FCR27-09 Executive Summary	
General Description	Fisheries Closure Review FCR27-09 is a standard review of the closure to Sockeye Salmon harvest by non-federally qualified users (NFQUs) in the Federal public waters of Neva Lake, Neva Creek, and South Creek. It is the Federal Subsistence Board's policy that Federal public lands and waters should be reopened when closures are no longer necessary, and that closures will be reviewed at least once every four years. The purpose of this review is to determine if the closure is still warranted.
Current Regulation	*§___.27(e)(13) Southeastern Alaska Area* *** *(xi) If a harvest limit is not otherwise listed for sockeye, then the harvest limit for sockeye salmon is the same as provided for in adjacent State subsistence or personal use fisheries. If a harvest limit is not established for the State subsistence or personal use fisheries, the possession limit is 10 sockeye and the annual harvest limit is 20 sockeye per household for that stream.* *** *(xxii) Only Federally qualified subsistence users may harvest sockeye salmon in Neva Lake, Neva Creek, and South Creek.*
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	**Rescind the Closure**
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	**None**

Draft Fisheries Closure Review
FCR27-09

Issue

Fisheries Closure Review FCR27-09 is a standard review of the closure to Sockeye Salmon harvest by non-federally qualified users (NFQUs) in the Federal public waters of Neva Lake, Neva Creek, and South Creek. It is the Federal Subsistence Board's (Board) policy that Federal public lands should be reopened when a closure is no longer necessary, and that closures will be reviewed at least once every four years. The purpose of this review is to determine if the closure to NFQUs at Neva Lake, Neva Creek, and South Creek is still warranted.

Closure Location and Species: Federal public waters of Neva Lake, Neva Creek, and South Creek – Sockeye Salmon

Closure Dates: year-round.

Current Federal Regulations

36 CFR 242 and 43 CFR 51

§___.27(e)(13) Southeastern Alaska Area

*****

(ii) You may 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 District 1.

*****

(xi) If a harvest limit is not otherwise listed for sockeye, then the harvest limit for sockeye salmon is the same as provided for in adjacent State subsistence or personal use fisheries. If a harvest limit is not established for the State subsistence or personal use fisheries, the possession limit is 10 sockeye and the annual harvest limit is 20 sockeye per household for that stream.

*****

(xxii) Only Federally qualified subsistence users may harvest sockeye salmon in Neva Lake, Neva Creek, and South Creek.

Current State Regulations

5 AAC 01.745 Subsistence bag and possession limits; annual limits

(h) In the Juneau Management Area, in waters open to subsistence salmon fishing under a household subsistence salmon fishing permit, the possession and annual limits for salmon per household are as follows:

* * * *

(B) District 14: in the following waters, the following possession and annual limits apply:

* * * *

(ii) Neva Creek: the possession and annual limit is 20 sockeye salmon

5 AAC 47.022 General provisions for seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the fresh waters of Southeast Alaska Area

* * * *

(b) In the fresh waters east of the longitude of Cape Fairweather:

* * * *

(2) salmon, other than king salmon: may be taken from January 1 – December 31; no annual limit, no size limit, bag and possession limits as follows:

(A) 16 inches or greater in length; bag limit of six fish per species; possession limit of 12 fish per species;

Regulatory Year Initiated: 2019 – with the adoption of Fisheries Proposal FP19-19

Closure last reviewed: 2023 - FCR23-24

Justification for Original Closure

Section 815(3) of ANILCA states:

Nothing in this title shall be construed as – (3) authorizing a restriction on the taking of fish and wildlife for nonsubsistence uses on public lands (other than national parks and monuments) unless necessary for the conservation of healthy populations of fish and wildlife, for the reasons set forth in section 816, to continue subsistence uses of such populations, or pursuant to other applicable law…

The Board adopted Proposal FP19-19 in 2019. The Board found that the low abundance of Sockeye Salmon, the resulting reduced harvest limits, and the perception of user conflicts are the primary reasons for the decline in subsistence use of this resource. The proposal would help reduce the user conflicts in a location with documented unreported harvest and enforcement issues.

Council Recommendation for Original Closure

Support: FP19-19. The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) identified a conservation concern based on information presented throughout the regulatory process. The Council discussed the fact that harvest by unguided fishers is not well-documented by the small sample sizes used in the sportfish harvest survey. Council members also shared first-hand knowledge and experience. It is believed that there is a fairly high amount of non-federally qualified sport fishing that goes on in fresh waters. It is known to exist, but it is poorly documented. However, Council and public testimony suggested that sport fishing had a fair impact on subsistence users, and the analysis documented user conflict. The Council valued the traditional ecological knowledge and biological information presented for this area. The Council adopted this proposal to help ensure access to this resource by federally qualified subsistence users (FQSUs) and reduce user conflicts.

