the Yakutat area, ADF&G personnel operated the weir on the lower Situk River through August 5 before pulling it for the season. There were 94,484 sockeye salmon and 172 large Chinook salmon counted through the weir this season. The count of sockeye salmon was above ADF&G’s 30,000 to 70,000 biological escapement goal range. In contrast, the count of Chinook salmon through the Situk River weir is well below ADF&G’s 450 to 1,050 goal range. ADF&G has not allowed retention of Chinook

salmon in their sport and commercial set gillnet fisheries and the Forest Service has not issued permits for the subsistence take of Chinook salmon. ADF&G has also moderated fishing times in the set net fishery and closed waters near the mouth of the Situk River in an effort to protect Chinook salmon. This is the sixth season that we have taken management actions to protect Chinook salmon returning to the Situk River. The broad overlap in timing of these two species through the Situk/Ahrnklin set gillnet fishery makes it difficult to harvest sockeye without catching Chinook salmon. The count of Chinook salmon through the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans weir on the Kluku River weir was within goal ranges this year.

In the northern inside waters of Southeast Alaska, ADF&G projects that the escapement of sockeye salmon into Chilkat Lake will be well within their 38,000 to 86,000 goal ranges. The Chilkat River fishwheel catches are still about twice the historical average and scale pattern analysis finds that over half of these fish are mainstem spawners. The sockeye count through ADF&G's weir on the Chilkoot River weir is projected to be within ADF&G's 70,000 to 150,000 goal range. Catches of sockeye salmon in the joint U.S./Canadian Taku River fishwheels are now above average and the escapement is projected to be above the goal range. Douglas Island Pink and Chum Hatchery personnel have now counted 2,500 sockeye salmon through their weir on the outlet of Speel Lake – the lower bound of ADF&G's escapement goal range is 4,000.

This week the commercial purse seine fishery fished a two-day opening on August 11-12 and will fish a two day opening on August 15-16. Areas open included the Whitestone/Augusta, Tenakee Inlet, Admiralty Island shoreline, and Hidden Falls. During the August 11-12 opening about 21% of the fleet fished in the Whitestone/Augusta and Admiralty Island shoreline areas and the numbers of pink salmon per boat were in the 8,000 to 10,000 fish range. ADF&G did not report the harvests in Tenakee and Hidden Falls since few boats fished these areas. ADF&G now anticipates a total commercial purse seine harvest of 30-35 million pink salmon this season and about 22 million have been harvested to date.

As of August 13, project personnel from the Hoonah Indian Association have counted and validated 1,002 sockeye salmon through the pair of video weirs at the outlet of Neva Lake. This run is about 68% over based on 11-years of weir counts. Angoon Community Association employees now have validated counts of 4,065 sockeye salmon through the pair of video weirs on Kook Lake. It is difficult to use historical weir counts to access the timing of this run since the migration of fish into the lake is directly affected by the commercial purse seine fishing effort in Icy Strait and Chatham Strait. The Angoon Community Association crew has also been counting sockeye salmon through the pair of remotely monitored video weirs at the outlet of Sitkoh Lake but we do not have an updated count for this report. At Kanalku Lake, ADF&G reports video weir counts of 1,570 sockeye salmon to the base of the falls and 887 (56%) into the lake.

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

There have been 241 permits issued for the 2015 Federal subsistence salmon fishery in the Southeast Alaska and Yakutat areas. Most effort typically occurs on Prince of Wales Island and is directed at Coho Salmon.

Subsistence effort will close in most Prince of Wales Systems July 31st. The Klawock fishery closes August 7 and the Hetta/Eek fisheries will continue through the remainder of the month.

Sockeye Salmon weirs are currently active and fishing at Hatchery Creek and Hetta. To date 4,853 Sockeye and 377 Coho Salmon have passed through at Hatchery Creek. Total count at the Hetta weir is 2,239 Sockeye Salmon. Salmon are continuing to move into Klawock Lake with counts at 3,129 Sockeye, 6,777 Pink and 8 Chinook Salmon.

