

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 29-JUNE 4, 2023. Report #2
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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

Sheet'ká and Xunaa (Sitka and Hoonah) Area – Ashley Bolwerk, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, office: (907)747-4299; work cell: (907)738-3461; ashley.bolwerk@usda.gov

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 is scheduled to be operational the last week in June. 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

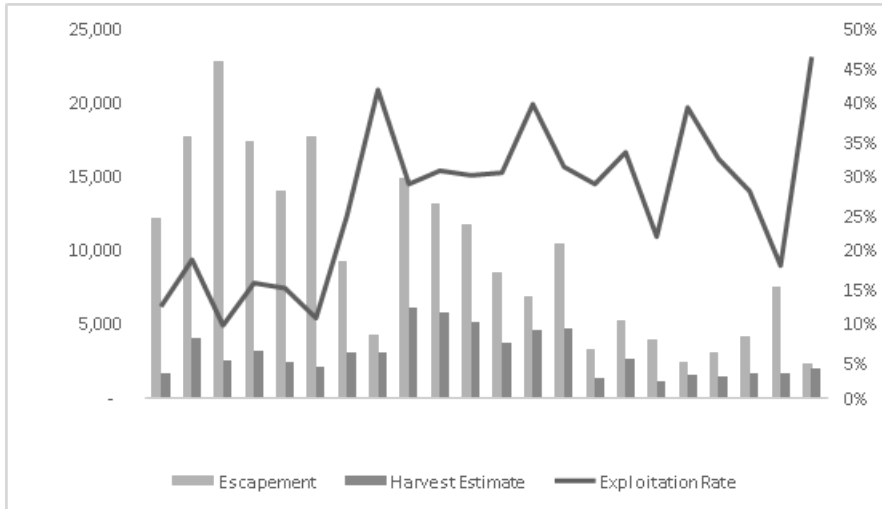


Figure 3. Creel survey harvest and escapement for Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon, 2001-2022.

Redoubt Lake - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which will be operational June 10. 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 Salmon possession limit was set at 25 and the individual/household subsistence Sockeye Salmon 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 Salmon are probably of Redoubt origin.

