

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JULY 24-30, 2023. Report #10
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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

Yakutat

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- **Situk River** – Remains closed to harvest of Chinook Salmon under both State and Federal regulations due to conservation concerns.

Juneau

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- Based on commercial gillnet catches, returns of sockeye, chum, and pink salmon appear to be relatively strong in northern inside waters. The return of wild Sockeye to the Taku system is exceeding pre-season expectations and is projected to have already exceeded the escapement goal range of 40,000 – 75,000 fish. Similarly, sockeye returns to the Chilkoot and Chilkat systems near Haines appear to be strong as well.
- **Neva Lake** – The Neva Lake weir was installed on June 21, and is a cooperative project between the Hoonah Indian Association and the Forest Service. The weir is used to monitor sockeye salmon returns to Neva Lake. Anecdotal reports indicate that sockeye are present throughout the Neva/South Creek system. Harvesters are reminded that only Federally qualified subsistence users may harvest sockeye from fresh water in the Neva/South Creek system. The author fished the mouth of South Creek on July 29 and was able to scrape up a handful of sockeye using a small gillnet. However, the pinks were starting to come in and will only get thicker as the season progresses. The creek is low, and federally qualified users may have better luck dipnetting fish holding in the creek and waiting for higher water to move upstream.



Figure 1. Juliet Harrision, USFS; Gerard White Sr. (HIA) and Gerard White Jr. (HIA) in front of the Neva Lake weir

Sheet'ká and Xunaa (Sitka and Hoonah) Area

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- **Herring** – A commercial herring fishery occurred in Sheet'ká X'áat'i (Sitka Sound) in 2023. Please see this [summary of Sitka Sound herring 2023](#). More information can be found on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's "[Commercial Herring Fishery](#)" homepage. Here is the [2023 summary of southeast Alaska herring](#).
- **Falls Lake** – The Falls Lake weir project was not funded in the latest FRMP cycle.
- **Chaa's' Geeyí (Klag Bay)** - The Sitka Tribe of Alaska operates the sockeye salmon monitoring weir at Klag Bay which counts sockeye entering Klag Lake and conducts on-site creel surveys of fishermen. The weir was operational as of June 25. As of July 30, 443 sockeye have entered the lake, and 1,516 have been harvested. In 2022, approximately 2,029 sockeye migrated past the weir while an estimated 1,960 were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fishery. Subsistence harvest accounted for approximately 99% of terminal area harvest.
- **Redoubt Lake** - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which was operational as of June 12. As of July 29, 81,217 sockeye have entered the lake. On June 28, the Alaska Department of Fish and game [announced a liberalization](#) of the state personal use and subsistence fishery at Redoubt would take affect on July 1. This emergency order changes the sockeye salmon limit, in the state

subsistence fisheries, to 25 sockeye salmon per household with an annual limit of 100 sockeye salmon per household. On July 7, an [Emergency Special Action](#) was authorized through the Federal Subsistence Program, which increases the daily limit for qualified federal subsistence users to 50 sockeye per household with no annual limit. A separate Federal Subsistence fishing permit, which can be acquired at the Forest Service office in Sitka, is required to participate in this opportunity.

In 2022, an estimated 90,005 sockeye salmon passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake. On July 9, in accordance with the Redoubt Lake Management Plan, the individual/household subsistence sockeye possession limit was set at 25 and the individual/household subsistence sockeye annual limit was set at 100. Preliminary personal use/subsistence harvest records indicate that 5,850 sockeye salmon were harvested from the Redoubt system under 246 subsistence/personal use permits. Approximately 5,549 sockeye salmon were harvested in Sitka Sound commercial fishery openings throughout the season. Most of these sockeye are probably of Redoubt origin.



Figure 2. SCA technician sampling fish (photo credit: Elizabeth Klein)

Admiralty

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- **Sitkoh Lake** - The Sitkoh Lake weir is a cooperative project between the USFS and the Angoon Community Association (ACA). The weir was installed on July 12. The swim-through video weir records Sockeye and other fish as they enter the lake.



Figure 3. SCA intern Chaney Haavik installs electronics at the Sitkoh Lake weir.

SCA intern Chaney Haavik installs electronics at the Sitkoh Lake weir.