Commercial fisheries within Districts 1-4 are in full swing. Total estimated harvests in these districts to date are: 485,825 Sockeye, 124,185 Coho, 6,848,600 Pink and 1,649,800 Chum Salmon.

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 – Molly McCormick, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve. (907) 822-7280 Molly_McCormick@nps.gov

The ADF&G sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the lower Copper River) was pulled on July 27 with a final estimate of 1,341,545 salmon. This estimate is 192% of the projected escapement objective of 700,490 for this date, or 641,055 more salmon. It is the highest escapement counted at the Miles Lake sonar since it started in 1978. An estimate of 4,386 salmon migrated by the sonar counter on the final day of counting.

MILES LAKE SONAR ESTIMATES (TOTAL SALMON)

Year	Estimate	Year	Estimate	Year	Estimate	Year	Estimate
1978	107,011	1988	488,398	1998	866,957	2008	614,999
1979	237,173	1989	607,797	1999	848,921	2009	709,330
1980	276,538	1990	581,895	2000	587,592	2010	924,010
1981	535,263	1991	579,435	2001	833,569	2011	914,285
1982	467,306	1992	601,952	2002	819,000	2012	1,271,354
1983	545,724	1993	797,902	2003	695,233	2013	1,267,060
1984	536,806	1994	715,181	2004	669,646	2014	1,218,418
1985	436,313	1995	599,265	2005	854,268	2015	1,341,545
1986	509,275	1996	906,867	2006	959,731		
1987	483,478	1997	1,148,079	2007	926,438		

Commercial harvests in the Copper River District of Prince William Sound so far are:

- 22,764 Chinook
- 1,549,196 sockeye
- 13,090 coho
- 78,961 pink
- 15,032 chum

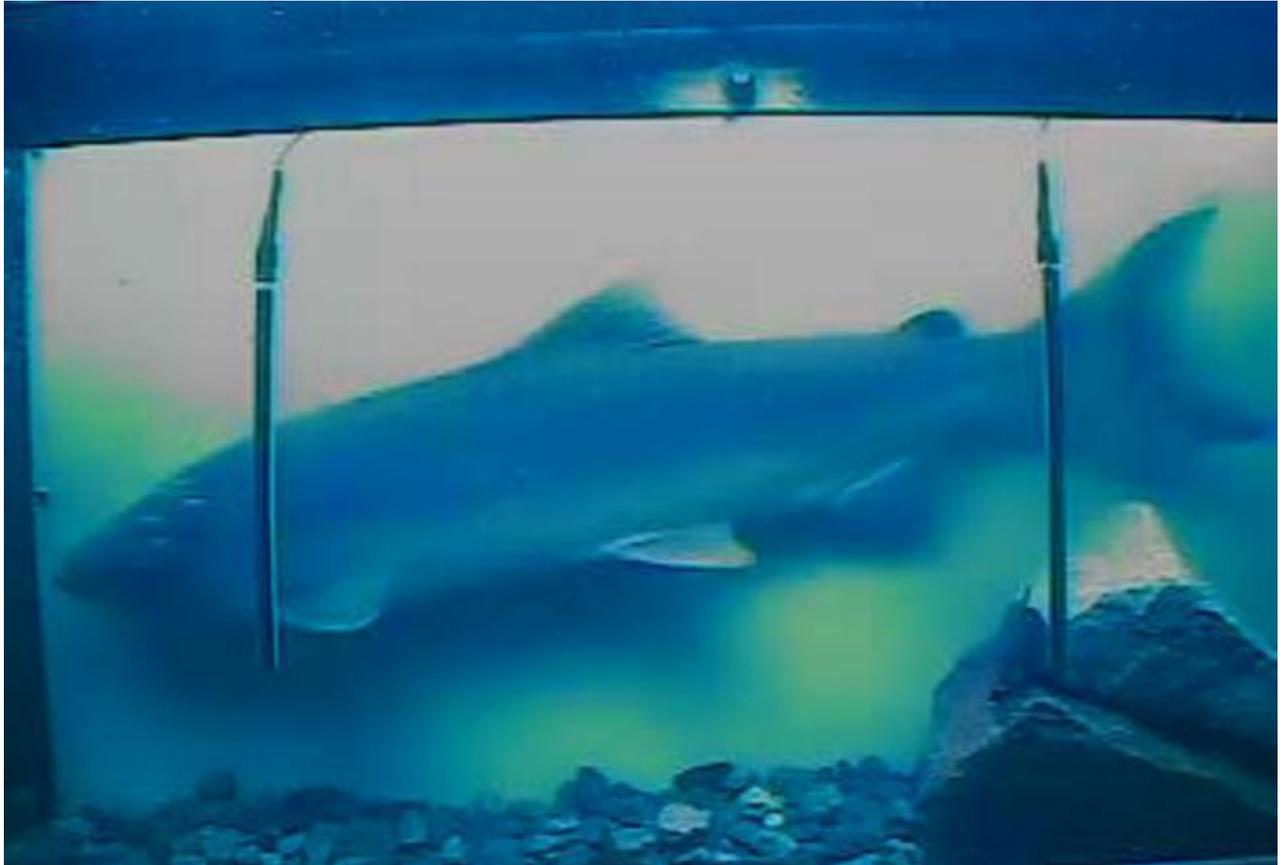
The Chitina Subdistrict is open and scheduled to remain open throughout the rest of the season – through September 30, 2015. The state and federal fisheries in the Chitina Subdistrict usually follow identical fishing schedules which are set by the state. Eighty-two Federal Chitina Subdistrict permits have been issued on FWS’s online data base plus additional permits that have been issued in 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. 295 Federal Glennallen Subdistrict permits have been issued on FWS’s 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 1st.

