

FP25–04 Executive Summary

General Description	Fisheries Proposal FP25-04 requests to establish salmon harvest limits specific to the Buskin River to match the Womens Bay rod and reel only area Federal salmon harvest limits. <i>Submitted by Rebecca Skinner of Kodiak</i>
Proposed Regulation	See page 80 of this book for proposed regulations.
OSM Conclusion	Support
Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	Oppose
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	The Interagency Staff Committee found the staff analysis to be a thorough and accurate evaluation of the proposal and that it provides sufficient basis for the Regional Advisory Council recommendation and Federal Subsistence Board action on the proposal.
ADF&G Comments	Neutral
Written Public Comments	None

STAFF ANALYSIS
FP25-04

ISSUES

Fisheries Proposal FP25-04 was submitted by Rebecca Skinner of Kodiak and requests to establish salmon harvest limits specific to the Buskin River to match the Womens Bay rod and reel only area Federal salmon harvest limits, which currently match State sport fishing limits.

DISCUSSION

The proponent states that conservation measures are needed for Coho and Sockeye salmon at the mouth of the Buskin River to ensure adequate numbers of salmon can enter the Buskin River system.

Existing Federal Regulation

§____. 50 CFR 100.27(e)(9)

* * * * *

(iii) You may subsistence fish for salmon with rod and reel only in the following locations:

(A) Womens Bay—All waters inside a line from the tip of the Nyman Peninsula (57°43.23' North latitude, 152°31.51' West longitude), to the northeastern tip of Mary's Island (57°42.40' North latitude, 152°32.00' West longitude), to the southeastern shore of Womens Bay at 57°41.95' North latitude, 152°31.50' West longitude.

(1) King salmon: bag and possession limit of two fish; no size limit; no annual limit.

(2) Salmon, other than king salmon, that are:

(i) 20 inches or greater in length; bag and possession limit of five fish, of which only two may be coho salmon and only two may be sockeye salmon.

(ii) Less than 20 inches in length; bag and possession limit of 10 fish.

(iii) From September 16 through December 31, the bag and possession limit for coho salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, is one fish.

(B) Buskin River marine waters—All waters inside of a line running from a marker on the bluff north of the mouth of the Buskin River at approximately 57°45.80' North

latitude, 152°28.38' West longitude, to a point offshore at 57°45.35' North latitude, 152°28.15' West longitude, to a marker located onshore south of the river mouth at approximately 57°45.15' North latitude, 152°28.65' West longitude.

* * * * *

(v) *The annual limit for a subsistence salmon fishing permit holder is as follows:*

(A) *In the road-accessible Zone (Northeastern Kodiak Island), east of the line from Crag Point south to the westernmost point of Saltery Cove, including the inland waters of Spruce, Woody and Long Islands, and the Federal marine waters of and around Womens Bay, 25 salmon for the permit holder plus an additional 25 salmon for each member of the same household whose names are listed on the permit: an additional permit may be obtained upon request.*

(B) *In the remainder of the Kodiak Area not described in paragraphs (e)(9)(iii)(A) and (e)(9)(v)(A) of this section, there is no annual harvest limit for a subsistence salmon fishing permit holder.*

* * * * *

Proposed Federal Regulation

§____. 50 CFR 100.27(e)(9)

* * * * *

(iii) *You may subsistence fish for salmon with rod and reel only in the following locations:*

(A) *Womens Bay—All waters inside a line from the tip of the Nyman Peninsula (57°43.23' North latitude, 152°31.51' West longitude), to the northeastern tip of Mary's Island (57°42.40' North latitude, 152°32.00' West longitude), to the southeastern shore of Womens Bay at 57°41.95' North latitude, 152°31.50' West longitude.*

(1) *King salmon: bag and possession limit of two fish; no size limit; no annual limit.*

(2) *Salmon, other than king salmon, that are:*

(i) *20 inches or greater in length; bag and possession limit of five fish, of which only two may be coho salmon and only two may be sockeye salmon.*

(ii) *Less than 20 inches in length; bag and possession limit of 10 fish.*

(iii) From September 16 through December 31, the bag and possession limit for coho salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, is one fish.

(B) Buskin River marine waters—All waters inside of a line running from a marker on the bluff north of the mouth of the Buskin River at approximately 57°45.80' North latitude, 152°28.38' West longitude, to a point offshore at 57°45.35' North latitude, 152°28.15' West longitude, to a marker located onshore south of the river mouth at approximately 57°45.15' North latitude, 152°28.65' West longitude.

(1) The following limits apply only to the Federal public waters of the Buskin River (downstream of mean high tide).

(2) King salmon: bag and possession limit of two fish; no size limit; no annual limit.

(3) Salmon, other than king salmon, that are:

(i) 20 inches or greater in length; bag and possession limit of five fish, of which only two may be coho salmon and only two may be sockeye salmon.

(ii) Less than 20 inches in length; bag and possession limit of 10 fish.

(iii) From September 16 through December 31, the bag and possession limit for coho salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, is one fish.

* * * * *

(v) The annual limit for a subsistence salmon fishing permit holder is as follows:

*(A) In the road-accessible Zone (Northeastern Kodiak Island), east of the line from Crag Point south to the westernmost point of Saltery Cove, including the inland waters of Spruce, Woody and Long Islands, and the Federal marine waters of and around Womens Bay **not described in paragraph (e)(9)(iii)(A) and (e)(9)(iii)(B)**, 25 salmon for the permit holder plus an additional 25 salmon for each member of the same household whose names are listed on the permit: an additional permit may be obtained upon request.*

(B) In the remainder of the Kodiak Area not described in paragraphs (e)(9)(iii)(A), (e)(9)(iii)(B), and (e)(9)(v)(A) of this section, there is no annual harvest limit for a subsistence salmon fishing permit holder.

