

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 30-JUNE 5, 2022. Report #2
Compiled by George Pappas - (907) 317-2165, 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

Sitka and Hoonah Area – Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
Jake Musslewhite, 907-789-6256 jacob.g.musslewhite@usda.gov

May 31, 2022 – No new report for this week.

Herring – The 2022 Sitka Sound commercial sac roe herring fishery was conducted between March 26 and April 10, and harvested approximately 25,500 tons of herring. The harvest represented 56% of the guideline harvest level of 45,164 tons set by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Aerial and boat-based surveys mapped 91.5 miles of herring spawn between March 27 and April 28. This was the fifth largest estimate since 1953 and higher than the 10-year average of 63 miles of spawn.

Sockeye Salmon – Sockeye Salmon fisheries in the area have not begun for the season.

Falls Lake – The Falls Lake weir project was operated for the 21st consecutive year in 2021. The project monitors escapement and terminal harvest of Sockeye Salmon returning to Falls Lake each year. In 2021, an estimated 1,189 Sockeye escaped to the lake, while 315 were harvested in terminal subsistence and sport fisheries (Figure 1). The escapement and harvest were lower than in recent years. However, spawn-recruit analyses indicate that maximum recruitment of Falls Lake Sockeye Salmon occurs at lower escapements – around 2,000 fish. So, the low escapements seen in 2020 and 2021 may still provide for an adequate number of returning adults in several years.

The Falls Lake project was not funded for operation in 2022.

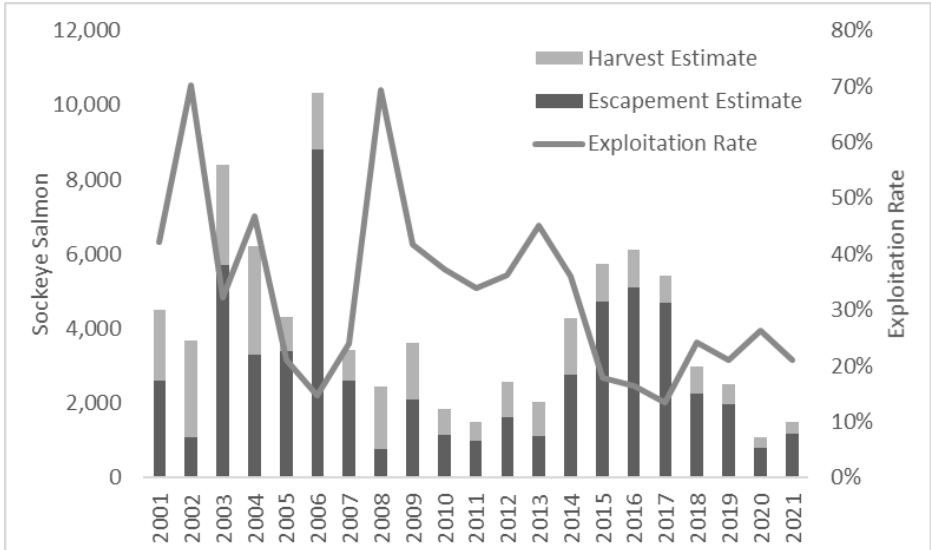


Figure 1. Escapement estimate and onsite harvest estimate for Falls Lake Sockeye Salmon, 2001-2021.

Petersburg and Wrangell Area – Robert Cross, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
Robert Cross, (907)772-5944 robert.cross@usda.gov or Andrew Sanders, (907)772-3871

The pre-season terminal run forecast for large Chinook Salmon in the Stikine River is 7,400 fish. This forecast is below the goal range of 14,000 to 28,000 fish. Directed commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries in the area have been closed to protect this return. Currently, all drift gillnet, purse seine and non-terminal harvest area troll fisheries are closed in district 8.