The Batzulnetas Area fishery opened on May 15 and is expected to remain open until September 30, 2015. Four permits have been issued so far.

The Tanada Creek weir was operational on May 27. The crew has counted 6,392 sockeye salmon and no Chinook migrating through the weir as of August 13.

The Long Lake weir started operating on July 28. Forty-two sockeye and no coho have migrated through the weir as of August 13.



Sockeye migrating through the Long Lake weir as seen on video monitor.

2,626 Chinook were tagged this year at the two project fishwheels in Baird Canyon operated by the Native Village of Eyak; 128 were recaptured at the Canyon Creek wheels. The Baird Canyon wheels stopped operating for the season on July 10. The Canyon Creek wheels stopped operating for the season on July 26.

ADF&G's counting tower in the Gulkana River was installed on June 2. The tower stopped operations for the season on August 6, with a final count of 3,648 Chinook and 23,292 sockeye.

Effective June 20, 2015, by emergency order of ADF&G, the bag and possession limit for sport-caught sockeye salmon 16 inches or longer in the Copper River drainage increased from 3 to 6.

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

- delaying the starting date of the Chitina River federal salmon fishery and setting the pre-season schedule for the fishery
- amending the preseason schedule for the Chitina Subdistrict for the week of July 6 – July 12, allowing a full week (168 hours) of fishing, and providing the tentative schedule for future fishing periods
- amending the preseason schedule for the Chitina Subdistrict for the week of July 13-19, allowing a full week (168 hours) of fishing
- amending the preseason schedule for the Chitina Subdistrict for the week of July 20-26, allowing a full week (168 hours) of fishing
- amending the preseason schedule for the Chitina Subdistrict for the week of July 27- August 2, allowing a full week (168 hours) of fishing

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>

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence User's Guide

<http://www.nps.gov/wrst/historyculture/upload/Subsistence%20brochure.pdf>

Prince William Sound Federal Subsistence Regulations including Copper River.

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

Gulkana River counting tower – ADF&G

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

Link to article in the Peninsula Clarion about the smaller-than-average trend for sockeye salmon this season

<http://peninsulaclarion.com/news/2015-06-25/across-state-early-salmon-catches-underweight>

PWS and Copper River Flats – Milo Burcham, Forest Service, Cordova.