Kaachxana.áak'w and Séet Ká Kwáan (Wrangell and Petersburg) Area

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As of July 25, a total of 93 Stikine River Subsistence Permits have been issued for 2023 and users reported a cumulative harvest of 867 Sockeye (65 percent reporting). Based on this survey an estimated 1,466 Sockeye Salmon have been harvested to date. Last year at this same point in time, an estimated 980 Sockeye had been harvested. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game in-river assessment fishery continues to track along with a much higher abundance of sockeye to date then what we have seen for the past two years. The 2023 Stikine River pre-season Sockeye Salmon forecast is 86,000 fish, with 57,000 Tahltan and 29,000 Mainstem fish. The 2022 Sockeye Salmon estimate was 56,000 fish, which included 28,000 Tahltan Lake and 28,000 Mainstem Sockeye Salmon. The escapement objective for Tahltan-bound Sockeye Salmon is 18,000 fish and 30,000 for Mainstem fish.

The 2023 pre-season terminal run forecast for large Chinook Salmon in the Stikine River is 11,700 fish. This forecast is below the bottom range of the 14,000 to 28,000 fish goal. The area's commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries have been closed to protect this return. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game Chinook Assessment Survey concluded on July 10 and the cumulative CPUE ended up at 19.39, just under the recent five-year average of 19.67. The Stikine River Chinook Fishery continues to be a concern on a Federal, State and local level as the estimate continues to be well below average. Gauge height on the Stikine River downstream of Shakes Slough ranged from 16.3 ft to 18.5 ft for the week of July 23. Currently, water levels are dropping (16.3 ft) and the water temperature is on a rising trend (10.1 C).

Prince of Wales

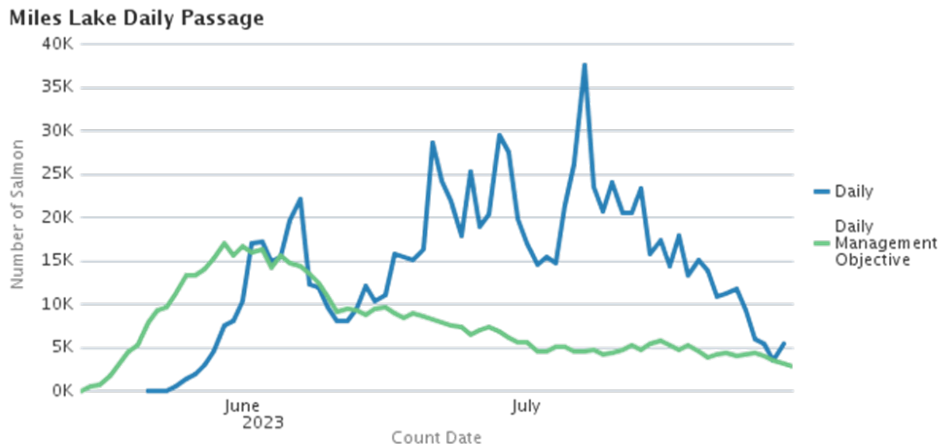
- **Hetta Lake** – The Hetta Lake weir is fish tight, and the Hydaburg Cooperative Association staff have passed 260 Sockeye Salmon so far. An estimated 1546 Hetta Lake Sockeye have been harvested to date.
- **Eek Lake** – The Eek Lake weir is fish tight, and the Hydaburg Cooperative Association staff have passed 63 Sockeye Salmon so far. An estimated 192 Eek Lake Sockeye Salmon have been harvested to date.