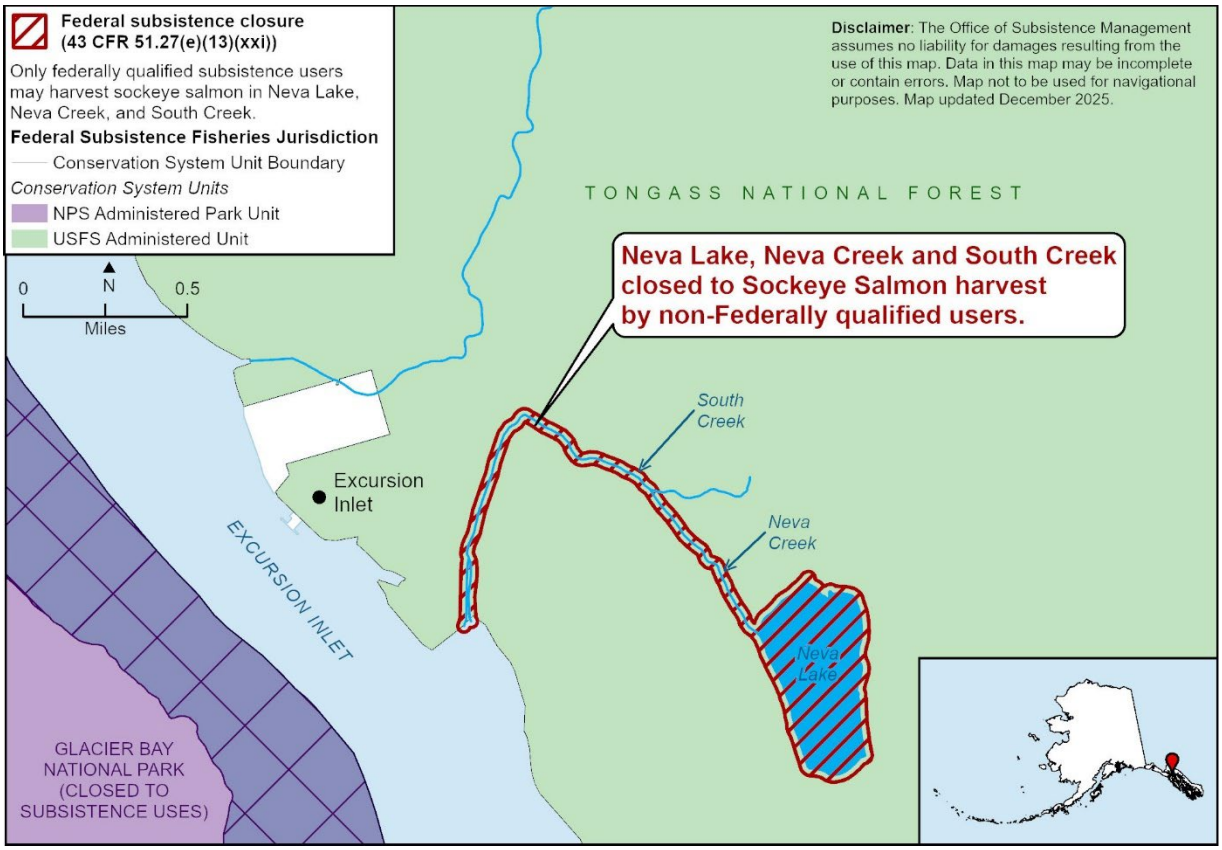
State Recommendation for Original Closure

Oppose: The State noted that the proposal would exclude non-federally qualified Alaska residents from participating in a subsistence fishery that they may have participated in historically and would exclude sport anglers from targeting Sockeye Salmon. ADF&G recommended the proponent participate in the Alaska Board of Fisheries process if he wishes to amend regulations for Sockeye Salmon in the Neva Lake/Neva Creek and South Creek watershed. The State also noted that there would be enforcement challenges with respect to the non-federally qualified resident and nonresident sport fishermen who would still be allowed to fish for Rainbow Trout, Arctic Char and Coho Salmon in the fresh waters of the Neva Lake/Neva Creek and South Creek watershed.

Extent of Federal Public Water

Neva Lake, located near the community of Excursion Inlet, drains into Neva Creek, which flows into South Creek before emptying into the marine waters of Excursion Inlet (**Figures 1 and 2**).

For purposes of this discussion, the phrase “Federal public waters” is defined as those waters described under 36 CFR §242.3 and 43 CFR §51.3. While Neva Lake, Neva Creek, and much of South Creek are located primarily on Haines Borough-owned land, these waters are within the exterior boundaries of the Tongass National Forest and are considered Federal public waters for the purposes of Federal subsistence fisheries management.



Map 1. Map of the Excursion Inlet area, showing the waters of South Creek, Neva Creek, and Neva Lake covered under the closure.

Map 2. Map of the Icy Strait area, showing the communities of Hoonah, Gustavus, and Excursion Inlet.

Customary and Traditional Use Determination

All rural residents of the Southeast Alaska and Yakutat Fishery Management Areas have a cultural and traditional use determination for all fish in the Southeast Alaska Area and the Yakutat Area.

Regulatory History

Federal Regulatory History

Before 2007, only residents of Hoonah had a customary and traditional use determination for salmon, Dolly Varden, Rainbow Trout, smelt, and Eulachon in Sections 14-B and 14-C of Fisheries District

114, which includes the Excursion Inlet/Neva area. In 2007, the Board adopted Fisheries Proposal FP07-17, extending the customary and traditional use determination to include all fish and all residents of drainages flowing into portions of Section 12 and 13 (12A & 13A), and District 14 (FSB 2007a).

For the 2008 regulatory cycle, Fisheries Proposal FP08-06 proposed reducing the daily possession limit in Neva Creek from the 40 Sockeye Salmon limit provided in State regulation to 10 Sockeye Salmon, while eliminating the annual limit (OSM 2007). This proposal was rejected by the Board (FSB 2007b).

In 2019, Fisheries Proposal FP19-17 further expanded the customary and traditional use determination for all fish in the Southeast Alaska and Yakutat Fishery Management Areas to include all rural residents of Southeast Alaska and Yakutat.

Fisheries Proposal FP19-19 was also submitted during the 2019 regulatory cycle. This proposal requested to close the Federal public waters of Neva Lake, Neva Creek, and South Creek to the harvest of Sockeye Salmon by NFQUs. The proponent of FP19-19 stated that "over the past few years, the subsistence harvest limit for Sockeye has been reduced from 40 to 10 salmon, at the same time sport harvest and use by nonresidents and unguided charter boat renters from urban areas in the lower 48, have continued uncontrolled and unabated" and continued that, "a meaningful preference for Federally qualified subsistence users is not being provided in this area" (OSM 2019: pg. 546). The Board adopted FP19-19 due to concerns over lower escapement numbers, the need to continue subsistence uses in a location with user conflicts, and in deference to the recommendation of the Council (FSB 2019).

The closure initiated under FP19-19 was last reviewed during the 2023 regulatory cycle, as FCR23-24. During deliberations, the Council supported retaining the closure (SERAC 2022). The Council felt that there was substantial evidence that unguided sport fishing was negatively affecting subsistence users' harvest of Sockeye Salmon on this system, and that retaining the closure would help subsistence users meet their needs and provide for safer fishing conditions (SERAC 2022). The Council felt that the closure needed to be retained until subsistence harvest limits were increased to provide for a meaningful subsistence priority over sport fishing, and to make subsistence fishing trips to the Neva system worth the effort (SERAC 2022). The Board motion to rescind this closure failed on a tie vote; therefore, the closure was retained (FSB 2023).