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

Copper River District opened at 7:00 am, Thursday, August 13 for a 36-hour commercial fishing period. For the week ending August 1, the actual Copper River delta survey count was 38,180 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 32,568 – 76,979. Hatchery contributions from the period that closed on July 24 were 46% Gulkana Hatchery.

A total of 47 Federal Subsistence fishing permits have been issued for freshwaters within the Prince William Sound of Chugach National Forest to date. There are reports of anglers beginning to catch coho in the Eyak River and Ibeck Creek. Ninety-one permits were issued last season. Harvest by this year’s permit holders will not be known until reports are returned this winter. In 2014, 630 coho and 76 sockeye were harvested on Copper River Delta fresh waters in this fishery.

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

Subsistence users continue to harvest late-run Sockeye Salmon in the subsistence dip net fishery at the Russian River Falls and harvest of 1,133 Sockeye Salmon has been reported through August 13. Harvest of 65 Sockeye Salmon has been reported in the Kasilof River subsistence dip net fishery. Harvest of 223 Sockeye Salmon has been reported in the Kasilof River experimental community gillnet fishery through July 31 which is the regulatory end date for the fishery. Totals of 139 Kenai River permits, 33 Kasilof River permits, and 14 Designated Fisher permits have been issued through August 13.

Emergency Special Action 10-KS-01-15 remains in effect which closed the Federal subsistence fishery for Chinook Salmon in the Kenai River downstream from the outlet of Skilak Lake through Saturday, August 15, 2015. This closure prohibits all subsistence fishing for Chinook Salmon, including dip net, rod and reel, and community gillnet fisheries.

Fish Counts through August12:

Russian River early-run sockeye (weir)	50,226	(count ended on July 14)
Russian River late-run sockeye (weir)	26,953	(count began on July 15)
Kenai River late-run sockeye (sonar)	1,313,534	(counts began on July 1)
Kasilof River sockeye (sonar)	460,324	(counts ended Aug. 11)
Kenai River early-run Chinook (sonar)	6,190	(counts ended on June 30)
Kenai River late-run Chinook (sonar)	21,614	(counts through Aug. 11)

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

This will be the final Kodiak Area weekly report for the 2015 season. The Sockeye Salmon returns to the Kodiak Archipelago continue to be very strong. Many of the systems with weirs on them have either met their respective lower escapement goal or exceeded their upper escapement goal.

The Sockeye Salmon returns on those systems with no late run activities have slowed considerably. Saltery Creek weir was closed on August 6, final escapement count of 42,468 fish (escapement goal 15,000 to 35,000 fish); Dog Salmon weir was closed on August 8 with a final escapement count of 235,813 Sockeye Salmon and a surprisingly large return of 218,054 Pink Salmon; Pauls Bay weir was closed on August 11, 2015 with a final escapement count of 11,740 fish; and Frazer Lake weir was closed on August 13, 2015 with a final escapement count of 219,093 fish.. The late run Sockeye Salmon returns continue to be strong with the Ayakulik River meeting its lower escapement goal, 76,075 fish (escapement goal range 60,000 to 120,000 fish). The total escapement counts are very strong with 294,253 fish, which is second highest count in the past ten years.

The late run Sockeye Salmon returns to Karluk River continue to be strong with 91,627 fish passing the weir (escapement goal 170,000 to 380,000). The total Sockeye Salmon escapement count is very strong with counts being the largest in the past ten years with 324,663 fish. Subsistence users from Karluk village and Larsen Bay are expected to meet most of their needs because of exceptional escapement of Sockeye Salmon coupled with their traditional reliance on this species. These villagers will be active through early September.