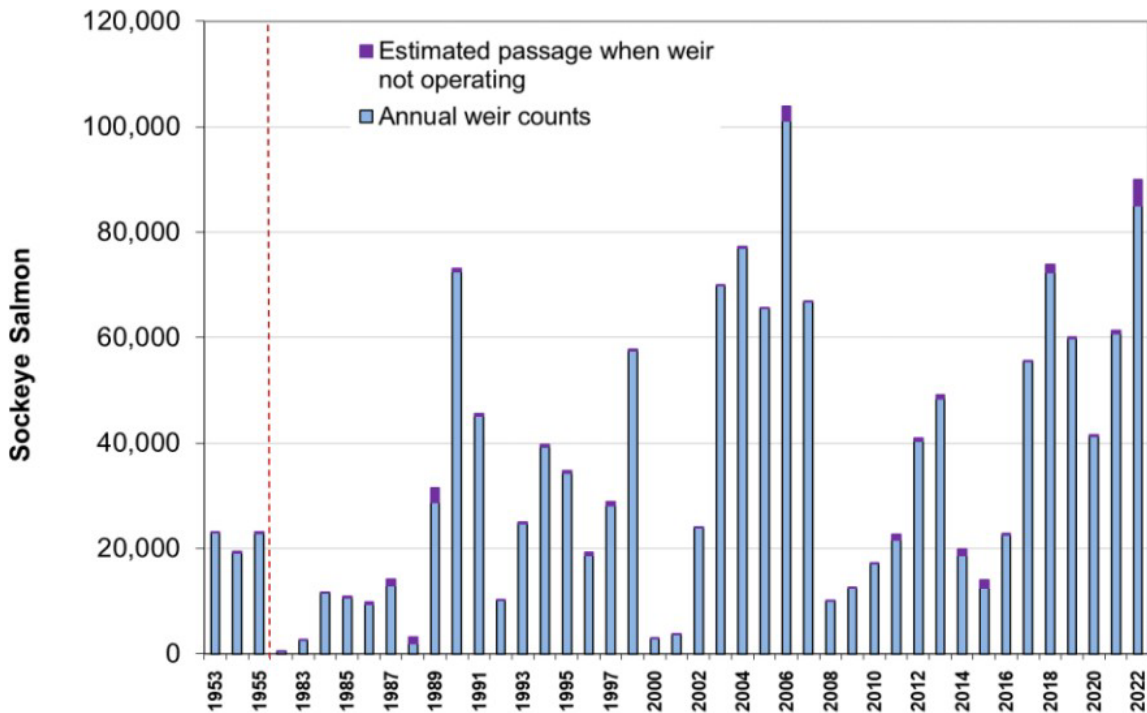


Figure 4. Annual total weir count (light blue) and expanded escapement estimates (dark purple) of sockeye salmon at Redoubt Lake for years with data. The red dashed line indicates a break in data from 1955 to 1982. The weir was similarly not operated in 1998.

Gut Bay - The Gut Bay weir project was not funded in the latest FRMP cycle.

Wrangell Area, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest Kevin Kocarek - Kevin.kocarek@usda (907)772-3871

2023 Stikine Chinook Fishery is Closed

Wrangell District Ranger Victoria Houser, under authority delegated by the Federal Subsistence Board, has closed the Federal subsistence Chinook Salmon fishery in the Stikine River May 15–June 20, 2023. The preseason forecast for the Stikine River is 11,700 large Chinook Salmon (greater than 28 inches in total length), which is below the escapement goal range of 14,000 to 28,000 large Chinook Salmon. The closure of the Chinook Salmon fishery does not affect other Stikine River Federal subsistence fisheries beginning June 21, 2023.

2023 Stikine Sockeye and Coho Salmon

The Stikine River forecast is for an 86,000 Sockeye Salmon run which includes 57,000 Tahltan and 29,000 mainstem fish. This forecast results in a U.S. AC of 17,500 Tahltan and zero mainstem fish. The Federal Subsistence Sockeye Fishery on the Stikine is from

June 21 through July 31. The Subsistence Coho Salmon Fishery on the Stikine is from August 1 through October 1.

North Zone Tongass National Forest - Juneau, Hoonah, Admiralty Area and Yakutat – Forest Service, -Jake Musslewhite, 907-789-6256
jacob.g.musslewhite@usda.gov

June 5, 2023

Salmon fisheries – Subsistence salmon fisheries in the area have not begun for the season. Most subsistence fisheries begin in late June, as sockeye start to show up at the mouths of streams. Commercial fisheries in northern Southeast will begin over the next couple of weeks, and provide the first indication of run strength throughout the region.

With no fisheries information to report yet, this week's update is looking into the crystal ball at the season to come. Most commercial gillnet fisheries are scheduled to open on June 18, and the early season will be all about minimizing catch of local Chinook stocks. Fisheries managers will be using restrictions on gear size, time and area, and delayed season starts to meet Chinook escapement goals while still providing harvest opportunity for sockeye and hatchery chum salmon. These restrictions will ease as the season progresses and returning Chinook enter rivers to spawn. Catch rates in these gillnet fisheries provide an early indicator of sockeye run strength before they reach terminal areas used by subsistence harvesters, so we will be watching them closely.

The forecast for the 2023 pink salmon harvest is in the weak range, at 19 million fish. The weak forecast means a conservative fishing regime for purse seiners, especially in the northern inside waters. Bad news for seiners, but it could be good news for subsistence fishermen targeting sockeye, as it could reduce incidental catch of sockeye heading to streams in the Chatham Strait corridor. Based on recent stronger-than-expected sockeye returns and reduced seine effort, it could be a decent year for sockeye in northern inside waters.

Data from stock assessment projects, test fisheries, and commercial catches will be used to evaluate the season as it progresses. Subsistence fishermen are encouraged to report observations and anecdotal reports of run strength from local areas.

Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area – TBA, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest. (907) 826-1649

USFS Weekly Summary Author position vacant - TBA. Reports expected soon this season once staffing is complete.

**Petersburg - Tongass National Forest. Robert Cross – Contact (907-723-8653
Or robert.cross@usda.gov**

No report submitted this week – USFS organizing new reporting zones among new and existing staff.

Southeast Alaska Web Links

Tongass National Forest News Room <http://www.fs.usda.gov/news/tongass/news-events>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Southeastern Alaska Area
http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Southeast.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.R1>

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 Southeast Alaska
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R1.home>

Statewide ADF&G Fish counts
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/>

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND – COPPER RIVER

Copper River, 6/05/2023 Update – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), (907) 822-7281, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) provided preseason total run forecasts of 53,000 Chinook Salmon and 1,695,000 Sockeye Salmon in the Copper River. Relative to recent 10-year averages, these forecasts are 15% above average for Chinook Salmon and 14% below average for Sockeye Salmon. In early May, Federal and State fisheries managers met to discuss this forecast, regulatory changes, anticipated early season management strategies, and plans for maintaining communications with local stakeholders throughout the season.

The commercial fishery in the Copper River District has been limited to six 12-hour fishing periods, through June 1. The cumulative harvest through June 1 is reported as 380,155 Sockeye Salmon and 6,994 Chinook Salmon. The most

recent fishing period closed on June 1; harvest for this 12-hour period was 123,499 Sockeye Salmon and 1,132 Chinook Salmon.

The ADFG sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) began limited operation of only the North Bank sonar on May 22. Salmon passage was first recorded on May 25. Early season ice flow delayed the operation of the South Bank sonar, which began operation on May 25. As of June 4, 86,933 salmon have been estimated migrating upstream for the season; this is 42% of the management objective of 207,111 for this date. A daily estimate of 14,904 salmon migrated by the sonar on June 4.

Performance in the commercial fishery and in river sonar salmon passage estimates are the primary early season assessments of the Sockeye Salmon return to the Copper River. The initial early season commercial fishing periods resulted in relatively low harvest in comparison to projected levels. However, the more recent commercial fishing periods have resulted in significant increases in harvest.

Daily sonar passage has shown a significant increasing trend during the past week. Although the sonar season total estimate is well below the management objective, it is important to keep in mind that the Copper Basin experienced record snowfalls during the winter of 2023 (similar to the conditions of 2022). This, delayed timing of the melt off, and relatively cold water temperatures could be associated with a delayed start to the salmon return. Federal managers will continue to monitor run strength indices to evaluate the need for appropriate fisheries management actions in the Copper River Drainage. No Federal Special Actions have been issued by the in-season manager this season.

The State subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict is scheduled to open June 1. The State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict was tentatively scheduled to open on June 7; however, this initial open period has been delayed due to poor early season run assessments.

The Federal subsistence fisheries in the Chitina Subdistrict, the Glennallen Subdistrict, and the Batzulnetas vicinity opened on May 15 and are expected to remain open through September 30. Data from the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Federal

subsistence permit website indicate that 84 Chitina Subdistrict permits, 113 Glennallen Subdistrict permits, and zero Batzulnetas permits have been issued to date.

The Federal subsistence salmon fishery in the Lower Copper River near Cordova is scheduled to be open from June 1 through September 30. Salmon harvest is only allowed in the Copper River within ½ mile of the Copper River Highway, only by dip net or rod and reel, dip netting from boats is prohibited, and all salmon harvest must be reported within 48 hours. Permits are available at the Cordova Ranger Station (Chugach National Forest). To date, there have been 23 permits issued through the OSM database.

With funding through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP), WRST is planning to operate the Tanada Creek salmon weir located at Batzulnetas. Due to record winter snowfall and delayed warming this spring, groundwater and creek level conditions have limited our ability to access the site to initiate the project. A site visit is planned in early June to begin installation.