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

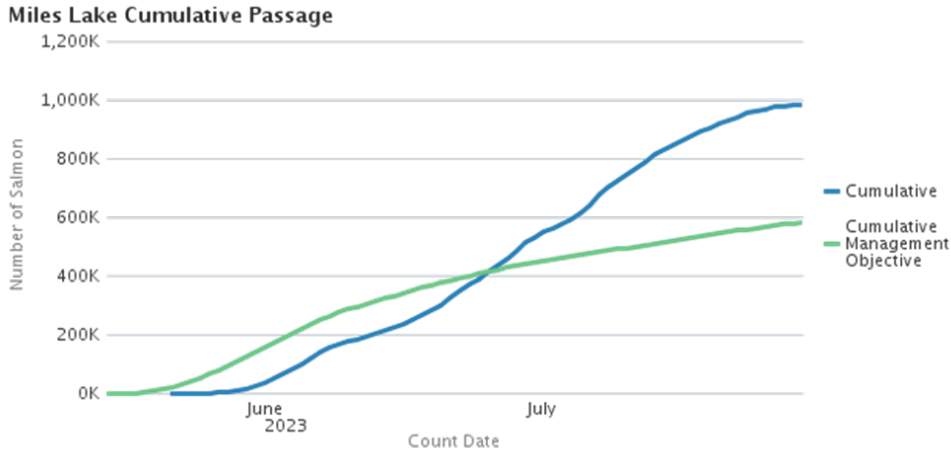
Copper River, 7/31/2023 Update – Dave Sarafin, Copper River Federal Fisheries Management Biologist, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), (907) 822-7281, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) reports the commercial fishing harvest in the Copper River District through July 29 to be 846,900 Sockeye Salmon and 10,400 Chinook Salmon.

As of July 28, the ADFG sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) has estimated the passage of 987,450 salmon migrating upstream for the season. The cumulative passage is now 70% above the management objective of 581,172 salmon for this date of the season. A daily estimate of 5,544 salmon migrated by the sonar on July 28.



Graph of Copper River Salmon Daily Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through July 28, 2023



Graph of Copper River Salmon Cumulative Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through July 28, 2023

Sonar salmon passage estimates are the primary assessment tool for the Sockeye Salmon return to the Copper River. The sonar season total estimate is well above the management objective and the escapement goal for the season has been achieved. Salmon harvest is being reported throughout the river.

As with Sockeye Salmon, fisheries managers are also monitoring Chinook Salmon run strength; assessments by the ADFG of in-river data project an abundance of approximately 50,000 Chinook Salmon; a level that should continue to provide harvest opportunities and still exceed the sustainable escapement goal range of 21,000 to 31,000 fish.

No Federal Special Actions have been issued by the in-season manager this season.

The State subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened June 1 and is scheduled to remain open through September 30. The State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict is scheduled to remain open for the remainder of the season. Effective July 20, the State increased the Chinook Salmon sport fish possession limit in the Upper Copper River Drainage from 1 to 2 fish (daily bag limit remains at 1 fish).

The Federal subsistence fisheries in the Chitina Subdistrict, the Glennallen Subdistrict, and the Batzulnetas vicinity are open May 15 through September 30. Records of the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Federal subsistence permit website indicate that 197 Chitina Subdistrict, 279 Glennallen Subdistrict, and 2 Batzulnetas permits have been issued to date.

The Federal subsistence salmon fishery in the Lower Copper River near Cordova is open from June 1 through September 30. To date, there have been 57 permits issued through the OSM database. A total of 170 Sockeye Salmon and 4 Chinook Salmon have been reported through July 24.

With funding through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP), WRST is again operating the Tanada Creek salmon weir located at Batzulnetas. As of July 29, preliminary count estimates are of 2,322 Sockeye Salmon and 7 Chinook Salmon passing

the weir. Through this date of the season, the count of salmon passing the weir is well below average.



Tanada Creek Salmon Weir, 2023

Links:

ADFG Miles Lake daily sonar estimates

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.salmon_escapement

ADFG Copper River Inseason Commercial Harvest Estimates

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.harvestsummary>

ADFG Sport Fish Emergency Orders and News Releases

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=main.home>

PWS, Copper River Delta, Chugach – Dr. Andrew Sanders, Chugach National Forest, Cordova. July 7, 2023 Contact – (907) 250-0439 or Andrew.sanders@usda.gov

Prince William Sound / Copper River Delta: The lower Copper River dipnet fishery opened on June 1st. As of Monday morning July 31st, 57 permits had been issued, and users reported a cumulative harvest of 170 Sockeye Salmon and 4 Chinook Salmon. The Copper River Highway is accessible to 36 Mile. For more information about conditions in the Copper River and the commercial drift gillnet fishery, please see the *Prince William Sound – Copper River* weekly update which can also be found in this report.

Water levels in area streams are continuing to recede. Pink Salmon are in, and anglers are reporting high success in the lower stream reaches. In 2022, the 2nd week of July was the peak period for reported harvest for Sockeye Salmon outside the Copper River under subsistence regulations. Dip netters are still seeing success in the Copper River. Anglers are awaiting the arrival of Coho Salmon.

