

**FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JULY 31-AUGUST 6, 2023.** Report #11

Compiled by George Pappas - (907) 317-2165, [George.Pappas@fws.gov](mailto:George.Pappas@fws.gov) Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS.

The purpose of the weekly fisheries update is to provide the reader with an overall summary of the status of subsistence related fisheries throughout the state of Alaska. The target audience is the Federal Subsistence Board and its Staff Committee. The report was compiled with the assistance of the Federal in-season managers and OSM staff that provided weekly updated information by the close of business on Friday of the reporting week. My goal is to have the report sent by the close of business the following Monday. Web links have been included to provide additional information. You may obtain additional information on a fishery of particular interest by contacting the in-season manager, provided contacts, follow the provided web links, or contact me.

**SOUTHEAST ALASKA****Yakutat**

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- **Situk River** – The Federal Chinook Salmon fishery was closed through July 30. A total of 144 Chinook Salmon were counted through the weir as of August 2<sup>nd</sup> when the State crew pulled the weir. The Sockeye Salmon run did well with 127,462 counted at the weir as of August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Juneau**

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- **Salmon fisheries** - Sockeye fisheries in most areas have wound down, and escapements through the region are favorable. Stock assessment projects on the Chilkat and Chilkoot systems indicate that escapements are at or above goals, and the Taku is following suit. The pink salmon return is coming in well over the poor pre-season forecast, and boaters will see humpies jumping just about everywhere. Coho are moving into inside waters, and the next few weeks should provide some opportunity to put some in the freezer.
- **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. On August 3, the weir crew removed a beaver dam from the Neva Lake inlet stream, which had been blocking fish passage to a major spawning area for sockeye.



Figure 1. Before and after beaver dam removal on the Neva Lake inlet stream, August 3, 2023.

**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.
- **Chaas’ 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 August 06, 1,132 sockeye have entered the lake, and 1,523 have been harvested. As of August 05, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has [closed the state subsistence and sport sockeye salmon fishery](#) at Klag Bay. 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 August 05, 100,569 sockeye have entered the lake. With a month remaining of weir operation, this year has already surpassed the annual escapement for all other years on record (40+ seasons). 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. Folks dipnetting for sockeye at the base of Redoubt falls (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.

**Kaachxana.áak'w and Séet Ká Kwáan (Wrangell and Petersburg) Area***Kevin Kocarek, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, (907) 874-2323*[kevin.kocarek@usda.gov](mailto:kevin.kocarek@usda.gov)

As of August 1, a total of 103 Stikine River Subsistence Permits have been issued for 2023 and users reported a cumulative harvest of 974 Sockeye (59 percent reporting). Based on this survey an estimated 1,654 Sockeye Salmon have been harvested to date. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game in-river assessment fishery suggests a much higher abundance of sockeye to date than 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.

**Prince of Wales**

- **Hetta Lake** – The Hydaburg Cooperative Association staff have passed 314 Sockeye Salmon so far. An estimated 1546 Hetta Lake Sockeye have been harvested to date.
- **Eek Lake** – The Hydaburg Cooperative Association staff have passed 64 Sockeye Salmon so far. An estimated 192 Eek Lake Sockeye Salmon have been harvested to date.

**SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA**

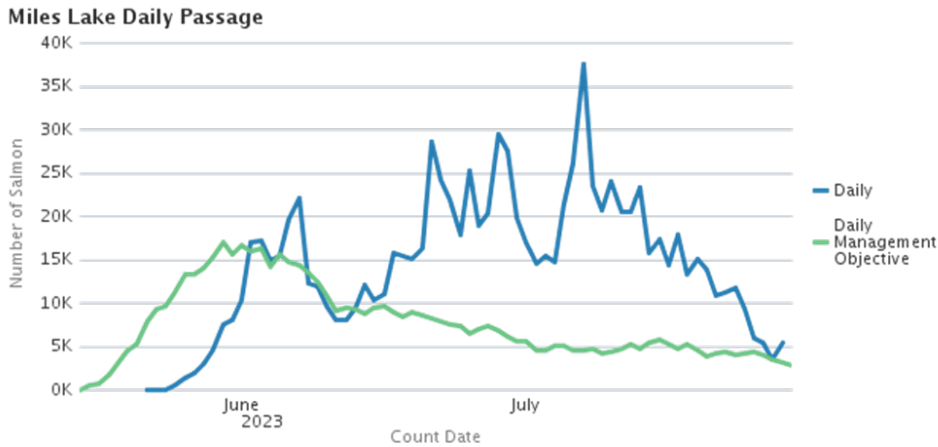
**Copper River, 7/31/2023 Update – Dave Sarafin, Copper River Federal Fisheries Management Biologist, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), (907) 822-7281, [dave\\_sarafin@nps.gov](mailto:dave_sarafin@nps.gov)**

Author will update weekly summary **next reporting period**.