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. May 29, 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 June 5, 91 permits had been issued, and users reported a total harvest of 1 Sockeye Salmon. Snow drifts along the Copper River Highway are still making it difficult to access the dipnet harvest area. 14,904 Sockeye Salmon have so far been counted at the Miles Lake Sonar Station. 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.

COOK INLET AREA – Kenneth Gates, Senior Fish Biologist, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Contact:(907)260-0126 or kenneth_gates@fws.gov

No summary submitted for this reporting period.

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 or

Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230 Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov

The preliminary 2023 reports from Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) are for the pinks salmon runs to be strong and the sockeye salmon runs to be weak. Fish monitoring weirs have been installed on the Ayakulik, Karluk, and Upper Station rivers, as well as the Buskin River. Very little sockeye has started to return except for Upper Station and Karluk River, with a total count to date of 761 fish and 308 fish, respectively. Due to the poor Chinook salmon returns on the Karluk and Ayakulik Rivers, ADF&G has restricted sport fishing on these drainages, E.O. No. 2-KS-4-19-23.

Any additional information pertaining to subsistence harvest will be provided in next week report.

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF June 5, 2023.

BRISTOL BAY, CHIGNIK, ALASKA PENINSULA, and ALEUTIAN ISLANDS – Jonathon Gerken Fisheries Branch Chief Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office Contact (907) 271-2776 or jonathon_gerken@fws.gov

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, 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 Federally-managed waters.

Bristol Bay:

The 2023 Bristol Bay Sockeye Salmon run is forecast to be approximately 51 million fish for the nine river systems: Kvichak, Alagnak, Naknek, Egegik, Ugashik, Wood, Igushik,

Nushagak, and Togiak. Based on the forecast, 38 million fish are available for harvest. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has strategies in place for all mixed stock districts to address differential run strength should that occur. Gillnets are the primary gear used for most subsistence fishing for salmon. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opens June 1 by regulation and commercial fishing openings have been announced. Fishing in eastside districts and Togiak will be allowed using a weekly schedule that will vary by district. The schedules are in place to balance fishing opportunity with escapement in the early part of the season, particularly for Chinook Salmon. As each run develops and Sockeye Salmon run characteristics become defined within individual districts, fishing time will be adjusted accordingly. In the Nushagak District, management of the Chinook Salmon fishery will govern fishing time in the early part of the season, followed by directed Sockeye Salmon management as abundance dictates.

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

Escapement Goals:

Kvichak	SEG = 2,000,000 – 10,000,000
Alagnak	SEG = minimum of 210,000
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 – 3,000,000
Igushik	SEG = 150,000 – 400,000
Nushagak	SEG = 370,000 – 1,940,000
Nushagak	SEG = 55,000 – 120,000 Chinook Salmon
Togiak	SEG = 120,000 – 270,000

Chignik:

The 2023 Sockeye Salmon forecasted total-run size for the Chignik River Management Area (CMA) is 1,524,000 fish with a harvest estimate of 889,000 Sockeye Salmon. The CMA is composed of five fishing districts: Eastern, Central, Chignik Bay, Western, and Perryville. The Board of Fisheries made many notable changes to the Chignik Area Salmon Management Plan and are outlined here:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/RIR.4K.2023.07.pdf>

1. An optimal escapement goal of 300–400 thousand fish for the early sockeye salmon run, and 240–360 thousand fish for the late sockeye salmon run was instated.
2. The number of sockeye salmon required to escape through the Chignik weir prior to the first commercial fish opening was increased from 20,000 to 40,000 sockeye salmon.