State Regulatory History

State subsistence Sockeye Salmon possession and annual limits were increased from 10 to 25 in 2002 and increased again to 40 in 2004, in response to strong escapements. However, harvest limits were decreased to 30 in 2015, and further decreased to 10 in 2016, in response to a decline in escapements. The current possession and annual limit of 20 Sockeye Salmon for subsistence was established in 2023 (ADF&G 2023). Sport fishing falls under the Southeast Alaska general regulations and limits, which currently state that all species of salmon, other than Chinook Salmon, may be taken from January 1 – December 31, with a bag limit of six fish per species, a possession limit of 12 fish per species, and no annual limit.

Biological Background

Neva Lake is a relatively small 64.5-acre (26.1-hectare) lake. Neva Creek, the outlet stream, is also a tributary to South Creek, which empties into Excursion Inlet immediately south of the Ocean Beauty Seafood processing plant. A Fishery Resource Monitoring Program-funded weir project has estimated the annual escapement of Sockeye Salmon into Neva Lake from 2002 to 2025 (Musslewhite 2025). Sockeye Salmon escapements trended downward from 2003, before reaching a low point in 2015 (**Figure 1**). Escapements have generally improved since 2015, with an average escapement of 5,109 fish between 2021 and 2025 (**Figure 1**).

Most Sockeye Salmon smolts out-migrate after spending a year rearing in the lake, and there is a good distribution of one-, two-, or three-ocean age fish in the escapements. Adult Sockeye Salmon enter the lake from June through October. The earlier running fish spawn in the main inlet stream in August and September, and the later running fish spawn on lake beaches from mid-September to December.

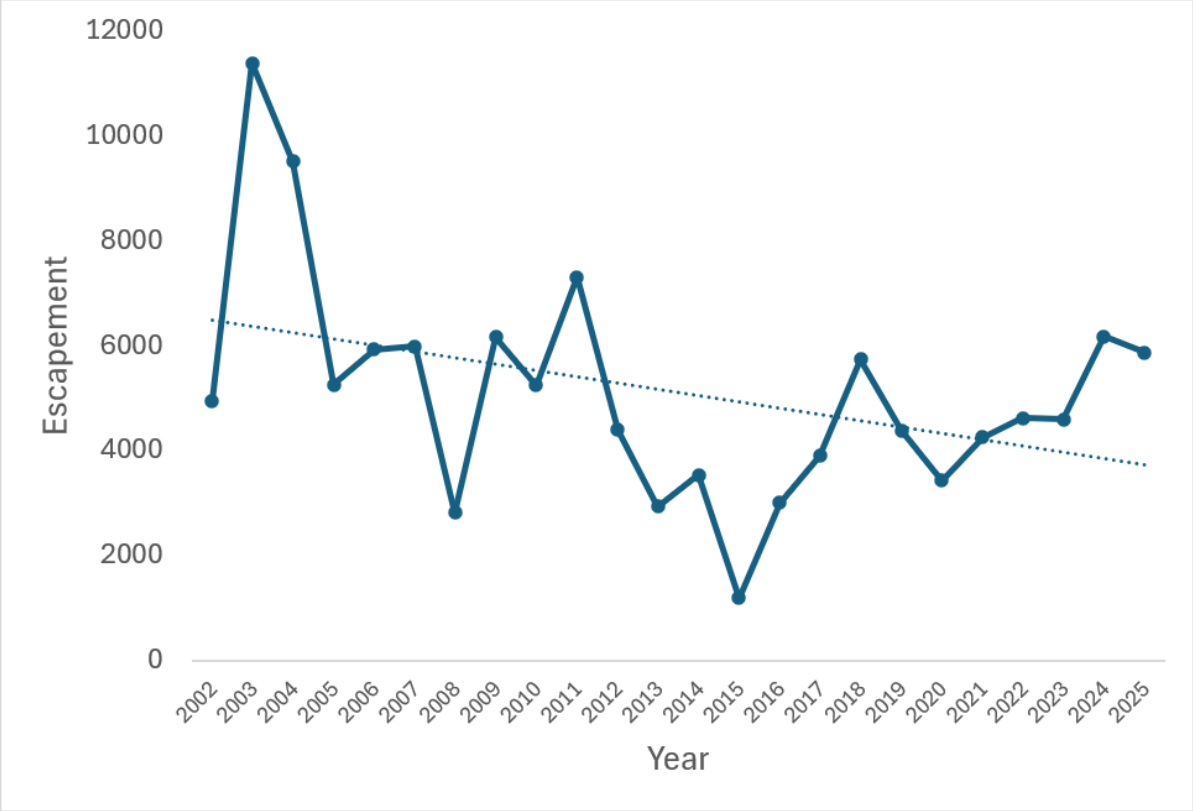


Figure 31. Escapement estimates of Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon from 2002–2025.

Habitat

The inlet stream to Neva Lake has been used as a water source for the Ocean Beauty seafood processing plant in Excursion Inlet. The inlet stream is a primary salmon spawning area, and water withdrawals have likely adversely affected the quantity and temperature of water in the stream. U.S. Forest Service personnel have documented pre-spawn mortality of spawning Sockeye Salmon in the

inlet stream during warm, dry periods. Ocean Beauty developed an alternative water intake to draw water from South Creek instead, which appeared to alleviate impacts on the inlet stream. However, the Ocean Beauty plant ceased operations in 2021, and it will remain closed for the foreseeable future (Chilkat Valley News 2022). With the closure of the plant, water use from the watershed has stopped altogether. In March 2025, the plant was purchased by Silver Bay Seafoods, which has not announced any plans to resume operations in Excursion Inlet (Alaska Public Media 2025).

