



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Federal Subsistence Board

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Forest Service

EULACHON FISHERY CLOSED IN FEDERAL WATERS OF DISTRICT ONE EXCEPT BY FEDERALLY QUALIFIED USERS IN THE UNUK RIVER DRAINAGE

EMERGENCY SPECIAL ACTION

Under Authority of: 36 CFR 242.10 and .19
50 CFR 100.10 and .19

Emergency Special Action No: FSA 13-EU-01-25 Issued at: Ketchikan Alaska, February 24, 2025

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Saturday, March 01, 2025
Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Monday, April 15, 2025, unless superseded by subsequent emergency special action.

EXPLANATION: This emergency Special Action closes Eulachon harvest in Federal public waters draining into District 1, except by federally qualified users in the Unuk River drainage. Harvest within waters of the Unuk River drainage shall be limited to one 5-gallon bucket of whole eulachon per household, and gear is restricted to dip net and/or cast nets. All Eulachon incidentally caught in Federal public waters draining into District 1 outside of the Unuk River must be immediately released into the water unharmed. A Federal subsistence fishing permit is required.

REGULATION: 50 CFR 100.27(e)(13)(ii) and 36 CFR 242.27(e)(13)(ii) are amended to read:

*§ __.27(e)(13)(ii) You must possess a subsistence fishing permit to take salmon, trout, grayling, or char. You must possess a subsistence fishing permit to take Eulachon from any freshwater stream flowing into fishing Sections 1C or 1D. **All waters draining into District 1 are closed to the taking of Eulachon, except the by federally qualified users in the Unuk River drainage, from 12:01 a.m., March 01 through 11:59 p.m., April 15, 2025. Harvest within the Unuk River drainage is limited to one 5-gallon bucket of whole Eulachon per household, and gear is restricted to cast net and/or dip net.***

JUSTIFICATION:

District 1 historically supported subsistence, personal use, and commercial fisheries for Eulachon or Ooligan, *Thaleichthys pacificus*, primarily in the Unuk River system. The USDA Forest Service (USFS) has monitored the Unuk River since 2001 using combinations of aerial surveys, foot & boat surveys, satellite cameras, and on-site reports from local cabin owners. In 2005 the Eulachon population collapsed, with less than 150 fish on average observed each year between 2005 and 2010, resulting in State and Federal closures to fishing beginning in 2005. In 2011 Eulachon began returning to the Unuk River in greater numbers. In 2018 the USFS partnered

with the Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC) to increase on-the-ground monitoring efforts on the Unuk River system.

Annual monitoring has documented variable return levels between 2011 to present, though stock sizes remain at levels lower than those observed prior to the 2005 population collapse. Because monitoring efforts have documented Eulachon returning consistently since 2011, the Federal subsistence fishery was opened on the Unuk River in 2021 to limited harvest and gear restrictions. The limited harvest has continued to date. Only nine harvest permits were issued to federally qualified users during the 2024 season, with all nine reporting harvest. Harvest was restricted to one five-gallon bucket per household and limited to cast net and dip net only methods. The State of Alaska Eulachon fishery remained closed in 2024.

Based on the observations made by biologists and reports from local subsistence users, the 2024 Eulachon run appeared to be abundant. Because of this and the low harvest observed in 2024, Managers feel that returns will be sufficient to continue with another limited subsistence harvest in 2025 on the Unuk River in District 1. Managers believe that allowing a limited harvest again in 2025 will aid in obtaining needed biological data to better assess run sizes, as well as provide federally qualified subsistence users a harvest opportunity. Data collected will help managers determine if the Eulachon population can support sustained harvest and if future harvest limits should be changed.

Federal Subsistence Board by delegation to: /S/ Cathy Tighe
CATHY TIGHE
District Ranger
Ketchikan Misty Fjords Ranger District
February 24, 2025

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