* * * * *

Relevant Federal Regulation

§____. 50 CFR 100.27(c)(2) *Fishing permits and reports*

- (i) *You may not take more fish for subsistence use than the limits set out in the permit;*
- (ii) *You must obtain the permit prior to fishing;*

* * * * *

Existing State Regulation

5 AAC 01.530. Subsistence fishing permits

(a) *A subsistence fishing permit is required for taking salmon, trout, char, and herring for subsistence purposes.*

(b) *The annual limit for a subsistence salmon fishing permit holder is as follows:*

(1) in the fresh waters of Kodiak Island, east of a line from Crag Point south to the westernmost point of Saltery Cove, including the waters of Woody and Long Islands, and the salt waters bordering this area within one mile of Kodiak Island, excluding the waters bordering Spruce Island, 25 salmon for the permit holder plus an additional 25 salmon for each member of the same household whose names are listed on the permit; an additional permit may be obtained if it can be shown that more fish are needed;

(2) in the remainder of the Kodiak Area not described in (1) of this subsection, there is no annual limit.

Existing State Sport Fish Regulation

5 AAC 64.022 Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for the Kodiak Area.

(a) *Unless otherwise specified in this section, 5 AAC 64.051, or 5 AAC 64.060, or by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060, the following are the bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and special provisions for finfish and shellfish in the waters of the Kodiak Area:*

(1) king salmon: may be taken from January 1—December 31, as follows:

(A) in fresh waters:

(i) 20 inches or greater in length; bag and possession limit of two fish; annual limit of five king salmon; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006;

(ii) less than 20 inches in length; bag and possession limit of 10 fish; king salmon less than 20 inches in length caught in fresh water do not count toward the annual limit;

(B) in salt waters: bag and possession limit of two fish; no size limit; no annual limit; a harvest record is not required;

(2) salmon, other than king salmon: may be taken from January 1—December 31, as follows:

(A) 20 inches or greater in length; bag and possession limit of five fish, of which only two may be coho salmon and only two may be sockeye salmon;

(B) less than 20 inches in length; bag and possession limit of 10 fish

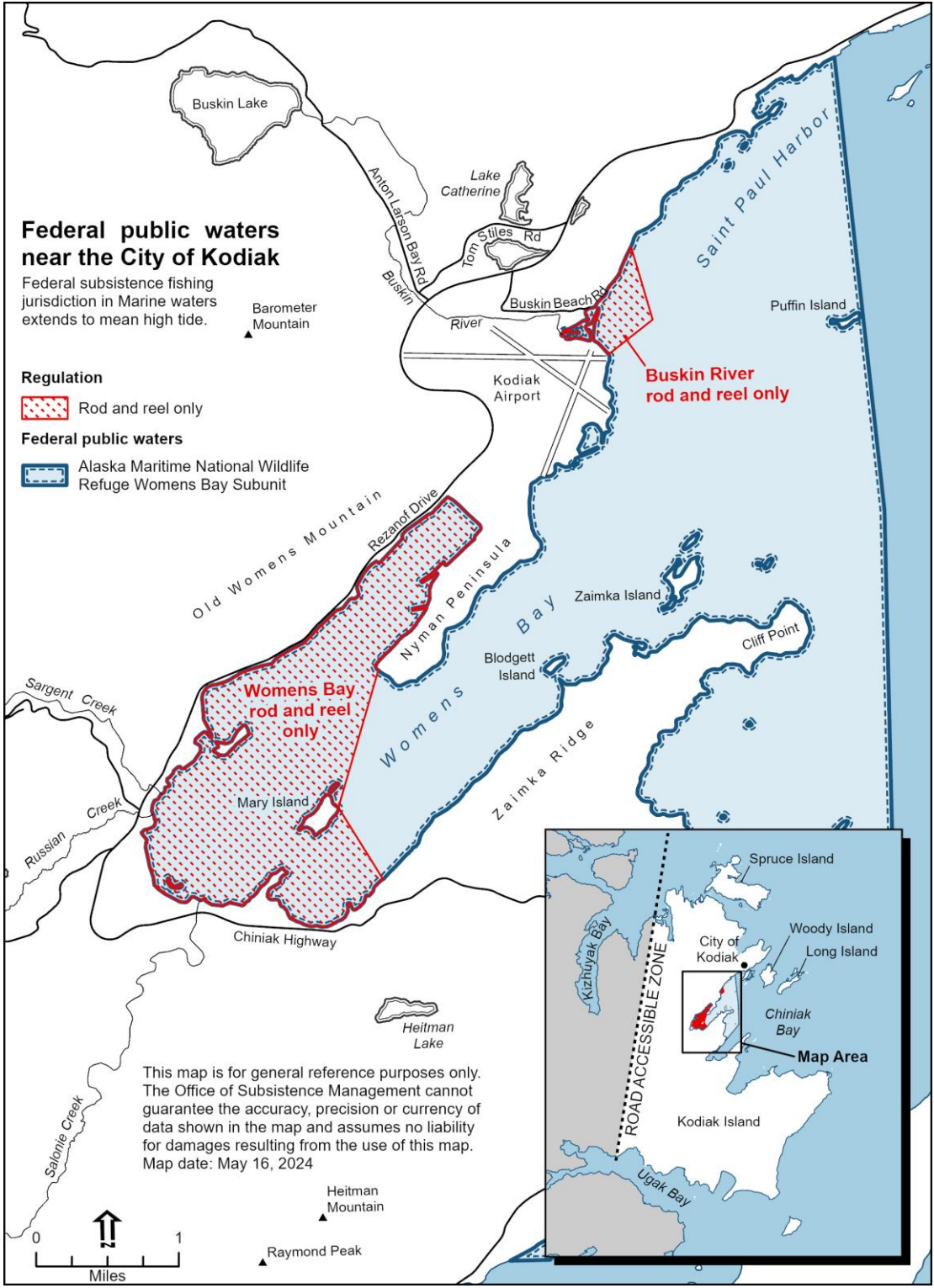
(8) in the Kodiak Road Zone, from September 16—December 31, the bag and possession limit for coho salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, is one fish, except that in the following stocked waters the bag and possession limit for coho salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, is two fish:

Extent of Federal Public Lands/Waters

For purposes of this discussion, the phrase “Federal public waters” is defined as those waters described under 36 CFR 242.3 and 50 CFR 100.3.