Cultural Knowledge and Traditional Practices

The Excursion Inlet/Neva area is in the traditional subsistence fishing area of the Huna Tlingit (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998; Schroeder and Kookesh 1990). It is also thought to have been the traditional home of a Tlingit clan of the Raven moiety known as the *Kuyeikeidi* or the "People of Kuyeik (Excursion Inlet)" (Thornton 1999). It is unclear if this clan dissipated or if it was integrated into the *Lukaaxadi* clan of Haines (Thornton 1999). Another clan from Glacier Bay, the *Wooshkeetan*, is thought to have established a settlement in Excursion Inlet around 1700, when the glacier rapidly advanced and forced the resettlement of several groups (Crowell and Howell 2013). This village was known as *Weitadi Noow* (the young woman in seclusion).

Several published documents reference archaeological records and cultural accounts of historic occupation and use of the Excursion Inlet area (e.g., Smythe 1988, Langdon 2006). A pool in the lower part of Neva Creek is a known traditional site for harvesting Sockeye Salmon with a gaff (Langdon 2006). Smythe (1988) reported that the area was also important for trapping in the early to mid-1900s, especially as winter income for local salmon fishermen.

The contemporary settlement at Excursion Inlet began with the construction of a salmon cannery at the mouth of the inlet in 1908 (Ocean Beauty Seafoods 2018). The name of the settlement was first reported in the 1943 Coast Pilot, and the area served as a resupply point for the Aleutian Campaign during World War II (ADCCED 2025). Excursion Inlet first appeared in the US Census in 1940, as an unincorporated village with a population of 23 (US Census 2025). However, it did not reappear in the census until 2000, when it was named a census-designated place (CDP) with a full-time population of 10 (US Census 2025). The full-time population of Excursion Inlet subsequently increased from 12 people in 2010, to 40 people in 2020, before falling to 24 people in 2024 (ADCCED 2025).

Land ownership in the vicinity of the Neva Creek watershed is complicated in part due to the former military use of the area (Ratner and Dizard 2006). The Ocean Beauty Seafoods fish processing plant occupies some of the former military buildings and tidelands. Neva Lake and the outlet creek are not within the Tongass National Forest and some of the land in the area was selected by the Haines Borough (Ratner and Dizard 2006). However, the watershed is within the exterior boundaries of the Tongass National Forest and is considered Federal public waters for the purposes of subsistence management.

As recently as 2012, Excursion Inlet was reported as an important salmon fishing area by residents of both Haines and Hoonah (Sill and Koster 2017). Residents of Gustavus and Angoon are also known to harvest salmon in the area (FSB 2019, OSM 2019). The use of Neva Lake and South Creek was

specifically mentioned by Hoonah residents in a 2003 study, and some residents reported that they were entirely dependent on Neva Creek for their subsistence salmon needs (Ratner and Dizard 2006). Several respondents grew up in Excursion Inlet, learned to fish at Neva Creek, and continue to fish in the same places that their ancestors did (Ratner and Dizard 2006).

Some Hoonah respondents indicated that they tend to fish in the Neva area primarily when the Hoktaheen area is closed to salmon fishing, while some only used one site, and others generally used both sites (Ratner and Dizard 2006:16):

> On occasion, harvesters fished Neva/South Creek very early in the morning, about four or five o'clock and then went to Hoktaheen on the same day if they were unsuccessful at Neva/South Creek. Other respondents used one site exclusively for Sockeye Salmon. One respondent had fished only at the Neva Creek watershed his entire life, except for six years when he was in the Navy.

Other Hoonah respondents noted that they tend to choose Hoktaheen fishing sites over Neva/South Creek due to lower possession limits at Neva Creek (Ratner and Dizard 2006). According to the study, most Hoonah salmon fishermen that historically fished at Neva Creek switched to Hoktaheen when regulations reduced the harvest limit to ten Sockeye Salmon per household at Neva (before 2002). Based on conversations with local residents at the time of the study in 2003, there was an informal agreement among community members to forgo harvesting Neva Sockeye Salmon due to conservation concerns (Ratner and Dizard 2006).

Fishers traveling to Neva/South Creek from Hoonah frequently return home the same evening (Ratner and Dizard 2006). Ratner and Dizard (2006) reported that many Hoonah respondents prefer beach seines over gillnets at Neva Creek. The latter are problematic in strong tidal currents at the mouth of the stream where there are debris and large rocks. Despite the preference, some fishers have switched to gillnets because they are lighter when wet and make the crossing of Icy Strait safer and less costly. At least one respondent reported using traditional gaffs exclusively in Neva Creek (Ratner and Dizard 2006).

It is believed that the actual number of Sockeye Salmon harvested from Neva/South Creek by residents of Hoonah is underreported due in part to the individual household focus of fishing permits, which do not allow for the type of widespread sharing and distribution of salmon resources that is typical throughout the community (Ratner and Dizard 2006). There are a relatively small group of high harvesters in Hoonah who provide Sockeye Salmon for many of its residents. These harvesters regularly provide for 7–14 households, elders, single mothers, and ceremonial and cultural events (Ratner and Dizard 2006).

User Conflict

There have been indications of competition and user conflict regarding salmon fishing in the Neva Lake/South Creek area (Ratner and Dizard 2006, SERAC 2018). There are a number of seasonal recreational cabins and several fishing lodges at Excursion Inlet (Ratner and Dizard 2006). At least one

of the lodges specializes in “unguided anglers,” and provides clients with boats, equipment, and local knowledge. However, the lodge does not typically provide a fishing guide. When the Ocean Beauty fish processing plant was in operation, it employed several hundred seasonal workers throughout the processing season. Many of these workers also fished for salmon in the area (Ratner and Dizard 2006). In Ratner and Dizard (2006), several respondents noted avoidance of the Neva Creek area because of competition among user groups. As one respondent explained, “Usually [I go to] Hoktaheen. You have too much hassle going over to Neva Creek anymore, or Excursion Inlet. They have tourists over there; they’ll watch you. A lot of cannery people over there getting fish. They are being over fished there pretty much” (Ratner and Dizard 2006:16).