For further information about the federal subsistence fishery in the Lower Copper River, users can contact the US Forest Service Cordova District office by calling 907-424-7661 or Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve staff -- Dave Sarafin at 907-822-7281 or Barbara Cellarius at 907-822-7236. Updates regarding changes affecting the Federal subsistence fisheries in the Copper River are available by calling the Wrangell-St. Elias Visitor Center at 907-822-7250. More information regarding the federal subsistence fisheries in the remainder of the Copper River Delta area and Prince William Sound can be obtained by contacting the Chugach National Forest Subsistence Staff – Andrew Sanders at 907-424-4759

COOK INLET AREA – Kenneth Gates, Senior Fish Biologist, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

The 2023 Cook Inlet Federal subsistence fishing is underway beginning on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers June 15 and June 16, respectively. Regulatory dates for the Kasilof River community gillnet fishery are from June 16 through August 15. Regulatory periods for the Kenai River community gillnet fishery are from July 1 through August 15 and from September 10 – 30.

Seasons for subsistence fishing with rod and reel are the same as for the taking of fish under Alaska sport fishing regulations. Most of the initial rod and reel subsistence effort will be focused on Sockeye Salmon in the Upper Kenai and Russian Rivers which opened June 11.

Federal subsistence fishing permits have been issued to 478 residents of Cooper Landing, Hope, Ninilchik, and Moose Pass. Permit types include a general fishing, household, designated fisher, and community gillnet permits. To date, 5,730 Sockeye Salmon have been reported as being harvested in all fisheries between the Kasilof and Kenai rivers: 1,978 by gillnet in the Kasilof River; 2,601 by gillnet in the Kenai River; 56 by dip net in the Kasilof River; and 1,095 by dipnet at the Russian River falls through 7/29/2023.

No special actions have been issued for Cook Inlet Federal fisheries. However, escapement remains very poor for Chinook Salmon returning to upper Cook Inlet. The early-run Chinook Salmon escapement was not met in the Kenai River with only 1,961 large fish passing the Alaska Department of Fish and Game sonar by June 30, 2023. We are closely monitoring the late-run Chinook Salmon escapement and Federal harvest of Chinook Salmon in the Kenai River and will take necessary action if warranted. The late-run of Chinook Salmon returning to the Kenai River is currently not predicted to meet the established in-river escapement goal.

Fish counts at some Alaska Department of Fish and Game-operated assessment projects are available on-line at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/index.cfm?ADFG=main.home>

Kodiak Island Area – Michael Brady, Refuge Manager, - Kodiak NWR(907) 487-2600/0230 michael_brady@fws.gov orKevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230 Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov

Subsistence fishing around the northern Kodiak Archipelago has decreased over the past few weeks. The Buskin River has very few sockeye salmon returning, and the overall escapement counts is low. It is unlikely to meet its' lower escapement goal. Reports from local fishermen have shown a small pulse of fish were harvested in the harbor around Ouzinkie. Litnik continues to have a few sockeye moving past the weir.

The Chinook Salmon escapement continues to trickle into the Karluk and Ayakulik River drainages, but it is very unlikely they will meet their respective lower escapement goals. Fishing of any type for Chinook salmon continues to be restricted on both systems.

Many subsistence users are turning their attention to deer hunting season which starts on August 1, 2023. There have been numerous commercial fishing openings around the Kodiak Island, which has contributing to the low number of subsistence users fishing for Sockeye Salmon. For those subsistence users who were not able to meet their needs, they will attempt to meet it by fishing for Coho Salmon.

Pink Salmon are slowly returning to the Buskin River and Coho Salmon are being caught by sport fishermen around Kodiak.

Any reports of subsistence activities will be reported during the upcoming week.

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF July 31, 2023.***BRISTOL BAY, CHIGNIK, ALASKA PENINSULA, and ALEUTIAN ISLANDS –
Jonathon Gerken Fisheries Branch Chief Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office***

These areas support abundant returns of salmon, particularly Sockeye Salmon; as well as some of the largest commercial fisheries for salmon in Alaska. All of the assessments of salmon returns are conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), and provide the basis for any inseason assessment and management. None of the adjustments in commercial fishing management throughout any of these areas are anticipated to affect subsistence fishing in waters under Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction covered in this report.