3. Sections and subsections of the Western and Perryville Districts have been altered and new subsections have been added.
4. Management of the following Western and Perryville District Sections and Subsections are now based on the evaluation of local pink, and chum salmon runs after July 31; Inner Kuikta/Portage Bay Subsection, Windy Bay Subsection, Dorner Bay Subsection, Mitrofanina Bay Subsection, Fishrack Bay Subsection, Ivan Bay Subsection, Coal Cape Subsection, Inner Perryville Subsection, Inner Humpback Bay Subsection, and the Ivanoff Bay Section. Previously these locations were managed based on the evaluation of local pink, chum, and coho salmon, or Chignik Lake sockeye salmon.
5. After August 31, fishing periods in the Western and Perryville Districts are based on the department’s evaluation of coho, pink, and chum salmon stocks.
6. The IRRG of 20,000 sockeye salmon (10,000 in August and 10,000 in September) has been removed.
7. Beginning August 1 and ending September 15, a 56-hour closure from 10:00 p.m. Friday to 6:00 a.m. Monday will occur each week in the Chignik Bay District, Central District, and Inner Castle Cape Subsection of the Western District. Fishing periods in these areas will occur the rest of the week so long as escapement is being met.
8. The 48-hour maximum weekly fishing period restriction starting September 15 in the Chignik Bay District, Central District, and Inner Castle Cape Subsection of the Western District has been removed.
9. In accordance with the Chinook salmon stock of concern action plan, the Chignik Bay District, Central District, and the Castle Cape Section of the Western District are restricted to nonretention of Chinook salmon greater than 28 inches until the department determines that the Chinook salmon BEG will be achieved. Fishermen are required to return Chinook salmon greater than 28 inches to the water quickly and with minimal handling.

Escapement Goals:

Early Run Sockeye Salmon/ Black Lake	OEG = 300,000 – 400,000
Late Run Sockeye Salmon/ Chignik Lake	OEG = 240,000 – 360,000

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:

There are numerous salmon stocks and fisheries throughout the Alaska Peninsula, as well as the Aleutian Islands. The largest fisheries are managed under management plans. Management objectives vary by district and time. Several Sockeye Salmon escapements (mostly on the north peninsula) are monitored with weirs including Nelson, Bear, Sandy, Ilnik, McLees, and Orzinski systems. Preseason forecasts are made only for the Nelson River and late-run (post July 31) Bear Lake stocks. The 2023 Sockeye Salmon run size

projections are 177,000 fish for the Nelson River and 354,000 fish for late-run Bear Lake. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

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. May 29- June 4, 2023 Federal Manager, Holly Carroll (907) 351-3029, holly_carroll@fws.gov

The USFWS Emmonak Field Office will be closed again this season. Essential services will be provided to fishermen online and over the phone. ADF&G management staff plan to open the Emmonak Field Office on June 5 and USFWS will continue to work closely with their management and research staff daily.

Summer Season Outlook

The Chinook Salmon drainage wide forecast is for a range of 62,000 to 104,000 with a midpoint forecast of 82,000 fish. A Chinook Salmon run of this size is not expected to meet escapement goals. Additionally, Canadian-origin Chinook Salmon are forecasted to be below the Interim Management Escapement goal of 42,500 to 55,000 fish.

The preliminary summer Chum Salmon forecast is for a run size of 557,000 fish with a range of 280,000 to 900,000 fish. Although the upper half of the forecast is within the drainage wide escapement goal range of 500,000 to 1.2 million summer Chum Salmon, managers are uncertain what effects the extreme water temperatures seen in 2019 had on this year's expected 4-year-old age class.

The preliminary fall Chum Salmon forecast is for a run size of 251,000 fish with a range of 112,000 to 602,000 fish. The drainage wide escapement goal for fall Chum Salmon is 300,000 to 600,000 fish. Like the summer Chum Salmon run, managers are uncertain regarding the strength of this year's returning 4-year-old component. Unless the run comes in near the upper end of the forecast, a run of this size is unlikely to meet escapement goals including

the 70,000 to 104,000 Canadian Interim Management Escapement Goal. The Coho Salmon run is forecasted to be below the average of 222,000 fish.