The area in question is defined in §___. 50 CFR 100.27(e)(9)(v)(A): The road-accessible Zone (Northeastern Kodiak Island) is defined as: east of the line from Crag Point south to the westernmost point of Sallery Cove, including the inland waters of Spruce, Woody and Long Islands, and the Federal marine waters of and around Womens Bay (**Map 1**).

The primary Federal public waters fished in this area are marine waters seaward of mean high tide near the Buskin River (Witteveen and Huang 2022). This proposal is specific to a section of the Buskin River from the river mouth at headland to headland extending upriver for approximately 0.3 miles to mean high tide (**Map 1**).



Map 1. Federal public marine waters of the Buskin River and Womens Bay near Kodiak City.

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Residents of Kodiak Island Borough, except those residing on the Kodiak Coast Guard Base have a customary and traditional use determination for salmon in all portions of the Kodiak Area except the Mainland District.

Regulatory History

In 1992, the Federal Subsistence Management Program announced regulations governing the harvest of fish for subsistence uses in waters qualifying as “public lands” under ANILCA. (57 FR 22940). These regulations incorporated many provisions from State subsistence fishing regulations, including the Buskin River closed waters: All waters inside of a line running from a marker on the bluff north of the mouth of the Buskin River at approximately 57°45.80' North latitude, 152°28.38' West longitude, to a point offshore at 57°45.35' North latitude, 152°28.15' West longitude, to a marker located onshore south of the river mouth at approximately 57°45.15' North latitude, 152°28.65' West longitude (**Map 1**).

At the direction of the Federal Subsistence Board (Board), the Office of Subsistence Management conducted a review (FCR21-16) of the Buskin River closed waters during the 2021–2023 fisheries regulatory cycle. The Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) recommended, and the Board agreed, that closure review FCR21-16 be deferred to the following fisheries regulatory cycle to gather more public input. The closure was revisited during the 2023–2025 fisheries regulatory cycle along with Proposal FP23-06b, which sought to rescind the closure, limit the harvest method to rod and reel only, and adopt current State sport fishing limits in this area. The Kodiak/Aleutians Council recommended that the closure of Buskin River waters be rescinded, and a rod and reel fishery be implemented, but did not recommend adopting State sport fishing limits. The Kodiak/Aleutians Council felt these limits would unnecessarily restrict efficiency of subsistence harvest. The Board subsequently adopted FP23-06b, as modified by the Kodiak-Aleutians Council, and took no action on deferred closure review FCR21-16.

Current Events Involving the Species

Federal emergency special actions and State emergency orders were implemented for Womens Bay in recent history due to poor returns of salmon to the Buskin River drainage. In 2019, Emergency Special Action 9-SS-02-19 closed all Federal public waters near the Buskin River to the take of Coho Salmon. In 2021, Emergency Special Action 9-RS-01-21 closed the Federal public waters of Womens Bay to the take of Sockeye Salmon. In 2022, Emergency Special Action 9-SS-01-22 closed Women’s Bay to the take of Sockeye Salmon but was later rescinded under Emergency Special Action 9-RS-02-22 because minimum escapement was met. In 2023, Emergency Special Action 9-RS-02-23 closed all Federal public waters at the mouth of the Buskin River to the take of Sockeye Salmon. State emergency orders also closed Womens Bay to sport and subsistence fishing in all the above situations.

Biological Background

Sockeye Salmon returning to the Buskin River are counted using a weir that operates annually from May through July. Most Sockeye Salmon returning to the Buskin River watershed pass through this weir located at the outlet of Buskin Lake, while a portion return to Lake Louise which is lower in the watershed. Buskin Lake has an annual Sockeye Salmon escapement goal of 5,000 to 8,000 fish (Anderson et al. 2019). The Buskin River has experienced both very strong and relatively weak Sockeye Salmon returns over the past 12 years (2012 – 2023; **Figure 1**), but there is an overall declining trend. One of the highest Sockeye salmon counts ever recorded occurred in 2013 (16,178 fish). However, Sockeye salmon returns did not meet escapement goals during two out of the five years of the most recent reporting period (2021 and 2023). The 2023 escapement of 1,761 Sockeye salmon was the lowest return in the past 12-year period (2012-2023).

The Buskin River supports one of the historically most productive Coho Salmon stocks in the Kodiak Management Area (Polum et al. 2019). Coho Salmon typically start returning in early to mid-August and continue into the fall. The Buskin River has a Coho Salmon escapement goal of 4,700-9,600 fish and is monitored by a weir located about a mile above the river mouth. From 2012 to 2023, weir counts of Coho Salmon ranged from a high of 8,413 fish in 2014, to a low of 630 fish in 2020 (**Figure 1**). The Coho numbers shown for 2016, 2020, 2022, and 2023 in **Figure 1** are considered incomplete, minimum counts because the weir was removed before the end of the run during these years. The Buskin River also supports a Pink salmon run, as well as a small number of Chum salmon each year.