Bristol Bay:

Current counts for Sockeye Salmon at installed escapement projects for July 30:

Alagnak = No counts reported

Egegik = 1,562,700 (project removed on July 25)
 Igushik = 537,294
 Kvichak = 3,751,260 (project removed on July 28)
 Naknek = 1,156,206 (project removed on July 22)
 Nushagak = 1,772,675; Chinook = 31,497 (project removed on July 25)
 Togiak = 197,250
 Ugashik = 1,128,188 (project removed on July 28)
 Wood River = 2,648,616 (project removed on July 25)

The Sockeye Salmon sustainable escapement goals (SEG) for Bristol Bay systems are:

Escapement Goals:

Kvichak	SEG = 2,000,000 – 10,000,000
Alagnak	SEG = 320,000 minimum
Naknek	SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000
Egegik	SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000
Ugashik	SEG = 500,000 – 1,400,000
Wood River	SEG = 700,000 – 1,800,000
Igushik	SEG = 150,000 – 400,000
Nushagak	SEG = 370,000 – 900,000
Nushagak	SEG = 55,000 – 270,000; Chinook Salmon = 55,000 – 120,000
Togiak	SEG = 120,000 – 270,000

Chignik:

The Chignik River cumulative weir count as of July 30 is 628,400 Sockeye Salmon. Early run Sockeye Salmon account for 421,744 fish and late run Sockeye Salmon account for 206,656 fish. The interim combined run escapement objective for July 30 is around 426,000 – 635,000 fish.

There has been only 235 Chinook Salmon counted at the ADFG weir as of July 30. It is unlikely, based on the current rate of escapement, that the lower range (1,300) of the escapement goal for Chignik River Chinook Salmon will be achieved. In an effort to conserve the Chinook Salmon run, both state and Federal fisheries closures remain in effect.

Escapement Goals:

Early Run Sockeye Salmon/ Black Lake	BEG = 350,000 – 450,000
Late Run Sockeye Salmon/ Chignik Lake	SEG = 200,000 – 400,000
-In-river Goal	-10,000 in August and 10,000 in September in addition to minimum escapement objectives
Chinook Salmon	BEG = 1,300 – 2,700
Pink Salmon – Even year	SEG = 170,000 – 280,000
Chum Salmon	SEG = 45,000 – 110,000

Alaska Peninsula:

Current counts for Sockeye Salmon at installed escapement projects for July 29:

Nelson = 230,213; Chinook = 4,078 (weir removed on July 27)

Bear = 264,447

Ilnik = 99,021 (weir removed July 19)

Orzinski = 17,700

Sandy = 36,257 (weir removed July 22)

McLees = 25,817

Escapement Goals:

Nelson River BEG = 97,000 – 219,000

Late-run Bear Lake BEG = 117,000 – 195,000

Aleutian Islands.

All fisheries are forecast to meet escapement goals and provide harvest opportunity.

Yukon River –USFWS Fairbanks Office. July 24-July 30, 2023

Federal Manager, Holly Carroll (907) 351-3029, holly_carroll@fws.gov

Assessment and Management Information

The fall season is underway in the lower river, but we are the lull between the summer and fall chum runs, with no large groups of chum entering currently. The Canadian-origin component of the fall chum run has been poor the last few years, so the run may not be large enough to meet escapement goals for the Canadian stocks of fall chum. At this time, selective gear openings (with dip nets, beach seines or manned fish wheels) are being continued 24 hours per day, 7 days a week until fall chum typically enter the river in significant numbers, then, retention of chum salmon will close, in order to assess the fall chum run, until it is projected that all escapement goals will be met. Throughout the drainage, Chinook salmon still need to be released, but, pink, coho and sockeye salmon can be retained from selective gears. Gillnets are still limited to 4-inches maximum mesh size, and 60 feet maximum length. Selective gear salmon opportunities in fall season are limited to federally qualified users in federal public waters by Temporary special action, and fishing closures for fall chum salmon are announced for the Coastal District and Districts 1-3 here: [TSA-02-FC-01-23](#); and for District 4 here: [TSA-02-FC-02-23](#).