User conflicts in the area are also known regarding contaminants and water withdrawals. The military abandoned hazardous waste in the area, and during the 1940s, the creek was believed to be unsafe, and elders warned their families not to eat salmon harvested from it (Ratner and Dizard 2006). Though local perceptions of water and fish safety appear to have improved over time, the impact of withdrawals from Neva Creek for operations at the Ocean Beauty Seafoods facility have also been concerning (Ratner and Dizard 2006). The water system was originally constructed in the 1940s, and water rights were issued to Ocean Beauty Seafoods by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources in 1970, with no documented consideration of its potential impact on local fisheries (Ratner and Dizard 2006). However, the Ocean Beauty Seafoods facility ceased operations in 2021, and it does not appear likely to reopen in the near future.

With the closure of the fish processing plant, the amount of human activity in the Excursion Inlet area has declined dramatically. The plant staff has now been reduced to a single caretaker position, and services such as fuel, ice, and groceries are no longer available. Over the winter of 2024/2025, several pilings for the main dock broke, so there is no longer moorage available for recreational or commercial vessels. This decline in overall activity has likely reduced the amount of user conflict in the Neva system.

Enforcement

Monitoring and enforcement issues have also been documented (Ratner and Dizard (2006). Ratner and Dizard (2006) noted that some Hoonah residents felt that their subsistence harvests are monitored and restricted much more closely than non-resident clients of the Excursion Inlet lodges. The effectiveness of the closure may also be limited by a lack of public awareness of the closure. The State sport fishing regulation book does not mention the closure, so many anglers may be unaware of it. Until recently, the closure was not shown on the State subsistence fishing permit conditions. In 2024, the closure was included on the permit conditions for the first time as a footnote stating that “Non-federally qualified subsistence fishermen are in violation of a federal closure if they fish above mean high tide in the Neva/South Creeks drainage” (ADF&G 2025).

Harvest History

Sockeye Salmon returning to Neva Lake are targeted in subsistence and sport fisheries occurring in the Neva/South Creek drainage, as well as the marine waters of Excursion Inlet. They are also incidentally

taken in mixed-stocked commercial fisheries in Icy Strait and Excursion Inlet. Subsistence fishing in marine waters occurs at the mouth of South Creek, usually with beach seines or gillnets, and only under State regulations. In freshwater, salmon are taken with gaffs, dip nets, or spears for subsistence purposes. Sport fishing occurs in both marine and freshwaters, with boat-based fishing occurring throughout Excursion Inlet and shore-based fishing occurring primarily at the mouth of South Creek.

Sport and commercial fisheries

The annual Alaska Statewide Sport Fish Harvest Survey collects information from a random selection of licensed sport fish anglers through a mailed questionnaire designed to estimate fishing effort, catch, and harvest in Alaska sport fisheries each year (Smith et al. 2024). The current questionnaire specifically asks respondents about their activities in larger sport fisheries like the Kenai Peninsula/Cook Inlet survey area, with respondents asked to write in the names of other places they may have fished and provide information about their activities in those fisheries (Smith et al. 2024). For 2023, the most recently published survey year, questionnaires were mailed to a stratified random selection of 47,000 of the 500,357 total Alaska sport fish license holders for that year (Smith et al. 2025). The overall response rate to delivered surveys was 28% (12,257 responses) for the 2023 survey year (Smith et al. 2025). Declining response rate has been a long-term problem for this survey (Kirsch et al. 2022). For such reasons, these surveys typically do not provide an accurate estimate of fishing effort and harvest in small systems like Neva Lake and Neva/South Creek. Sport harvest estimates are only reported for sites receiving twelve or more survey responses in a given year (Smith et al. 2025). Estimates for sites that receive fewer than twelve survey responses are aggregated with other similar sites (Smith et al. 2025). In recent years (2018–2024), there were no Sockeye Salmon reported as harvested by sport anglers at Neva although it should be noted that there were very few responses and a reliable estimate could not be generated for both harvest and effort (Poetter 2025).

Charter boat operators and saltwater fishing guides are required to record all salmon caught in the ADF&G logbook program. However, the “self-guided” lodge in Excursion Inlet has anglers that are unguided, so the number of Sockeye Salmon caught by clients of the lodge would be estimated from the Statewide Harvest Survey. Guided freshwater effort and harvest in the area is low, and no Sockeye Salmon catch was reported at Neva prior to the end of the freshwater logbook reporting requirement in 2019. Since 2019, freshwater logbooks have not been required for guided anglers (Poetter 2025).

The commercial harvest of Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon is unknown and probably negligible in years when there is little or no purse seine fishing in the northern portion of section 14-C. Between 2004 and 2025, the commercial purse seine annual harvest of Sockeye Salmon in Subdistrict 114-80 (Excursion Inlet) has ranged from 0 to 2,968 fish, with no fisheries opened in 15 of the 22 years (ADF&G 2026).

Subsistence Fisheries

Most subsistence fishing is done under the State permit, though some harvest occurs using Federal permits (**Table 1**). State permits may be used in both freshwater and in saltwater, while Federal permits may only be used in freshwater. The location of harvest (e.g. freshwater or saltwater) is not reported on the permit, but it can be inferred from the gear type used. Net gear such as beach seines and gillnets are

generally used in marine waters near the mouth of South Creek, while dip nets, spears, and gaffs are used in freshwater. Cast nets may be used in either freshwater or saltwater, so the location of cast net harvest is unknown. The amount of unreported harvest is unknown, as only limited harvest monitoring has occurred in the Neva Creek area.

Residents of Icy Strait communities (primarily Hoonah, Gustavus, and Excursion Inlet) are the principal FQSUs of Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon, and most of the NFQUs harvesting from this system are from the Juneau area. The reported harvest of Sockeye Salmon by all users declined between 2015 and 2020, but it has increased somewhat in the last 2-3 years (**Table 1**). The harvest limit increase from 10 to 20 fish in 2023 has likely contributed to the recent increase in harvest. However, yearly harvest remains below the levels witnessed from 2008 – 2015.