Sockeye Salmon continue to trickle into Litnik “Afognak” Lake with a cumulative escapement count of 38,018 fish (escapement goal 20,000 to 50,000 fish). Many villagers from Port Lions have reported meeting their subsistence needs for the season. The Sockeye Salmon run in the Buskin River has also slowed considerably but it has exceeded its upper escapement goal with a cumulative count of 8,423 fish (escapement goal 5,000 to 8,000 fish).

Chinook Salmon returns to the Karluk River have concluded and the stock did not meet the lower escapement goal with a total escapement 2,768 fish as of August 13, 2015. To protect this fish stock, State and Federal managers issued an emergency order and special action closing the Karluk River to subsistence fishing to Chinook Salmon on June 19, 2014. Chinook Salmon returns to the Ayakulik River also did not meet its lower escapement goal with a total count of 2,392 fish as of August 13, 2015. To protect both the Karluk and Ayakulik River fish stock, State and Federal managers issued an emergency order and special action closing both systems to subsistence fishing for the entire season on June 19, 2014.

Coho Salmon have arrived around the island a little earlier than normal showing up as jumpers in front of big streams and in fishing nets. To date weir counts for Coho Salmon are 394 at Ayakulik on the west side, 63 at Upper Station, 72 at Chignik, 70 at Buskin, with additional reports of Coho Salmon showing up at Kalsin Bay and around Old Harbor. Coho Salmon are an important subsistence resourced to many Kodiak Island residents as well as enjoyment to harvest by rod and reel. Subsistence users enjoy putting them up by canning, freezing and smoking or drying.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kodiak Area

<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/pdf/fishregs13/kodiak.pdf>

**Bristol Bay and Chignik – Jon Gerken – Acting Inseason Manager Fisheries Branch
Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office**

Jon_Gerken@fws.gov 907-271-2776

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

This is the final inseason subsistence report for 2015.

Bristol Bay:

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

For Bristol Bay, the forecast was for an extremely large return of 54 million sockeye salmon. The realized sockeye return was 50.1 million and nearly at forecast. Run timing was extremely late. All districts made escapement goals, including Togiak, where commercial fishing is ongoing.

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

Chignik:

For Chignik, the forecast for total return of sockeye salmon was approximately 1.3 million early run and 1.2 million late run fish. The forecasts for both early-run and late-run sockeye are in excess of escapement goals. The early-run SEG was reclassified to a BEG starting in 2014. The late-run SEG includes an additional 50,000 sockeye for additional subsistence harvest opportunity. Commercial fishing management is typically based on early run assessment until approximately July 4; then late run assessment after that. However this year, genetic sampling continued to show very high proportions of early-run fish, and their run timing was extremely late. To date, total sockeye escapement is 547 thousand, of which late-run escapement is 36 thousand. Commercial fishing is ongoing.

The escapement goal for Chinook salmon is 1,300 fish. In 2013, all inriver Chinook salmon fisheries, including the new Federal subsistence fishery, were closed by E.O. (State fisheries) or Special Action (Federal fishery closed effective July 27) and no Federal subsistence harvest was realized for 2013. In 2014, there was no commercial fishery for early run sockeye and the Chinook return was adequate to sustain inriver fisheries including the Federal subsistence fishery. The Federal subsistence fishery for

Chinook was open until August 9 with rod and reel from a point 300 feet upstream of the ADFG weir to Chignik Lake with no daily harvest or possession limit under the authority of a Federal subsistence fishing permit. Federal subsistence fishing permits were available in four communities through village or tribal administrators. Total inriver return through the Chignik River weir is 2,664 fish.

Select tributaries to Chignik Lake are open to subsistence fishing. Gillnets and seines are the primary gear used for most subsistence fishing. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Alaska Peninsula:

There are numerous salmon stocks and fisheries throughout the Alaska Peninsula, as well as the Aleutian Islands. Several sockeye escapements (mostly on the north peninsula) are monitored with weirs. Escapements to date are: Nelson (213 thousand), Bear (241 thousand), Sandy (94 thousand), Ilnik (24 thousand), and McLees (18 thousand) rivers.