The 2022 Stikine River pre-season Sockeye Salmon forecast is 63,000 fish, with 42,000 Tahltan and 21,000 Mainstem fish. The 2020 Sockeye Salmon forecast was 103,400 fish, which included 64,500 Tahltan Lake and 38,900 Mainstem fish. The escapement objective for Tahltan bound Sockeye Salmon is 18,000 to 30,000, and 20,000 to 40,000 for Mainstem fish. The 2022 forecast for Tahltan is expected to meet the escapement objective with a sufficient surplus for allowable harvest. The forecast for the mainstem is not expected to exceed the escapement goal and may result in a season closure. The 2022 Federal Stikine River Sockeye Salmon subsistence fishery begins June 21. A total of 8 permits have been issued for the Stikine fishery and no harvest estimate is available at this time.

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

May 31, 2022 No new report for this week.

Sockeye Salmon - Sockeye Salmon fisheries in the area have not begun for the season. Most subsistence fisheries begin in late June, as returning fish start to show up at the mouths of streams.

Sitkoh Lake – The Sitkoh Lake weir is a cooperative project between the Forest Service and the Angoon Community Association, and monitors Sockeye Salmon escapement to the lake using a remotely monitored video weir. In 2021, we counted a total of 5,303 Sockeye Salmon through the weir. This was an improvement from the poor escapements of 2017-2019, but less than the 8,000-12,000 fish seen in previous years (Figure 1). The Sitkoh Lake project will continue to operate in 2022, with the weir to be installed in early July. Returns are likely to be on the low side, based on the poor escapements in parent years.

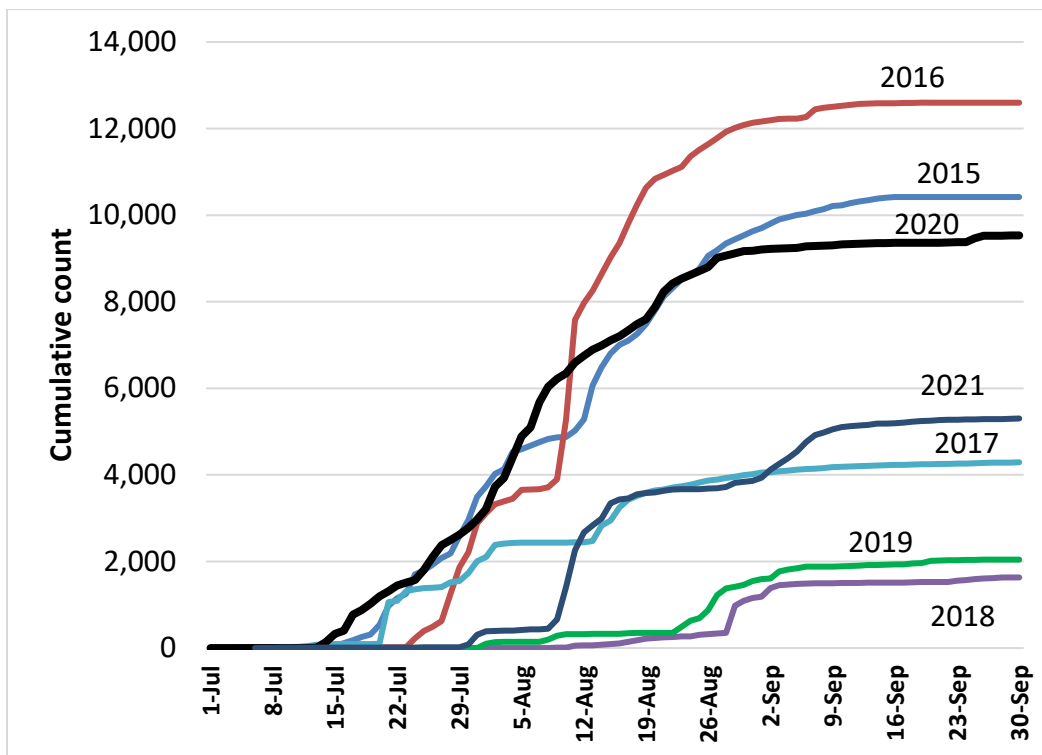


Figure 2. Estimated cumulative escapement of Sockeye Salmon into Sitkoh Lake through video weirs, 2015 to 2021.