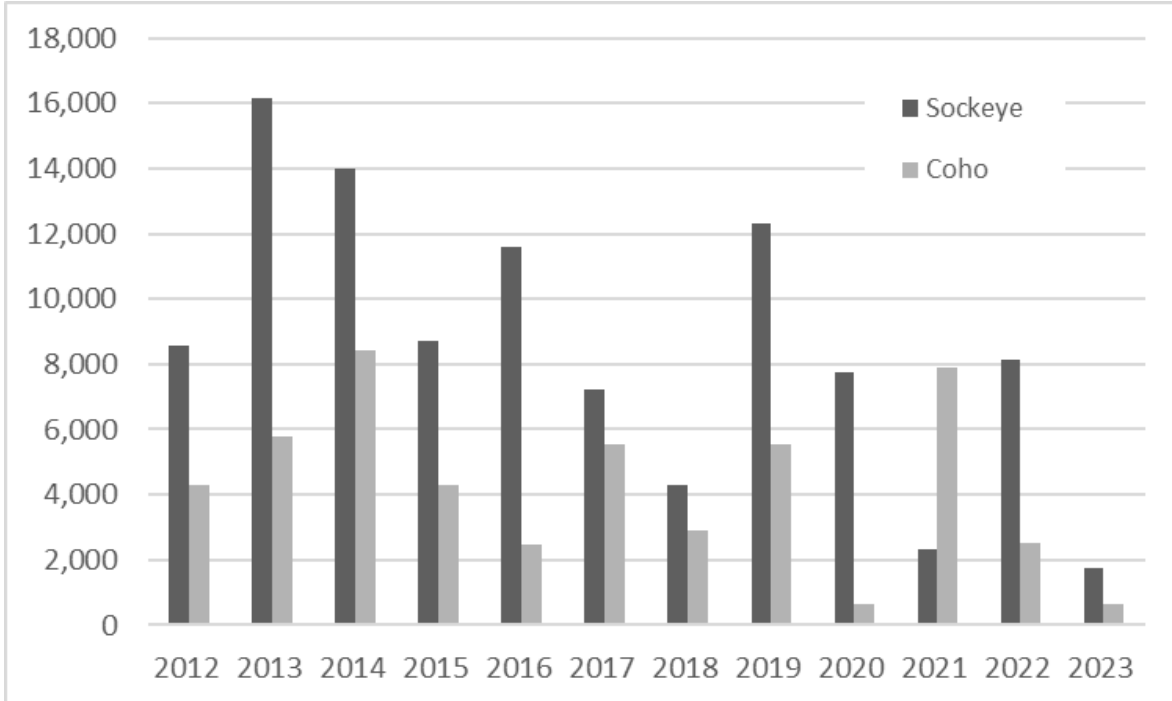


Figure 1. Annual weir counts of Sockeye and Coho salmon in the Buskin River from 2012 to 2023 (ADF&G. 2024b). Coho Salmon counts in 2016, 2020, 2022, and 2023 are incomplete.

Cultural Knowledge and Traditional Practices

The subsistence practices of the rural residents of the Kodiak Area reflect the cultural traditions of the Alutiiq/Sugpiaq, the Koniag/Qikertarmiut, and Eastern European, Scandinavian, Asian, and American settlers. Indigenous populations have lived in the area for at least 7,000 years, with subsistence economies largely based on the harvesting of maritime resources (Clark 1998). Key among these subsistence resources have been marine animals, shellfish, near-shore fisheries, sea or littoral birds and their eggs, and salmon harvested primarily from spawning areas (Clark 1998). Salmon remains one of the primary components of subsistence diets for rural residents in this region (Wolfe and Walker 1987, Fall and Walker 1993, Marchioni et al. 2016). Historically, some of the most-utilized harvest areas for subsistence salmon in the Kodiak Archipelago have been the Buskin and Pasagshak rivers, located in the Kodiak Road Zone on the northern end of Kodiak Island and the southeast side of Afognak Island at Litnik, respectively (Anderson et al. 2016, Brown et al. 2021).

Today, the population of the Kodiak Island Borough is approximately 12,721 residents (ADLWD 2024). Residents throughout the Kodiak Area currently harvest salmon using subsistence gillnets and seines, rod and reel, and removal of salmon from commercial catch for home use (Marchioni et al. 2016). Harvested salmon are typically dried, smoked, canned, or frozen to preserve the resource for use out of season, and are regularly shared throughout the community (Marchioni et al. 2016). These subsistence practices form a key basis of cultural identity, family life, and community well-being in the area (Fall 1999).

Residents of Kodiak City (5,384), Mill Bay Census Designated Place (CDP) (4,190), Kodiak Station (U.S. Coast Guard base; 1,483), Women's Bay (783), and Chiniak (55) are among those who can most readily harvest in the road-accessible areas (Brown et al. 2023). Residents of all these communities except the U.S. Coast Guard base have customary and traditional use determinations for salmon in the Kodiak Area except the Mainland District. Estimates show that approximately 75% of the salmon harvested for subsistence in the Kodiak Island Borough are harvested by residents of Kodiak City and other road-connected communities (Fall et al. 2003, Brown et al. 2005, Fall et al. 2015).

The Buskin River and the waters immediately offshore from the mouth of the river were the most productive of all the different fishing locations reported by Kodiak City residents during the most recently published report on salmon harvests and uses in the Kodiak Area (Marchioni et al. 2016). As **Tables 1 and 2** illustrate, salmon has consistently ranked as one of the top resources in terms of bulk contribution to Kodiak Road Zone residents' overall subsistence harvests, at times trailing only non-salmon fish (ADF&G CSIS 2024; Marchioni et al. 2016). The average annual harvest of salmon per Kodiak Road Zone resident has been approximately 45 pounds, accounting for about 36% of the overall per capita harvest in each of the household surveys shown in **Table 1**. An average of about 91% of Kodiak Road Zone households reported using salmon during these surveys, while an average of 72% reported attempting to harvest salmon (**Table 2**).

It is perhaps particularly interesting to note the substantial differences in per person salmon harvest amounts (**Table 1**) and harvest participation (**Table 2**) captured in the 2012 household survey that

compared rates of harvest, use, and sharing between Kodiak Road Zone subsistence permit holders and other residents (Marchioni et al. 2016). This information suggests that subsistence permit holders attempt to harvest, and harvest substantially more salmon than Kodiak Road Zone residents without subsistence permits (Marchioni et al. 2016). Further, participation in commercial fishing was positively correlated with participation in subsistence fishing (Marchioni et al. 2016). As Marchioni and colleagues (2012: 36) noted, Kodiak Road Zone households that obtained a subsistence salmon fishing permit tended to also fish commercially, depend on home-pack, and share salmon in ways that more closely resembled off-road communities like Larsen Bay and Old Harbor than their road zone neighbors without subsistence permits.

Some federally qualified subsistence users harvest salmon exclusively in Federal marine waters near the Buskin River (KARAC 2010). However, most federally qualified subsistence users harvest under State subsistence regulations, and many residents remain unaware that a Federal subsistence permit is available (KARAC 2024). Previous research shows that when salmon are scarce, area residents must rely upon secondary subsistence resources and/or expensive store-bought foods (Marchioni et al. 2016). However, Kodiak/Aleutians Council members note that food is often in low supply at local grocery stores, making subsistence resources all the more critical for local users (KARAC 2022). The significant reductions in salmon stock available for subsistence harvest in recent years have caused increasing concerns about food security and the maintenance of subsistence lifestyles in the region (KARAC 2021a). When salmon returns to the Buskin River are particularly low, some subsistence users struggle to meet their harvest needs (KARAC 2022). When closures or impacts from marine mammals make fishing along the Buskin River untenable, many subsistence users must harvest at areas farther away on Afognak, Saltery Creek, Ugak Bay, Port Lions, Pasagshak River, and Ouzinkie. However, not all users have the means to access these alternative harvest areas (KARAC 2021b, 2021c, 2022, 2023).