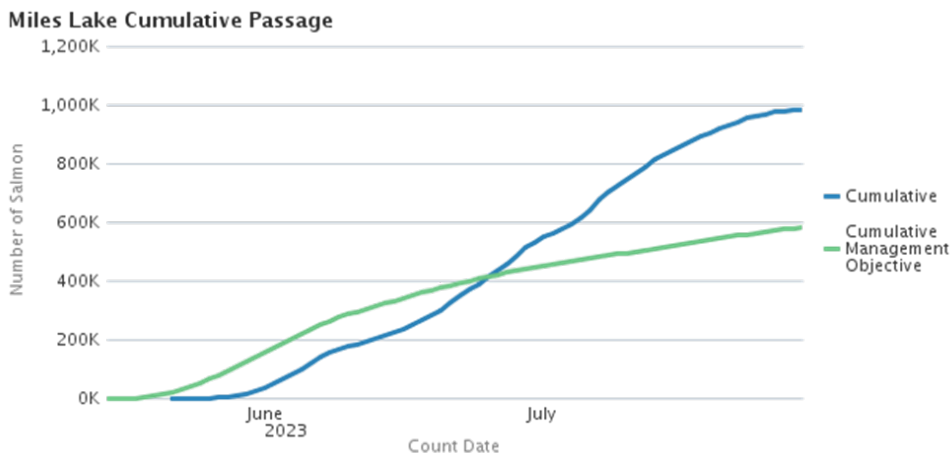
The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) reports the commercial fishing harvest in the Copper River District through July 29 to be 846,900 Sockeye Salmon and 10,400 Chinook Salmon.

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](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](mailto:Andrew.sanders@usda.gov)**

OSM fisheries update August 7th, 2023  
Chugach NF PWZ

Prince William Sound / Copper River Delta: The lower Copper River dipnet fishery opened on June 1<sup>st</sup>. As of Monday morning August 7th, 60 permits had been issued, and users reported a cumulative harvest of 176 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 success in the lower stream reaches. Dip netters are still seeing success in the Copper River. Coho Salmon have started moving in and anglers have been successful with rod and reel in multiple Eastern Prince William Sound streams including Ibeck Creek.

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 nearing completion on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. 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.



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, 5,936 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; 2,771 by gillnet in the Kenai River; 56 by dip net in the Kasilof River; and 1,131 by dipnet at the Russian River falls through 8/3/2023.

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. Escapement to date is at 9,667.

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](mailto:michael_brady@fws.gov) or  
Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230 [Kevin\\_VanHatten@fws.gov](mailto:Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov)

Deer hunting opened on August 1, 2023, and many subsistence users have turned their attention to harvesting deer. Those individuals who were not able to meet their subsistence fishing needs close to town are targeting Coho salmon. Many of the weirs will be pulled within the next 2-3 weeks.

Pink Salmon continue to have strong returns with well over 16,000 fish passing through the weir, as of August 3. The sockeye salmon run is close being over and it's unfortunate that it will meet the lower escapement goal. Coho Salmon are being caught by sport fishing users around Kodiak.

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

### **FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF August 6, 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 August 6:

Alagnak = No counts reported

Egegik = 1,562,700 (project removed on July 25)

Igushik = 542,496 (project removed on August 2)

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 = 261,696

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 August 6 is 671,214 Sockeye Salmon with 249,052 fish representing the late run.

There has been only 248 Chinook Salmon counted at the ADFG weir as of August 6. 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 -In-river Goal	SEG = 200,000 – 400,000 -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 August 6:

Nelson = 230,213; Chinook = 4,078 (weir removed on July 27)  
 Bear = 324,697  
 Ilnik = 99,021 (weir removed July 19)  
 Orzinski = 19,512 (weir removed August 3)  
 Sandy = 36,257 (weir removed July 22)  
 McLees = 26,945 (weir removed August 2)

## 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 31- August 6, 2023**

Federal Manager, Holly Carroll (907) 351-3029, [holly\\_carroll@fws.gov](mailto:holly_carroll@fws.gov)

**Assessment and Management Information**

The fall season is underway in the lower river. 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, closures to retention of chum salmon are already in place in Districts 1 through 4 and are announced in Subdistrict 5-ABC. Closures will be necessary until it is projected that all escapement goals will be met for fall chum salmon. 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 fishing 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](#); and for District 5-ABC here: [TSA-02-FC-03-23](#).