The lowest estimated escapements of Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon in recent history (2002-2024) took place in 2015 (**Figure 1**). Though escapements have generally improved since this time, lower returns were likely associated with the declining harvests witnessed since 2015 (**Table 1**). The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted fishing activities and harvest rates by all users in 2020, and perhaps into 2021 (FSB 2023).

While the proportion of Sockeye Salmon harvest taken by FQSUs varies from year to year, the average proportion has not changed substantially since the closure began (**Figures 2-5**). Between 2008 and 2018, before the closure took effect, FQSUs took about 58% of the total Sockeye Salmon harvest in the Neva system **(Figure 2)**. During the years in which the closure was in effect (2019–2024), FQSUs took about 51% of the total Sockeye Salmon harvest. This data suggests that the closure may not have been effective in increasing the proportion of the overall harvest taken by FQSUs, though there may be other reasons as to why the proportion of reported FQSU harvest did not increase during the period that the closure has been in effect.

However, it appears that there has been a shift from saltwater to freshwater harvest methods since the closure took effect (see **Figures 3-4**). Over the pre-closure years (2008–2018), about 41% of the total Sockeye Salmon harvest was taken using freshwater gear types **(Figure 4)**. Since the closure began, however, the percentage of total freshwater harvest has increased to 57% (**Figure 4**). While it is unclear what is driving this shift, most of the freshwater harvest since the closure began has been by FQSUs. Despite the closure, there has also been some reported harvest by NFQUs using freshwater gear types (**Figure 4**).

Table 1. Harvest of salmon from Neva Creek as reported on State and Federal subsistence permits, 1985-2024.

Year	State Permits Fished	State Permit Chinook	State Permit Sockeye	State Permit Coho	State Permit Pink	State Permit Chum	Federal Permits Fished	Federal Permit Sockeye	Federal Permit Coho
1986	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-
1987	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-
1988	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-
1989	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-
1990	1	0	25	0	0	0	-	-	-
1991	2	0	40	0	0	0	-	-	-
1992	16	0	348	0	0	14	-	-	-
1993	8	0	127	0	0	201	-	-	-
1994	5	0	151	0	52	0	-	-	-
1995	6	0	90	0	247	28	-	-	-
1996	19	0	411	0	216	872	-	-	-
1997	9	0	126	5	13	1156	-	-	-
1998	4	0	25	0	89	50	-	-	-
1999	5	0	50	0	46	73	-	-	-
2000	22	0	197	0	23	53	-	-	-
2001	7	0	157	30	15	23	-	-	-
2002	6	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	0
2003	6	0	87	12	0	0	0	0	0
2004	23	0	397	0	6	3	0	0	0
2005	14	0	276	0	23	10	1	34	0
2006	11	0	140	0	23	12	0	0	0
2007	13	0	295	31	0	0	2	50	36
2008	27	0	621	117	5	14	0	0	0
2009	40	0	807	34	31	8	0	0	0
2010	26	1	329	29	6	1	1	13	2
2011	31	0	448	110	59	1	1	10	10
2012	39	0	632	46	90	25	1	20	18
2013	39	-	522	38	74	17	1	21	36
2014	36	0	459	66	4	4	2	6	32
2015	40	0	312	58	195	2	0	0	0
2016	24	0	136	23	0	3	2	8	0
2017	18	0	110	37	40	0	1	0	10
2018	15	0	129	2	0	0	2	10	0
2019	17	0	91	14	6	8	1	1	0
2020	7	0	41	0	0	0	0	0	0
2021	7	0	35	5	30	20	1	7	0
2022	10	0	54	0	21	0	0	0	0
2023	22	0	230	0	4	15	1	9	0
2024	13	0	91	0	2	15	1	2	0
Average	15	0.0	200	16	32	68	0.8	8	6
Std.Dev.	12	0.2	198	29	60	231	0.7	13	12

[a]State subsistence data from ADF&G June 2026.

[b]Federal subsistence fishing permits were not issued before 2002.

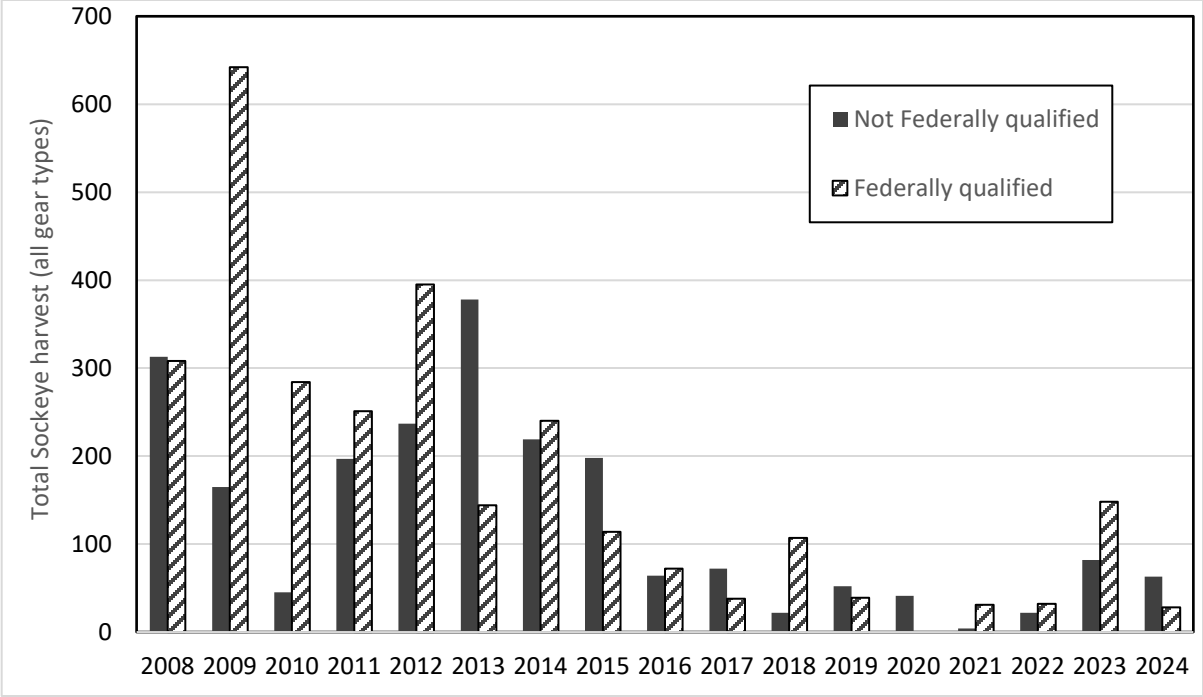


Figure 2. Total subsistence harvest of Sockeye Salmon in Neva/South Creek via all gear types from 2008–2024 (Poetter pers. comm. 2026).