Table 1. Information on harvest amount and rank of salmon in terms of bulk contribution to subsistence harvests in Kodiak Road Zone communities/groups from household surveys 1991 - 2021 (ADF&G CSIS 2024; Marchioni et al. 2016).

Community/ Group	Study Year	Salmon Harvest per Person (lbs.)	Overall Subsistence Harvest per person (lbs.)	Percentage Salmon (%)	Overall Subsistence Rank of Salmon
Kodiak City	2021	34	74	46%	1st
Kodiak City	1993	48	151	32%	2nd
Kodiak Road Zone	2021	31	86	36%	2nd
Kodiak Road Zone Subsistence Permit Holders	2012	70	-	-	-
Kodiak Road Zone Other Residents	2012	28	-	-	-

Community/ Group	Study Year	Salmon Harvest per Person (lbs.)	Overall Subsistence Harvest per person (lbs.)	Percentage Salmon (%)	Overall Subsistence Rank of Salmon
Kodiak Road Zone	1991	61	168	36%	2nd
Average		45	120	36%	

Table 2. Information on the harvest, use, and sharing of salmon in Kodiak Road Zone communities/groups from household surveys conducted from 1991 - 2021 (ADF&G CSIS 2024; Marchioni et al. 2016).

Community/ Group	Study Year	Households Using (%)	Households Attempting to Harvest (%)	Households Harvesting (%)	Households Receiving (%)	Households Giving (%)
Kodiak City	2021	83%	56%	53%	57%	35%
Kodiak City	1993	93%	73%	69%	73%	61%
Kodiak Road Zone	2021	89%	70%	63%	54%	38%
Kodiak Road Zone Subsistence Permit Holders	2012	99%	89%	86%	46%	55%
Kodiak Road Zone Other Residents	2012	92%	60%	58%	61%	35%
Kodiak Road Zone	1991	91%	85%	80%	59%	60%
Average		91%	72%	68%	58%	47%

Harvest History

Based on the most recent Alaska subsistence and personal use fisheries report, the total estimated subsistence salmon harvest for the Kodiak Area in 2020 was approximately 20,311 fish (Brown et al. 2023). However, only 230 of these salmon were taken through Federal subsistence permit (Brown et al. 2023). Though this overall harvest is much higher than the 12,688 salmon reported for 2019, it is in line with the most recently reported 5-year (2015–2019) average of 20,031 salmon. Still, the most recently reported 5-year harvest average is somewhat lower than the 10-year (2010–2019) harvest average of 25,318 salmon. Brown and colleagues (2023) suggest that the higher harvest amounts witnessed in 2020 compared to 2019 are related to greater fishing opportunities along the Kodiak road system (Buskin and Pasagshak Rivers), although it is unclear how fishing opportunities in these areas changed between 2019 and 2020.

The primary runs of Sockeye and Coho salmon present in Womens Bay are those returning to the Buskin River drainage. Both Federal and State subsistence users primarily harvest Sockeye and Coho salmon in Womens Bay, including in the marine waters near the mouth of the Buskin River.

Substantial subsistence harvests occur on these fish stocks, and they are the single largest source of subsistence salmon harvested in the Federal waters within the Kodiak/Aleutians Region (Witteveen and Evans 2020). The marine waters adjacent to the mouth of the Buskin River are closed under State subsistence regulation and only recently reopened under Federal regulations. The Buskin River system is also one of the most popular sport fishing locations because it is easily accessible by road and located close to Kodiak City. Both Sockeye and Coho salmon are targeted in the sport fishery.

Commercial fisheries in the marine waters surrounding Kodiak Island also harvest a small number of Buskin River salmon (Anderson et al. 2019). The Sockeye Salmon fisheries occur primarily in June due to the early run timing.

Subsistence Harvest

Between 2009 and 2023, the reported annual State subsistence harvests of Buskin River Sockeye Salmon have ranged from a low of 234 in 2021, to a high of 4,989 in 2017, with an average annual harvest of 2,686 (**Figure 2**). During this same time, the annual State subsistence harvests of Buskin River Coho Salmon have ranged from a low of 300 fish in 2017, to a high of 1,529 fish in 2014, with an average annual harvest of 712. The total number of State permits issued for subsistence harvest has declined from 2017 to 2023 (**Figure 2**). Few Federal subsistence permits are issued compared with State permits, and there is little Federal salmon harvest reported in most years (**Table 3**).

Actual harvest of salmon in the Kodiak Area may be much greater than what is reported, as harvest permits are often not returned or completed (Brown et al. 2023). Past research has found that harvest estimates compiled from household surveys are often far higher than those estimated from permit-based reporting (ADF&G 2008, Williams et al. 2010). Estimates of subsistence salmon use also do not include noncommercial salmon harvested with rod and reel, or commercial salmon harvest retained for personal use (Brown et al. 2023). Federally qualified subsistence users rely heavily on both rod and reel harvest and retention of commercially harvested salmon (“home pack”) for subsistence in the Kodiak Area (Fall and Utermohle 1995, KARAC 2022).