Eagle sonar is counting passage of Chinook with the run likely past the midpoint for that project. Counts are somewhat higher than what escaped over the border last year, but are still well below the previous Interim Management Escapement Goal of 42,500-55,000. **It is imperative that all Chinook be released alive from selective gear.**

**YR DFA 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 Assessment Update #2:**  
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1522006397.pdf>
- **Yukon River Subsistence Salmon Fishing Schedule 5-ABC:**  
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1519470063.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](http://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/](http://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](mailto:fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov)

**In Season Manager – Boyd Blihovde, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge** [Boyd\\_Blihovde@fws.gov](mailto:Boyd_Blihovde@fws.gov); Contact Spencer Reardon (907)543-1023 or [spencer\\_reardon@fws.gov](mailto:spencer_reardon@fws.gov)

The Bethel Test Fish numbers for coho salmon are indicating higher than years 2021 and 2022 but relative to the overall average, the numbers are considered low (<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.salmon#fishcounts>).

The August 3 drift and set net opener had an estimated 129 drift boat trips for an estimated total harvest of 4,771 (4,062 – 5,598) salmon. Of which, an estimated 35 (9 – 75) Chinook, 521 (338 – 742) chum, 4,027 (3,388 – 4,769) coho, and 188 (122 – 282) sockeye salmon were harvested.

### **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](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](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](mailto:Ken_Adkisson@nps.gov)

### **Norton Sound District**

#### **Escapement Projects:**

The wet summer continues to hamper 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) opened 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.

#### *Commercial Fishing:*

The Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts remained closed to commercial fishing.

**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 25 kings, 330 coho, 100 sockeyes and 4,000 pinks and 5,200 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 280 kings, 420 chums, 80 cohos and 5,200 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. The tower has been inoperable since July 9.

***NORTON Bay Subdistrict (4)******Subsistence Fishing:***

There are currently no restrictions to Subsistence fishing.

***Commercial Fishing:***

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 63 king, 4,600 chum and 3,200 pink salmon. The tower has experienced high water events that have caused the tower to be inoperable starting July 27.

***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, 3,300 chum, 14,700 pink, 380 coho and 18 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.

Total harvest is 1,023 chum, 26 sockeye and 12 pink salmon.



### ***Golovin Subdistrict (2)***

**Niukluk River Tower – NSEDC Project.** The project became operational July 25 and passage has been 3 kings, 3,800 chum, 110 coho, and 3,400 pink salmon.

#### *Subsistence Fishing:*

Subsistence fishing is allowed 7 days per week.

#### *Commercial Fishing:*

Subdistrict 2 (Golovin) opened to commercial salmon fishing for 48 hours from 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 1, until 6:00 p.m. Thursday, August 3. This commercial fishing period was a directed chum salmon period with gillnet mesh size restricted to 6 inches or smaller.

The cumulative harvest through last week is 9,826 chum, 104 sockeye, 10 coho and 170 pink salmon.

### ***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:*

Subdistrict 1 (Nome) opened for two 48-hour periods from 9:00 p.m. Monday, July 31, through 9:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 2, and from 9:00 p.m. Thursday, August 3, through 9:00 p.m. Saturday, August 5. chum salmon periods with gillnet mesh size restricted to 6 inches or smaller. The total harvest amount 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, 8,000 chum, 20 sockeye, 5 coho and 500 pink salmon. The project has met and escapement goals for chum salmon and ceased operations on June 26.

**Nome River Weir** – ADF&G Project. Water conditions finally allowed the installation of the weir on July 28 and current escapements are 39 chum and 128 pink salmon.

**Snake River Weir** – NSEDC Project. The weir started counting on July 24 and current escapements are 1 king, 180 chum, 11 coho and 180 pink salmon.

### **Port Clarence District**

**Pilgrim River Weir** – A NSEDC project. The weir has been fish tight since July 6. Passage has been slow so far with 9 kings, 4,000 chums, 1,500 sockeyes and 500 pink salmon passed the weir. Sockeye salmon are not projected to meet the escapement goal.

Nome River Weir – ADF&G Project

#### *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 8 hours daily from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Sunday, July 30, through Friday, August 4, 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.