A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Stock Assessment funded under the Subsistence Fishery Resource Monitoring Program:

For 2015, there are no stock assessment projects funded under the Subsistence Fishery Resource Monitoring Program.

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 closed for the season. Please call the Fairbanks office at (907) 455-1849.

Fall Season Outlook and Management Actions

The Yukon Area began Fall Season management in the lower river districts on July 16. Upper Subdistrict 5-D, which includes the villages of Circle and Eagle are transitioning to fall season August 14-20. The fall chum salmon run in the lower Yukon is between the mid-point and $\frac{3}{4}$ point of the run. Based on the in-season run assessment at the Pilot Station sonar the projected fall chum salmon run size is falling between the pre-season run size projection of 700,000 and 800,000 fish. This level of abundance should be adequate to meet escapement and subsistence priorities and provide for commercial harvest.

Subsistence fishermen had been heavily restricted during the summer season and are looking for fall chum to supplement their unfulfilled subsistence salmon needs. Subsistence salmon fishing has been relaxed in Districts 1, 2, and 3 to 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, restricted to 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear. In Districts 1 and 2, subsistence salmon fishing will be closed 12-hours before, during, and 12-hours after each commercial fishing period. Subsistence salmon fishing in Districts 4 and 5 has been liberalized to 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, restricted to 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear and fish wheels. District 6 remains on their normal regulatory subsistence fishing schedule.

Eight commercial fishing periods have been opened in District 1 and six periods have been opened in District 2. The preliminary fall chum salmon commercial harvest in Districts 1 and 2 is 112,640 fish. This harvest amount is within the manager's expectations for the projected amount of available surplus. The preliminary coho salmon commercial harvest in Districts 1 and 2 is 39,103 fish. This is a much higher coho harvest than average for this time of the season and higher than expected based upon in-season assessment information.

Fall Season Assessment Information

At this time the cumulative CPUE at the Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) is 756.67, below the median of 839.95. The Mt. Village Test Fishery (MVTF) has a cumulative CPUE of 1035.83, below the median at this time of 1,256.60. The Pilot Station sonar has a cumulative estimated passage of 354,380 fall chum, slightly above the median estimated passage of 337,236. Taking into account the harvests below the sonar, the Pilot

Station sonar reconstructed passage is 471,967 fall chum, above the median of 419,812. Four pulses of fall chum salmon have passed through the lower Yukon. The first pulse is passing through lower Subdistrict 5D and was detected by the Rapids video test fish wheel, and the fourth pulse is passing through District 2 at this time.

Coho typically enter the Yukon River during the second half of the fall chum run. At this time the cumulative CPUE at the LYTF is 166.48, above the median of 119.16. The MVTF has a cumulative CPUE of 270.77, above the median at this time of 233.91. The Pilot Station sonar has a cumulative estimated passage of 15,507 coho salmon, below the median estimated passage of 33,185. Taking into account the harvests below the sonar, the Pilot Station sonar reconstructed passage is 37,688 coho salmon, above the median of 34,102. The outlook is for an average to below average coho salmon run with a potential for 60,000-80,000 fish available for commercial harvests.

Summer Season Summary

The current end of season assessment is that the Chinook salmon total run size was above expectations based on the Eagle Sonar estimate as it ended above the upper end of the preseason projection range of 118,000 to 140,000 fish. Post-season analysis will seek to rectify the differences between the Pilot Station and Eagle sonar assessments. The current in season summer chum salmon run size assessment of approximately 1.8 million, is at the low end of the pre-season projection of 1.8-2.4 million chum, enough to provide for escapement needs, normal subsistence harvest levels, and a surplus for other uses.

Summer season escapement projects are either done or nearing their completion dates. For Chinook salmon, projects have at least exceeded their minimum Chinook salmon escapement goals or are above average passage, except for the Gisasa River weir which is slightly below its average passage. Summer chum salmon escapement goals have been met or projects are near or above their average passage estimates. Estimated passage of Chinook salmon past the Eagle sonar is 84,000 fish, above the high end of the Canadian Interim Management Escapement Goal and harvest sharing agreement. Escapement goals were met as result of the severe Chinook salmon subsistence fishing restrictions that were implemented this year.