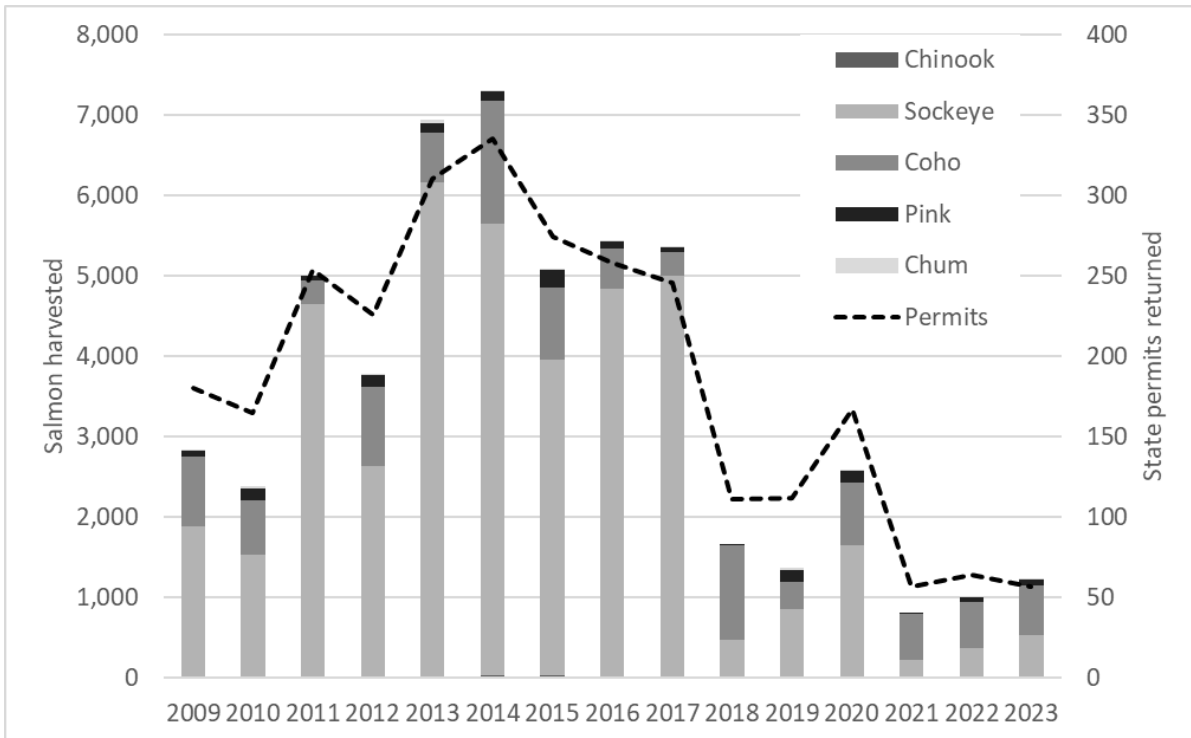


Figure 2. State subsistence salmon harvest from Buskin River, reported by species and permits returned 2009-2023. 2023 data may be incomplete (B. Mulligan pers. comm. 2024).

Table 3. Federal subsistence permits issued and reported Federal harvest of Buskin River salmon from 2012 – 2023 (OSM 2024).

Year	Federal permits issued	Permits reporting harvest	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Chinook	Total
2012	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013	7	1	36	0	0	0	0	36
2014	20	7	117	0	0	0	0	117
2015	18	4	42	0	0	0	0	42
2016	42	8	97	10	3	0	7	117
2017	55	14	369	7	5	0	0	381
2018	35	5	29	0	45	0	0	74
2019	40	1	24	0	0	0	0	24
2020	43	3	50	34	0	0	0	84
2021	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2022	17	1	2	0	0	0	0	2
2023	20	3	52	26	0	0	0	78
Average	26	4	68	6	4	0	1	80

Sport Harvest

Between 2010 and 2022, the estimated annual sport harvest of Coho Salmon in the Buskin River ranged from 934 fish in 2019, to 5,388 fish in 2014, with an average annual harvest of 2,773 (**Table 4**). During this same time, the estimated annual sport harvest of Sockeye Salmon ranged from 100 fish in 2021, to 4,237 fish in 2014, with an average annual harvest of 1,664 (**Table 4**). During this period, the average annual reported Sockeye Salmon sport harvest has been 43% less than the average annual reported State subsistence harvest, while the average annual reported Coho Salmon sport harvest has been more than triple the average annual reported State subsistence harvest.

Table 4. Buskin River Sockeye and Coho salmon estimated sport fishery harvest 2010-2022 (ADF&G 2024a).

Year	Sockeye	Coho	Total
2010	332	2,847	3,179
2011	1,277	3,640	4,917
2012	1,484	1,926	3,410
2013	1,310	4,926	6,236
2014	4,237	5,388	9,625
2015	3,978	4,889	8,867
2016	2,503	1,895	4,398
2017	3,161	2,337	5,498
2018	335	1,793	2,128
2019	1,063	934	1,997
2020	1,715	1,205	2,920
2021	100	2,462	2,562
2022	137	1,808	1,945
Average	1,664	2,773	4,437
Std. Dev.	1,412	1,478	2,534

Effects of the Proposal

If this proposal is adopted, it would institute more conservative harvest limits for salmon in the Federal public waters of the lower Buskin River. This change would reduce harvest opportunities for federally qualified users in this area, but potentially enhance conservation of Buskin River salmon stocks.

If this proposal is not adopted, harvest limits in the Federal public waters of the Buskin River will remain 25 salmon for the permit holder, plus an additional 25 salmon for each member of the same household whose names are listed on the permit. Households would be able to harvest this limit from the Buskin River, or from the Federal public marine waters adjacent to the Buskin River.

It is unknown how many additional federally qualified subsistence users will fish in the Federal public waters of the lower Buskin River since 2024 is the first season that this area has been open to Federal subsistence fishing.

OSM CONCLUSION

Support FP25-04.

Justification

Buskin River salmon are among the most heavily harvested stocks in the Kodiak Area. Salmon are more vulnerable to harvest once they are in the Buskin River. Having separate, more conservative harvest limits for salmon in the Federal public waters of the lower Buskin River is a reasonable conservation measure given the challenges of meeting escapement for Sockeye and Coho salmon in some recent years and the generally declining trend in Sockeye Salmon stocks in the Buskin. The salmon harvest limit in the marine waters adjacent to the Buskin River would remain unchanged if this proposal is adopted, and the Federal in-season manager would also continue to be able to implement management actions based on Buskin River weir counts.