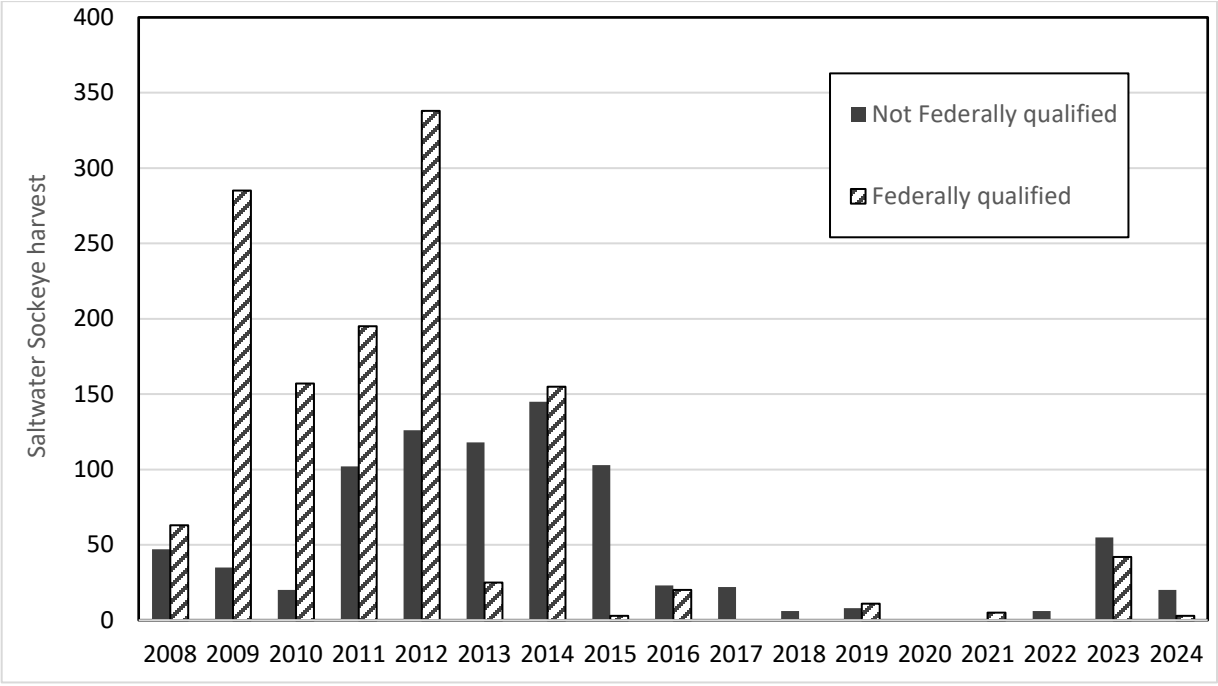


Figure 3. Subsistence harvest of saltwater Sockeye Salmon near Neva/South Creek from 2008–2024 (Poetter pers. comm. 2026). *Harvest location inferred by gear type.

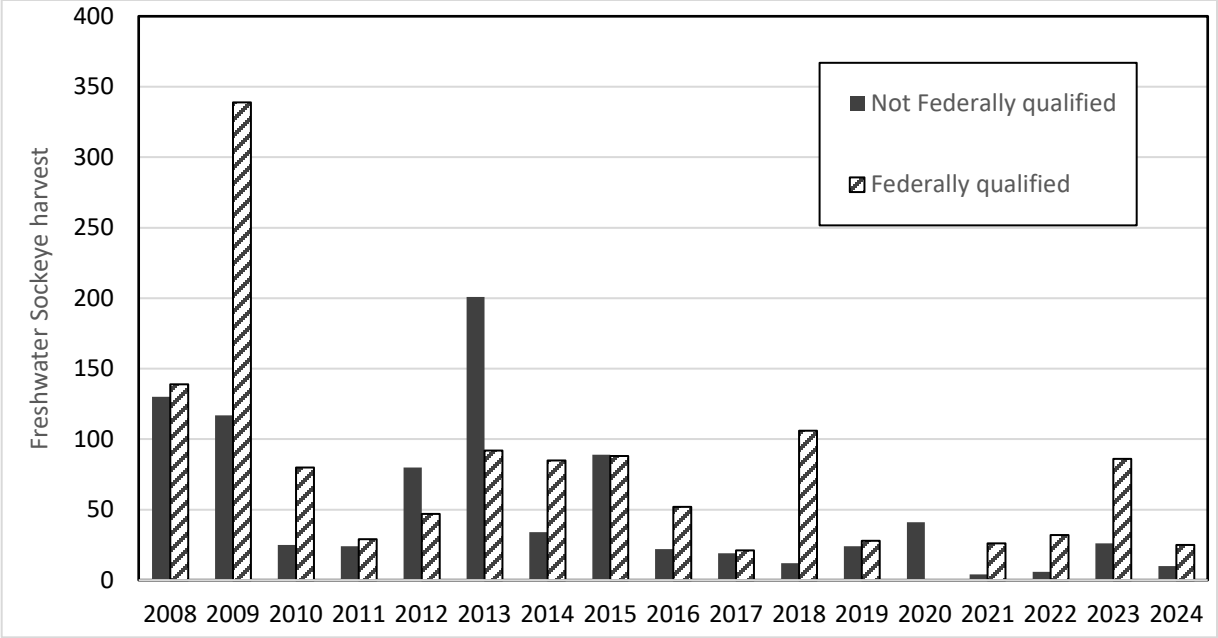


Figure 4. Subsistence harvest of freshwater Sockeye Salmon from Neva/South Creek from 2008–2024 (Poetter pers. comm. 2026). *Harvest location inferred by gear type.