Consultation

Federal and State managers have visited the upriver communities of Beaver, Venetie, Chalkyitsik, Circle and Fort Yukon, and lower river communities of Pilot Station and Anvik to discuss management strategies and address fishermen's concerns. Additional visits to other communities are anticipated this season. Weekly YR DFA teleconferences began on June 2, and a YAG (Yukon Advisory Group) meeting was held on June 18. Another YAG meeting was held, Monday, July 13, to discuss subsistence fishing opportunities for District 5 and review the fall season management.

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Kuskokwim River

Summary: *Taken from ADF&G Update #9*

Cumulative CPUE is below average for this time of year, indicating the coho salmon run is either late, weak, or both. Coho salmon have only recently begun to arrive in consistent numbers at tributary escapement monitoring projects. Escapement is below average at nearly all monitoring locations. Tributary escapement projects are currently experiencing relatively low and clear water conditions. The first commercial harvest opportunity for coho salmon was August 10, downriver from Bethel. Total harvest and CPUE from that commercial opportunity was average for this time of year. Inseason projections of run strength suggest that coho salmon abundance is likely adequate to meet escapement needs, provide for an increased subsistence harvest compared to recent years, and allow for limited commercial harvest.

Bethel Test Fish:

- Through the evening tide on August 15th the cumulative coho index was 1,837, at this time last year the cumulative index was 3,648.

Kwethluk River Weir: Through August 15th

- Cumulative coho salmon counts total 1,425, at this time last year the cumulative index was 6,667. This is the slowest start since 2009.

Tuluksak River Weir: Through August 15th

- Cumulative coho salmon counts total 1,109, at this time last year the cumulative index was 1,720.

Salmon River Weir: Through August 15th

- Cumulative coho salmon counts total 267, at this time last year the cumulative index was 730.

George River Weir: Through August 15th

- Cumulative coho salmon counts total 1,131, at this time last year the cumulative index was 2,714.

Tatlawiksuk River Weir: Through August 15th

- Cumulative coho salmon counts total 410, at this time last year the cumulative index was 886.

Kogruluk River Weir: Through August 15th

- Cumulative coho salmon counts total 374, at this time last year the cumulative index was 2,515.

Management Actions:

The first commercial harvest opportunity in District W1 was August 10. Total harvest was 3 Chinook salmon, 100 sockeye salmon, 366 chum salmon, and 23,335 coho salmon. Coho salmon harvest and CPUE was average.

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

Over 89,000 silver salmon have been harvested in the commercial fishery this season. The commercial harvest of silver salmon is well above average for mid-August and will exceed the upper bound of the preseason forecast of 90,000 silvers. This year's harvest currently projects out at being the 4th best on record, but could possibly approach the

record harvests of the 2006-2008 seasons when between 120,000-130,000 silvers were caught annually. Hazardous marine surf conditions have recently curtailed fishing effort throughout much of Norton Sound.

Unalakleet (Subdistrict 6) and Shaktoolik (Subdistrict 5)

Commercial Fishing: The August 12th 48 hours fishing period was affected by the hazardous marine surf conditions so was lengthened by 24 hours, in effect creating a 72-hour period concluding at 6:00 p.m. Saturday evening, August 15. Silver salmon counts at the Unalakleet River weir continue to be strong for early August with over 36,000 silvers counted through August 13. Additionally, projections of escapement to the North River based on 3,300 silvers counted through August 13 range between 7,000-9,000 silvers. This range of projected escapements indicate the North River aerial survey SEG range of 550-1,100 silver salmon will be exceeded and inriver abundance of silver salmon will provide subsistence uses of silver salmon.

North River Tower – Camp J.B. - A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from Fish & Game has escapement goals of 1,200-2,600 kings; 25,000 pinks; 550-1,100 silvers (aerial survey); and no goal yet established for chums. The silver salmon count this season has been 3,600 silvers.