Eagle sonar is counting passage of Chinook, and is matching up well with a run timing that was about 5 days late at Pilot Station sonar. With about 58,000 Chinook counted at Pilot Station sonar, and 42% of the run (on average) being Canadian-origin fish, it is likely about 26,000 Chinook salmon are making their way to Canadian spawning grounds. **It is imperative that all Chinook be released alive from selective gear.**

The weirs throughout the drainage have been stalled by high water. Gisasa river weir has been counting, but lost fish counts for nearly a week due to high water, so estimates are considered underestimates at this time. The Andreafsky weir, despite installation, is still experiencing high water that may render viable counts impossible for this season. Assessment project and management updates will be given on the **YRDFA weekly teleconferences each Tuesday at 1:00 pm at the following number: 1-800-315-6338, Passcode: 98566#.**

Management Strategies based on the preseason outlooks and inseason assessment:

The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) received special action request FSA23-02 asking the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) to close Federal public waters of the Yukon River drainage to the harvest of Chinook, Chum and Coho salmon except by federally qualified subsistence users from June 1 through September 30, 2023, and to require that Federal subsistence fishing schedules, openings, closures and methods be determined by the Federal Fisheries Manager. This request falls within the scope of authority of the Federal manager, Holly Carroll and has been transferred to her by the Board. See detailed management strategy here:

[2023 FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE FISHERY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE YUKON AREA \(doi.gov\)](#)

This week's Advisory Announcements co-authored by ADF&G and USFWS and distributed by ADF&G were:

- Yukon River Fall Update #1:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1518448328.pdf>

Where to Find Yukon Fishery Information:

To hear the fishing schedule and fish counts please call the toll-free Fishing Schedule and Fish Counts hotline: 866-479-7387.

Recent Fishery special actions are posted here:

<https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/fisheries-special-actions>

For Federal News Releases and Special actions, like

www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

For detailed information on management actions and weekly assessment updates, subscribe to ADF&G advisory announcements at

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.search>

For daily counts and State Advisory announcements like the ADF&G Yukon River Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG/

If you'd like to receive emails and notifications on the Federal Subsistence Management Program you may subscribe for regular updates by emailing fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov

In Season Manager – Boyd Blihovde, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Boyd_Blihovde@fws.gov; Contact Spencer Reardon (907)543-1023 or spencer_reardon@fws.gov

Now that Chinook, chum, and sockeye are mostly past the Bethel area, management discussions are focused on coho. The Bethel Test Fish numbers for coho salmon are indicating higher numbers than the past 10 years thus far (<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.salmon#fishcounts>). However, it is still early to accurately determine run strength. Harvest from the July 17, 19, 21, 24, and 26 set net openers is unknown as surveys were not conducted. However fishers and locals are reporting low effort as few nets were seen.

The USFWS and the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission will be meeting on July 31, 2023.

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

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/>

Northwest Alaska – Ken Adkisson, National Park Service, Nome.
(907) 443-6104 Ken_Adkisson@nps.gov

Norton Sound District

Escapement Projects:

The wet summer has hampered the operation of escapement projects throughout Norton Sound.

Federal Regulation:

Federal public waters of the Unalakleet River, upstream from the mouth of the Chirosky River, are closed to the taking of Chinook Salmon from July 1–to July 31, by all users. The BLM field manager is authorized to open the closed area to Federally qualified subsistence users or to all users when run strength warrants.

Sport Fishing:

To help protect king salmon during periods of low abundance and provide future sport fishing opportunities, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game closed all fresh waters in Northwest Alaska from Bald Head to Point Romanof to sport fishing for king salmon effective 12:01 a.m. April 5, 2023. This closure includes, but is not limited to, the Unalakleet, Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Ungalik, Inglutalik, and Golsovia River drainages. In addition, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used in these drainages. Restricting fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook artificial lure should minimize catch-and-release mortality for king salmon incidentally caught while sport fishing for other species. All king salmon caught incidentally may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

These temporary regulations will remain in effect through August 15, 2023, or until there are indications of a harvestable surplus of king salmon above escapement objectives. Escapements are determined by counts compiled at a counting tower on the North River, a tributary of the Unalakleet River, and counts at a floating weir located on the mainstem Unalakleet River.