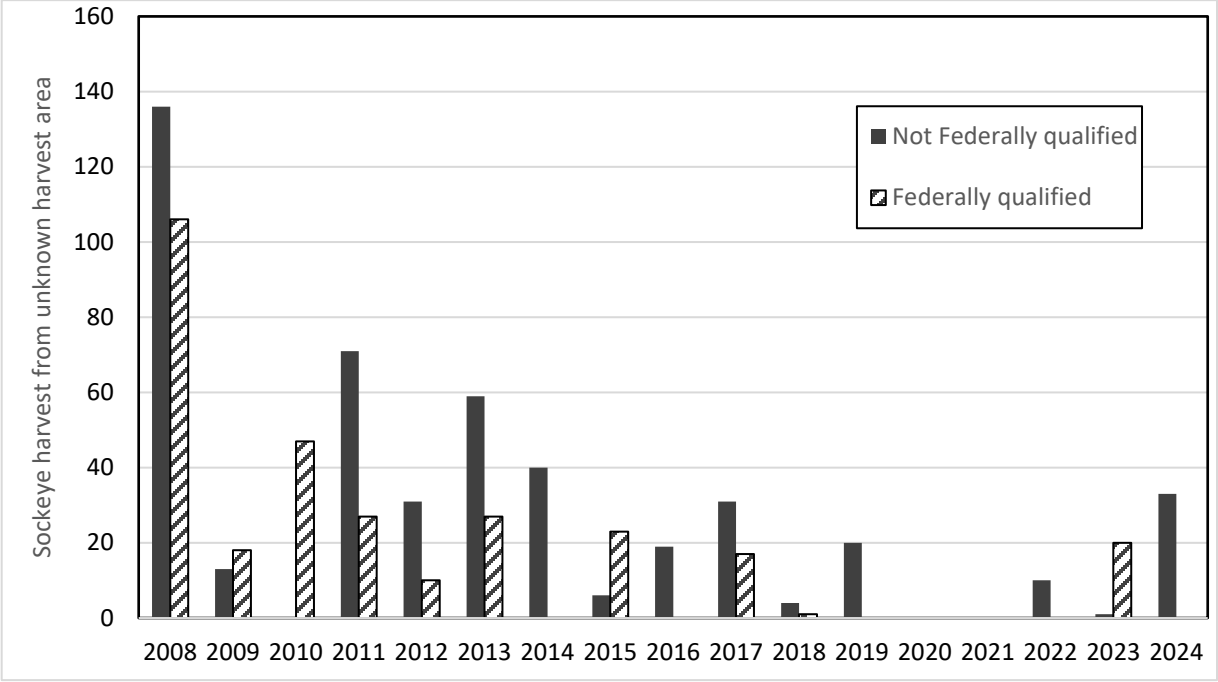


Figure 5. Subsistence harvest of Sockeye Salmon from unknown locations in or near Neva/South Creek from 2008–2024 (Poetter pers. comm. 2026). *Harvest location unable to be inferred by gear type.

Alternative(s) Considered

Increase annual harvest limits: In the last review of this closure (FCR23-24), the Council discussed potentially increasing harvest limits on this system as an alternative to the closure (SERAC 2022). The Council Chair delivered similar remarks to the Board during its deliberation on the closure (FSB 2023). Since then, the State and Federal annual harvest limits have increased from 10 Sockeye Salmon to 20 Sockeye Salmon per household, effectively implementing the alternative considered during the previous closure review.

Discussion and Effects

If this closure is retained, Sockeye Salmon harvest in the Federal public waters (i.e. freshwater) of the Neva/South Creek system will continue to be limited to FQSUs, reducing competition and user conflicts with NFQUs. This would continue to provide a greater subsistence priority for the use of Sockeye Salmon in the Federal public waters of the Neva system. If the closure is rescinded, NFQUs will be able to legally harvest Sockeye Salmon in the Federal public waters of the Neva/South Creek system. This may increase competition and user conflict with FQSUs.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

☐ **Retain the Status Quo**
☒ **Rescind the Closure**
☐ **Modify the Closure to** Click or tap here to enter text.
☐ **Defer Decision on the Closure or Take No Action**

Justification

Under the Board closure policy, a closure to non-subsistence uses may only be instituted and maintained for the purposes of conserving healthy populations of fish and wildlife, to continue subsistence uses of those populations, or pursuant to other applicable law. In the case of Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon, ongoing monitoring has shown that the population is at healthy levels after increasing from a low point in 2015. The restrictive 10-fish harvest limit has been increased to 20 fish, which makes the site a more attractive option for harvesters, and harvests have increased in the last two to three years. However, harvests remain below the levels witnessed prior to 2015.

The closure was intended to protect subsistence uses of Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon by reducing competition and harvest by NFQUs. The closure has probably curtailed some NFQU harvest of Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon in Federal public waters (i.e. freshwater), it is unclear how much the closure has affected or improved FQSUs' access to this system. Based on the harvest data collected since the closure was enacted, it appears that this closure has not led to a substantial increase in harvests of Neva Sockeye Salmon by FQSUs.

The closure also was intended to address a history of user conflicts in the area, mostly between subsistence users and non-resident lodge guests and processing plant workers. The fish processing

plant has been closed since 2021, which has dramatically reduced the number of people residing in Excursion Inlet, and potentially harvesting salmon in the area. While fishing lodge guests are still present in the area, the vast majority of their activity and harvest takes place in the marine waters near Excursion Inlet, and not in the Federal public waters subject to the closure. Overall, the potential for user conflict has declined since the closure was enacted, and it is unclear if there is still significant competition between user groups. Therefore, the closure does not appear to be necessary to maintain healthy populations of Neva Sockeye Salmon or to continue subsistence uses of those salmon.

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SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

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