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:

· Closures in District 3:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dfnewsrelease/1475919457.pdf>

·

Consultation

Extensive public outreach and Tribal Consultation meetings were held during the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023 to inform and seek input from Yukon River Tribal Governments, fishermen and stakeholders regarding Yukon River fisheries and fisheries management. Run outlooks and possible management strategies were discussed at Federal RAC meetings and State AC meetings, the Yukon River Panel meeting, the the annual Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) meeting, and a public hearing about the Federal Special action request (FSA 23-02).

Management strategies and recommendations were incorporated into a bright pink information sheet which outlined the preseason outlooks and management strategy. This information was distributed as a cooperative ADF&G and USFWS Advisory Announcement.

Assessment Information

Assessment projects in the lower river will be launching the first week of June, but could be delayed by high water and flooding. Beginning June 6, assessment project and management updates will be given on the YR DFA weekly teleconferences each Tuesday at 1:00 pm at the following number: 1-800-315-6338, Passcode: 98566#.

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

Nothing to report this period.

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

NEW = Kuskokwim River Updates Hosted on OSM Website
<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/kuskokwim.cfm>

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.
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Shore fast ice is melting and breaking loose throughout the region to join broken, melting pack ice drifting largely with the winds. Ice still dominates much of the region and marine mammal hunting remains a major subsistence focus. Cooler temperatures have delayed the herring run to Norton Sound.



Sea ice and weather conditions in Shishmaref - fleet, view 2.
Photo courtesy of Curtis Nayokpuk

Norton Sound District

Salmon returns to Norton Sound are anticipated to be similar to last year's returns with the potential to be slightly stronger in northern sections, Commercial fishing is expected to occur in all subdistricts of Norton Sound in 2023 but may be limited in time with mesh size restrictions. Additionally, in the Southern Norton Sound subsistence restrictions may be utilized to conserve king salmon in Subdistricts 5 and 6 early in the season,

St. Michael and Stebbins

Subsistence fishing is open 7 days per week in southern Norton Sound from Pt. Romanof to Black Point. Regulation does allow for the restriction of gillnet mesh size in the subsistence fisheries throughout Norton Sound if it is necessary to conserve Chinook salmon.

Shaktoolik (5) and Unalakeet (6) Subdistricts

Beginning June 15, 2023, subsistence fishing in the Shaktoolik and Unalakeet Subdistricts will be closed in the marine waters and fresh waters in order to provide conservation of king salmon returning to those subdistricts. King salmon escapement goals have not been met in recent years and ADF&G is planning on managing more conservatively in 2023. The Department plans on offering subsistence opportunity in the marine waters of the subdistricts with time and net restrictions beyond the schedule listed in regulations. The Department will relax restrictions put in preseason if inseason indications point to adequate abundance to meet escapement goals. Beach seining will be allowed beginning in July but any king salmon caught must be returned to the water unharmed. Commercial fishing is expected to begin in July but will restrict the sale of any king salmon taken incidentally.

Subdistricts 5 (Shaktoolik) and 6 (Unalakeet) have been managed as one fishery because past studies have shown salmon bound for these subdistricts intermingle and that harvests in one subdistrict likely will affect the other. No commercial fishing is expected for Chinook or chum salmon, but pink salmon will be targeted commercially depending on buyer interest and gillnet fishing would likely occur beginning in July.

Abundance of the Chinook salmon run will be monitored using passage estimates from the Unalakeet River weir and a counting tower on the North River, an important Chinook salmon spawning tributary in the Unalakeet River drainage. The escapement goal range for the North River is 1,200–2,600 Chinook salmon. However, for a Chinook salmon directed commercial fishery to occur, the department must project an escapement of a minimum of 1,900 Chinook salmon past the North River tower.

To protect Chinook salmon, the subsistence fishing schedule in regulation will begin on June 15 in Subdistricts 5 and 6. The subsistence fishing schedule in the marine waters of the Shaktoolik and Unalakeet Subdistricts is from 6:00 p.m. Monday until 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday and from 6:00 p.m. Thursday until 6:00 p.m. Saturday. The schedule in the Unalakleet River is from 8:00 a.m. Monday until 8:00 p.m. Tuesday and from 8:00 a.m. Friday until 8:00 p.m. Saturday. If the Chinook salmon run is like the last two years, then the escapement goal range would not be expected to be met and the department would

Norton Bay Subdistrict (4)

Elim Subdistrict (3)

Except as noted previously, Subsistence fishing will be allowed 7 days per week. Limited commercial fishing is likely to occur with time and gear restrictions.