LITERATURE CITED

- ADF&G 2008. The Kodiak Management Area subsistence salmon fishery and subsistence permit program: Background for Proposal 45. Alaska Department of Fish and Game Special Report BOF 2008-01, Juneau, AK.
- ADF&G. 2024a. Commercial Salmon Fisheries: Kodiak Management Area. <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=CommercialByAreaKodiak.salmon#fishcounts>. Accessed May 28, 2024.
- ADF&G. 2024b. Sportfish survey database online. <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/sportfishingsurvey>. Accessed May 9, 2024.
- ADF&G CSIS. 2024. Community Subsistence Information System, online database. <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sb/CSIS/index.cfm?ADFG=harvInfo.harvestCommSelComm>, retrieved September 26, 2024. Division of Subsistence. Anchorage, AK.
- ADLWD. 2024. Alaska population estimates by borough, census area, city, and census designated place (CDP), 2020 to 2023. Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development Research and Analysis. <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/data-pages/alaska-population-estimates>. Accessed 28 May 2024.
- Anderson, T. J., J. Jackson, B. A. Fuerst, and A. E. Dorner. 2019. Kodiak Management Area commercial salmon fishery annual management report, 2019. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Management Report No. 19-29, Anchorage.
- Anderson, T.J., J. Jackson, and B.A. Fuerst. 2016. Kodiak Management Area commercial salmon fishery annual management report, 2015. ADF&G, Fishery Management Report No. 16-36. Anchorage, AK. 202 pp.
- Brown, C.L., D. Caylor, J. Dizard, J.A. Fall, S. Georgette, T. Krauthoefer, and M. Turek. 2005. Alaska subsistence salmon fisheries 2003 annual report. ADF&G Division of Subsistence Technical Paper No. 316. Anchorage, AK. 251 pp.
- Brown, C.L., T. Bembenic, M. Brown, H. Cold, J. Coleman, E. Donaldson, J. Egelhoff, B. Jones, J.M. Keating, L.A. Sill, M. Orquia, C. Wilcox, T. Barnett. 2023. Alaska subsistence and personal use salmon fisheries 2020 annual report. ADF&G, Division of Subsistence Tech. Paper 494. Anchorage, AK. 338 pp.

- Brown, C.L., J.A. Fall, A. Goddhun, L. Hutchinson-Scarborough, B. Jones, J. Keating, B. McDavid, C. McDevitt, E. Mikow, J. Park, L.A. Sill, and T. Lemons. 2021. Alaska subsistence and personal use salmon fisheries 2018 annual report. ADF&G, Division of Subsistence Tech. Paper 484. Anchorage, AK. 294 pp.
- Clark, D.W. 1998. Kodiak Island: The later cultures. *Arctic Anthropology* 35(1): 172-186.
- Fall, J.A. 1999. Patterns of subsistence uses of fish and wildlife resources in the area of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. in L.J. Field, J.A. Fall, T.S. Nighswander, N. Peacock, and U. Varanasi, eds. *Evaluating and communicating subsistence seafood safety in a cross-cultural context: lessons learned from the Exxon Valdez oil spill*. Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC): Pensacola, FL.
- Fall, J.A., C.L. Brown, D. Caylor, S. Georgette, T. Krauthoefer, and A.W. Paige. 2003. Alaska subsistence fisheries 2002 annual report. ADF&G Division of Subsistence Technical Paper No. 315. Anchorage, AK. 235 pp.
- Fall, J.A., C.L. Brown, S.S. Evans, R.A. Grant, H. Ikuta, L. Hutchinson-Scarborough, B. Jones, M.A. Marchioni, E. Mikow, J.T. Ream, L.A. Sill, and T. Lemons. 2015. Alaska subsistence and personal use salmon fisheries, 2013 Annual Report. ADF&G Division of Subsistence Technical Paper No. 413. Anchorage, AK. 285 pp.
- Fall, J.A. and C.J. Utermohle, eds. 1995. *An Investigation of the Sociocultural Consequences of outer Shelf Development in Alaska. Vol. IV. Kodiak Island*. U.S. Department of the Interior Minerals Management Service, Alaska OCS Region, Social and Economic Studies Unit, OCS Study MMS 95-013, Technical Report No. 160: Anchorage. https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/boem-newsroom/Library/Publications/1995/95_013.pdf
- Fall, J.A., and R.J. Walker. 1993. Subsistence harvests in six Kodiak Island Borough communities, 1986. ADF&G, Division of Subsistence Tech. Paper 193. Juneau, AK. 98 pp.
- KARAC. 2010. Transcripts of the Kodiak Aleutians Regional Advisory Council proceedings. September 23, 2010. Cold Bay, AK. Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS. Anchorage, AK.
- KARAC. 2021a. Report to the Federal Subsistence Board for 2020. May 17, 2021. Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS. Anchorage, AK.
- KARAC. 2021b. Transcripts of the Kodiak Aleutians Regional Advisory Council proceedings. March 10, 2021. Teleconference. Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS. Anchorage, AK.
- KARAC. 2021c. Transcripts of the Kodiak Aleutians Regional Advisory Council proceedings. September 27, 2021. Teleconference. Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS. Anchorage, AK.
- KARAC. 2022. Transcripts of the Kodiak Aleutians Regional Advisory Council proceedings. February 23, 2022. Teleconference. Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS. Anchorage, AK.
- KARAC. 2023. Transcripts of the Kodiak Aleutians Regional Advisory Council proceedings. September 19, 2023. King Cove, AK. Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS. Anchorage, AK.
- KARAC. 2024. Transcripts of the Kodiak Aleutians Regional Advisory Council proceedings. March 8, 2024. Anchorage, AK. Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS. Anchorage, AK.
- Marchioni, M.A., J.A. Fall, B. Davis, and G. Zimpleman. 2016. Kodiak City, Larsen Bay and Old Harbor: An ethnographic study of traditional subsistence salmon harvests and uses. ADF&G, Division of Subsistence Tech. Paper 418. Anchorage, AK. 192 pp.

Mulligan, B. 2024. Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). Personal communication: email. Anchorage, AK.

Polum, T., M. Witteveen, M. Stratton, and M. Evans. 2019. Report on selected sport fisheries of the Kodiak Management Area, 2008-2017. Alaska Department of Fish and Game Divisions of Sport Fish and Commercial Fisheries. Fishery Management Report No. 19-04. Anchorage, AK. 97 pp.