The 2023 preseason outlook for the Unalakleet River drainage king salmon run is low, and the number of returning king salmon may be insufficient to meet escapement objectives and provide a moderate harvestable surplus for the subsistence fishery. According to the [Subdistricts 5 and 6 of the Norton Sound District and the Unalakleet River King Salmon Management Plan \(5 AAC 04.395\)](#), when the inriver subsistence fishery is closed to the retention of king salmon, sport fishing for king salmon will be closed.

Shaktoolik (5) and Unalakleet (6) Subdistricts

Subsistence Fishing:

Subsistence fishing in marine waters of Shaktoolik and Unalakleet (Subdistricts 5 and 6) will open 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 25, 7 days per week and any king salmon caught with beach seines must be released immediately unharmed.

The fresh waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6 will remain closed to subsistence net fishing including beach seines, cast nets, and dip nets. Set gillnets with a mesh size of 4-inches or less may be used in the Unalakleet River upstream from its confluence with the North River.

Beginning at 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 31, subsistence fishing in the fresh waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6 will open targeting coho salmon. Gillnets, beach seines, cast nets, and dip net are allowed gear; however, king salmon caught in beach seines, cast nets, and dip nets must be released immediately unharmed.

King, chum, and pink salmon returns in Subdistricts 5 and 6 continue to be poor. The department is reopening subsistence fishing with nets in the marine waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6 to allow subsistence opportunity for coho salmon. Historical run timing indicates the king and chum salmon runs will not be susceptible to harvest in marine waters. The department will reopen freshwater subsistence net fishing on Monday, July 31, to allow for subsistence opportunity for coho salmon. At this date nearly all king and chum salmon will have passed through lower river fisheries.

For any

The Unalakleet and Shaktoolik Subdistricts remain closed to subsistence in the marine and fresh waters in order to provide for conservation of king salmon returning to those Subdistricts. ADF&G had planned on relaxing restrictions in July after the bulk of the king salmon had migrated through the area. However, weak chum and pink runs has led the department to extend the subsistence fishery closure in order to allow more escapement into those systems. As of July 14, the two subdistricts are closed to net fishing in the marine and fresh waters of those subdistricts except for set gill nets with a mesh size of 4 inches or less in the Unalakleet River above the North River confluence to target non-salmon species.

Commercial Fishing:

Commercial salmon fishing opened for 10 hours on July 14 from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. with nets restricted to 4 1/2 inches or less. Harvests were confidential. The two Subdistricts remained closed to commercial salmon fishing this week to get more salmon onto the spawning grounds.

Unalakleet River Floating Weir - No escapement goals yet established. A cooperative project of Fish & Game, Native Village of Unalakleet, BLM and NSEDC; major funding provided by USFWS, Office of Subsistence Management. The weir was fish tight on July 1. The cumulative counts passed are 20 kings, 60 sockeyes and 640 pinks and 2,000 chums. Recent rains have caused the river to rise to such an extent that counting operations were suspended Monday, July 10. Counting resumed July 20.

North River Tower Camp J. B. - Escapement goals: king 1,200 to 2,600, chum no goal established, pink 25,000, silver 550-1,100 (aerial survey goal), A NSEDC project. The tower has been operational since June 24 and has remained operational most of the season except for a two-day period (July 10-11) when high, murky water halted operation. It has passed 130 kings, 190 chums, 12 cohos and 2,400 pink salmon.

Shaktoolik Tower – No escapement goals yet established, A NSEDC project. The tower began operations on June 26 and has passed an estimated 760 king, 2,900 chum, 5,900 pink and 9 sockeye salmon.

NORTON Bay Subdistrict (4)

Subsistence Fishing:

There are currently no restrictions to Subsistence fishing.

Commercial Fishing:

The commercial harvest is restricted. ADF&G has decided to forgo a commercial harvest this last week to get more fish into the system. The harvest for the last commercial fishing period is restricted due to the limited number of fishers. The Subdistrict will remain closed to commercial fishing this week in order to allow additional escapement into the local area rivers as escapement has been lagging.

Inglutalik River Tower - no escapement goals yet established. A NSEDC project. The project became operational on June 28. Estimated passages are 200 king, 1,800 chum and 200 pink salmon. High water closed operations July 10,

Ungalik River Tower - no escapement goals established yet. A NSEDC project. The tower became operational on June 28. Estimated passage is 54 king, 3,800 chum and 3,200 pink salmon. The tower has experienced high water events that have caused an additional five days lost in counting.