Golovin Subdistrict (2)

Except as noted previously, Subsistence fishing will be allowed 7 days per week. Limited commercial fishing is likely to occur with time and gear restrictions.

Nome Subdistrict (1)

Subdistrict 1 (Nome) is currently open to subsistence fishing 7 days per week. After June 15th, the fresh waters of the Subdistrict will be placed on a weekly fishing schedule. The subdistrict will be open to subsistence net fishing on a weekly basis from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays to 6:00 p.m. Mondays through August 31. The fresh waters of the Subdistrict will be open to subsistence net fishing on a weekly basis from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays to 6:00 p.m. Mondays. In the marine waters of the Subdistrict, subsistence net fishing is open on a weekly basis from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 6:00 p.m. Mondays west of Cape Nome, In the marine waters east of Cape Nome. subsistence net fishing will remain open 7 days per week The marine waters schedule will remain in effect through August 15, 2023. Dip nets and cast nets can be used as subsistence gear when the area is open to other gear. Additionally, beach seining is allowed when the area is open for subsistence fishing with other gear from June 15 through August 15 These fishing schedules will remain in effect unless reduced by emergency order due to abundance concerns.

Port Clarence District

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. Subsistence net fishing will be open 7 days per week outside of the Pilgrim River closed area.

Kotzebue District

No new information is currently available. If you read last week's report, you can stop here. If not, read on.

2023 Season Outlook:*

The Kotzebue District salmon fisheries management outlook is to inform fishermen, processors, and other interested people of the management strategies for the commercial salmon fishery. The Kotzebue District includes all waters from Cape Prince of Wales to Point Hope. The Kotzebue District is divided into three subdistricts. Subdistrict 2, near the mouth of the Noatak River is closed to commercial fishing by regulation. Most fishing occurs in Subdistrict 1, which is subdivided into six statistical areas to help managers determine catch location. Within the Kotzebue District, chum salmon *Oncorhynchus keta* are the most abundant anadromous fish. Other salmon species (Chinook *O. tshawytscha*, pink *O. gorbuscha*, coho *O. kisutch*, and sockeye salmon *O. nerka*) occur in lesser numbers, as do Dolly Varden *Salvelinus malma*, and sheefish (inconnu) *Stenodus leucichthys*.

Management Area	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Summer Chum	Fall Cum
Kotzebue	0	0	0	0	0	300-400

*The 2023 all-salmon commercial harvest outlook by management area, in thousands of fish.

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Historical Fishing Effort

Subsistence Fishery

Subsistence fishing has long been an important food gathering activity for people of the Kotzebue Sound drainages. The most recent subsistence survey of salmon harvest is from 2014 that estimated a total of 30,640 chum salmon that were harvested from the Kobuk River, and 6,577 chum salmon that were harvested from the Noatak River and Kotzebue residents reported a harvest of 21,144 chum salmon with the majority harvested in marine waters. Over 90% of the subsistence salmon harvests are chum salmon.

Commercial Fishery

There have been two major buyers in the commercial fishery in recent years. In 2018, there was a record harvest of 695,153 chum salmon caught by 95 permit holders that sold chum salmon for an average price of \$0.40 per pound. The 2019 harvest was 494,593 chum salmon caught by 92 permit holders that sold chum salmon for an average price of \$0.39 per pound and in 2020 only 149,808 chum salmon were harvested by 68 permit holders for an average price of \$0.45 per pound. During the 2021 season, 96,492 chum salmon were harvested by 52 permit holders for an average price of \$0.46 per pound.

<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/pdf/fishregs11/norton.pdf>