Williams, L., P. Coiley-Kenner, and D. Koster. 2010. Subsistence harvests and uses of salmon, trout, and char in Akhiok, Larsen Bay, Old Harbor, Ouzinkie, and Port Lions, Alaska, 2004 and 2005. Alaska Department of Fish and Game Fishery, Division of Subsistence Technical Paper No. 329. Juneau, AK.

Witteveen, M., and D. Evans. 2020. Stock assessment of sockeye salmon from the Buskin River, Kodiak, Alaska, 2019 Federal Subsistence Fishery Resource Monitoring Program, Annual Report for Project No. 18-400. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Anchorage, Alaska.

Witteveen, M., and J. Huang. 2022. Stock assessment of sockeye salmon in the Buskin River, 2018-2021. ADF&G, Division of Sport Fish and Commercial Fisheries, Fishery Data Series No. 22-30. Anchorage, AK. 69 pp.

Wolfe, R.J., and R.J. Walker. 1987. Subsistence economies in Alaska: Productivity, geography, and development impacts. *Arctic Anthropology* 24(2): 56-81.

SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

Kodiak/Aleutians Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Oppose FP25-04

The Kodiak/Aleutians Council opposed this proposal because they felt it would unnecessarily restrict harvest opportunity and harvest efficiency for subsistence users.

INTERAGENCY STAFF COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Interagency Staff Committee found the staff analysis to be a thorough and accurate evaluation of the proposal and that it provides sufficient basis for the Regional Advisory Council recommendation and Federal Subsistence Board action on the proposal.

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME COMMENTS

Fisheries Proposal FP25-04

This proposal would align an individual's bag limit for state and federal fisheries within the Buskin River area as well as with the Women's Bay subsistence rod and reel only area.

Position

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Though slightly less conservative than current state regulations in the Buskin River area, prohibiting the use of nets in the nearshore area and intertidal area of the Buskin River provides a needed conservation measure for management of sockeye and coho runs to the drainage. This proposal aligns daily bag limits between those fishing under a sport fishing license and those fishing with a federal subsistence permit. However, federal subsistence permits are household permits, and one member of the household may fish the bag limits of the other members allowing for some increased level of harvest over state sport fishing regulations.

Currently, the only definition of the upriver limit of federal waters in the Buskin River, however, is the 'mean high water' mark. If adopted, ADF&G recommends this would be defined, preferably by a GPS waypoint or a physical marker on the river.

Background

The Buskin River is historically the largest subsistence fishery in the Kodiak/Aleutians Region, though in many recent year's effort has shifted to other areas due to fluctuations in run strength and timing. The Buskin River remains extremely important for the community of Kodiak, however, and is the area of the highest effort for both sockeye and coho salmon for both subsistence and sport users. Given the large amount of effort for salmon returning to the drainage, the Buskin River is also of primary concern for conservation of salmon runs and there are frequent management actions taken by state and federal managers. Management actions are based on real-time weir counts from weirs operated for both sockeye and coho management.

Given the importance to the broader Kodiak community, and the potential for overharvest with liberal methods and means, it is prudent to restrict the use of gillnets and seines inside the historical markers in the nearshore area in front of the Buskin River drainage. This closed area has been in place for several decades as a measure to allow for harvest of salmon using gillnets and seines but provide a buffer near the river mouth to allow for salmon escapement to the drainage given the much higher efficiencies of these gear types over rod and reel.

The use of rod and reel in the closed area has been conducted under sport fishing regulations concurrently with the previously described subsistence fishery historically. The greatly reduced efficiency and much more conservative bag limits of this gear type mean that impacts to the resource are far less when fishing near the river mouth or in-river. Aligning the federal subsistence methods and means and bag limits in this area with state sport fishing regulations poses little conservation concern over current practices versus the use of gillnet and seines or more liberal daily limits. The majority of anglers

fishing in this area with rod and reel are already federally qualified users (FQU) fishing under state regulations and would likely take advantage of this opportunity if given the chance.

Impact on Subsistence Users

This would allow for a small amount of additional opportunity for residents of Kodiak Island to harvest salmon in the lower Buskin River and nearshore salt waters if using a federal subsistence permit.

Impact on Other Users

There is a potential to increase competition for sockeye and coho salmon as FQUs take advantage of the slightly more liberal federal regulations that would allow an individual to harvest the bag limits for their entire household

Opportunity Provided by State

State customary and traditional use findings: The Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) has made positive customary and traditional use findings for salmon and finfish other than salmon, except steelhead and rainbow trout, in the Kodiak Area, except that portion described in 5 AAC 18.200(g), are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence. (§ 5 AAC 01.536.(a))

Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence: Alaska state law requires the BOF to determine the amount of the harvestable portion of a fish population that is reasonably necessary for customary and traditional uses. This is an ANS. The BOF does this by reviewing extensive harvest data from all Alaskans, collected either by ADF&G or from other sources.

ANS provides the BOF with guidelines on typical numbers of fish harvested for customary and traditional uses under normal conditions. Fishing regulations can be re-examined if harvests for customary and traditional uses consistently fall below ANS. This may be for many reasons: fishing regulations, changes in abundance or distribution, or changes in human use patterns, just to name a few.

The ANS for salmon and other finfish in the Kodiak Area (§ 5 AAC 01.536.(b)):

26,800 - 44,700 salmon;

- 1) 21,000 - 35,000 rockfish;
- 2) 3,300 - 5,600 lingcod;
- 3) 550,000 - 900,000 usable pounds of finfish, other than salmon, rockfish, and lingcod.

Conservation Issues

There are no known conservation issues in this area and the Buskin River is annually monitored by ADF&G and managed through existing regulations and emergency orders.

Enforcement Issues

If adopted, this proposal will create overlapping federal and state enforcement requirements that could lead to potential enforcement problems. There has not previously been a federal enforcement presence

in this area, and it is unknown how this federal subsistence fishery would be monitored for compliance. In addition, the upriver boundary of the federal waters in the Buskin River is not clearly defined or marked and these would need to be defined in regulation or through physically marking the boundary.

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

None