Elim Subdistrict (3)

Kwiniuk River Tower-Camp Joel - escapement goals: king 250, chum 9,100-32,600, pink 8,400, silver 650-1,300 (aerial survey goal). Fish and Game project. The tower became operational July 5. Initial escapements, coupled with an aerial survey conducted after the tower began operations to assess missed passage indicated that chum passage was on track to meet or exceed the escapement objectives for the project. Current escapement is 21 kings, 2,700 chum, 4,400 pink and 12 sockeye salmon. Escapements have lagged expectations, and commercial fishing has been delayed attempting to get more fish to the spawning grounds.

Subsistence Fishing:

Subsistence fishing is allowed 7 days per week.

Commercial Fishing:

Escapements at the Kwiniuk Tower have been lagging so ADF&G is forgoing a commercial harvest this week in order to bolster escapement into the system. The total harvest to date is 1,023 chum, 26 sockeye, and 12 pink salmon. Escapement has been lagging at the Kwiniuk Tower recently, so the department is forgoing a commercial opening this week in an attempt to put more fish into the system.

Golovin Subdistrict (2)

Subsistence Fishing:

Subsistence fishing is allowed 7 days per week.

Commercial Fishing:

The cumulative harvest through last week is 9,826 chum, 104 sockeye, 10 coho and 170 pink salmon. The Subdistrict opened to commercial salmon fishing for 48 hours from 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 25, until 6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 27. This commercial fishing period was a directed chum salmon period with gillnet mesh size restricted to 6 inches or smaller.

Nome Subdistrict (1)

Subsistence Fishing:

The Nome Subdistrict remains on a subsistence fishing schedule in marine waters west of Cape Nome and in all fresh waters of the Nome Subdistrict from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays till 6:00 p.m. Mondays. Marine waters of the Nome Subdistrict east of Cape Nome remain open 7 days per week.

Effective June 15, beach seines, dip nets, and cast net could be used for salmon and will be open in all subsistence areas of the Nome Subdistrict whenever subsistence gillnet fishing is open. Unless closed by emergency order, beach seining will remain open during gillnet fishing periods through August 15.

Commercial Fishing

The Nome Subdistrict opened for two 48-hour periods from 9:00 p.m. Monday, July 24, through 9:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 26, and from 9:00 p.m. Thursday, July 27, through 9:00 p.m. Saturday, July 29. This commercial fishing period was a directed chum salmon period with gillnet mesh size restricted to 6 inches or smaller. The total commercial harvest is restricted.

Eldorado River Weir -escapement goals-chum 4,400-14,200. A NSEDC project. The weir was fish tight the evening of June 30 escapement has passed 10 kings, 7,900 chum, 20 sockeye and 450 pink salmon. The project has met and might exceed the goal for chum salmon.

Port Clarence District

Pilgrim River Weir – A NSEDC project. Escapement at the weir has been weak and is not projected to meet escapement goals.

Subsistence Fishing:

The Pilgrim River will remain closed to subsistence net fishing given the weak salmon returns. Escapement will continue to be monitored and restrictions may be relaxed if inseason assessment indicates there is a surplus to escapement needs.

Commercial Fishing:

No commercial fishing periods are expected due to lack of market interest and the likelihood of sockeye salmon escapement goals not being met. The Pilgrim River will be closed to subsistence net fishing. Escapement will be monitored and if run strength warrants it, restrictions may be relaxed.

Kotzebue District

Subsistence Fishing:

No changes to existing subsistence fishing are anticipated.

Commercial Fishing:

Commercial salmon fishing will be open for 9 hours daily from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday, July 24, through Friday, July 28, in the Kotzebue Sound District. In Subdistrict 1 of the Kotzebue District, marine waters adjacent to the end of the runway from the Weather Service Dome south of the main runway to the NANA building north of the main runway and extending one mile offshore into Kotzebue Sound perpendicular to the beach remains closed to both subsistence and commercial fishing in order to avoid birds being attracted to fishing nets near the end of the airport runway and becoming a safety hazard.

Two buyers are registered to purchase chum salmon in Kotzebue.