Unalakleet River Floating Weir – A cooperative project of Fish & Game, Native Village of Unalakleet, United States BLM and NSEDC with major funding provided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management. There are no weir escapement goals yet. The silver salmon count this season has been 38,000 silvers.

Shaktoolik Tower – A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from Fish & Game has no escapement goals yet established. The silver salmon count this season has been 11,000 silvers.

Norton Bay (Subdistrict 4), Elim (Subdistrict 3), and Golovin (Subdistrict 2)

The Golovin, Elim, and Norton Bay subdistricts reopened for two 48-hour commercial salmon fishing periods from 6:00 p.m. Saturday, August, 15 to 6:00 p.m. Monday, August 17 and from 6:00 Wednesday, August 19 to 6:00 p.m. Friday, August 21. Commercial harvests of silver salmon through August 13 in the three subdistricts are projected to be the 2nd best on record. Projections of Niukluk River and Kwiniuk River silver escapements based on current tower counts indicate escapement goals and inriver subsistence uses of silver salmon will be met.

Inglutalik River Tower – A cooperative project of NSEDC and ADF&G. No escapement goals have been established. The silver salmon count this season has been 8,000 silvers.

Kwiniuk River Tower – A Fish & Game project with assistance from NSEDC has escapement goals of 300-550 kings; 11,500 – 23,000 chums; 8,400 pinks; and 650-1,300 silvers (aerial survey goal). The silver salmon count season has been 2,400 silvers.

Fish River Tower - A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from Fish & Game. No escapement goals have been established. The silver salmon count this season has been 7,200 silvers.

Nome (Subdistrict 1)

Subsistence Fishing: Beach seining is no longer allowed. The subsistence set gillnet schedule in the marine waters west of Cape Nome is from 6:00 p.m. Monday until 6:00 p.m. Saturday. The marine waters east of Cape Nome are open seven days a week. There are no catch limits when fishing in marine waters. The fresh water subsistence area set gillnet schedule is from 6:00 p.m. Monday until 6:00 p.m. Wednesday and from 6:00 p.m. Thursday until 6:00 p.m. Saturday. Catch limits vary by river and fishermen should check the backs of their permits. The chum salmon limit for the Nome and Snake rivers have been waived.

Solomon River Weir – A Fish & Game project, has no escapement goals yet established. The silver salmon count this season has been 30 silvers.

Nome River Weir – A Fish & Game project with assistance from NSEDC has an escapement goal of 2,900 – 4,300 chum salmon and 3,200 pink salmon. The silver salmon count this season has been 70 silvers.

Snake River Weir – A cooperative project between Fish & Game and NSEDC has an escapement goal of 1,600 – 2,500 chum salmon. The silver salmon count this season has been 75 silvers.

Port Clarence District

Gillnetting and beach seining are allowed 7 days per week. All subsistence sockeye salmon catch limits have been waived on the Pilgrim River. Fishermen need to check the back of their permit for limits on other salmon.

Pilgrim River Weir –A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from Fish & Game has an escapement goal of 4,000 – 8,000 sockeyes based on aerial survey at Salmon Lake & Grand Central tributary to Salmon Lake. Passage at the Pilgrim River on August 14 was 435 sockeyes. The total passage of sockeyes this season is 35,000 sockeyes,

Kotzebue District

Daily commercial salmon fishing openings between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. occurred from Sunday, August 8 through Friday, August 14. Fishermen were limited by the buyer to a daily catch limit of 1,500 pounds.

The 2015 commercial harvest to date is 255,000 chum salmon and is tracking to be at least the third highest catch in 20 years.

Commercial salmon fishing will reopen daily from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. beginning Sunday, August 16 through Friday August 21 in the district. The buyer plans to continue having a catch limit of 1,500 pounds daily for each permit holder.

Kobuk River Test Fish - Fish & Game project. The chum catches have held steady this week and are the sixth highest overall in the 23-year history of the project. .

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