Neva Lake – The Neva Lake weir is a cooperative project operated by the Forest Service and the Hoonah Indian Association, and uses a video weir to count Sockeye Salmon entering Neva Lake, near the community of Excursion Inlet. In 2021, we counted a total of 4,262 Sockeye Salmon through the weir. Escapements have generally improved since a low point in 2015 (Figure 2). The Neva Lake project will continue to operate in 2022, with the weir to be installed in mid June.

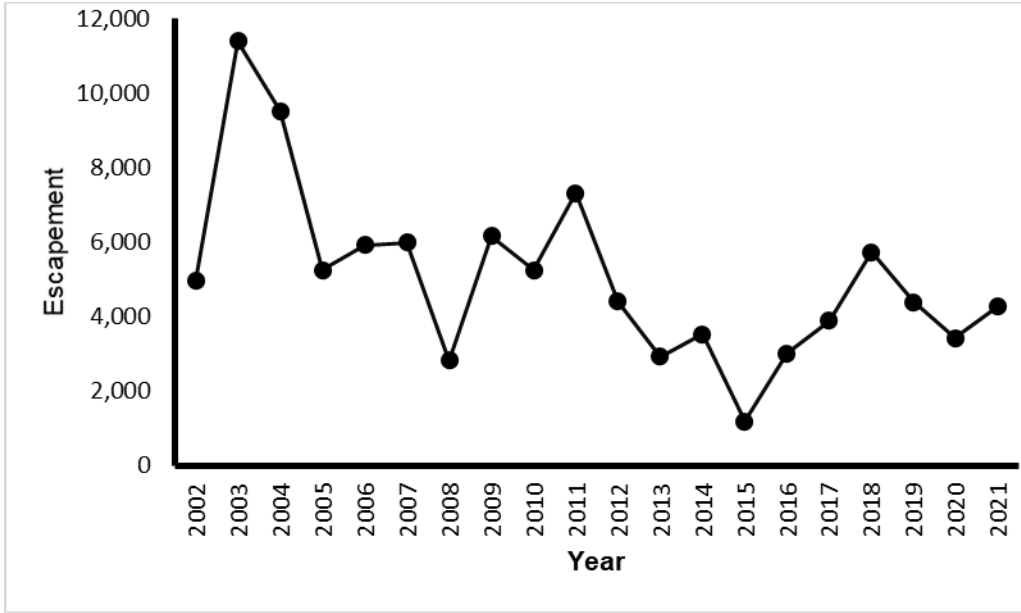


Figure 3. Estimated escapement of Sockeye Salmon at the Neva Lake weir, 2002-2021.

Yakutat- The preseason forecast for Situk River Chinook Salmon is 1,600 large fish, and the escapement goal range is 450 – 1,050 fish. In order to ensure that the escapement goal is met, subsistence and commercial fisheries on the mouth of the Situk have been closed until further notice (Figure 3). Escapement of Chinook Salmon will be monitored at the Situk weir, and fisheries may reopen if adequate escapement is seen through the weir.



Figure 4. Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet waters closed to commercial and subsistence fishing in 2022.

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

USFS Weekly Summary Author position vacant - TBA. No reports expected until alternate staffing arrangements are made..

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

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Copper River, 6/5/2022 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 forecasts of 40,000 Copper River Chinook Salmon and 1,379,000 wild stock Copper River Sockeye Salmon. Relative to recent 10-year averages, these forecasts are 13% below average for Chinook Salmon and 29% 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 in response to low early season numbers of salmon. Four 12-hour open commercial fishing periods have occurred through June 5. ADFG reports preliminary cumulative commercial harvest to be 178,328 Sockeye Salmon and 8,492 Chinook Salmon. Commercial harvest from the most recent 12-hour period was 84,555 Sockeye Salmon and 1,016 Chinook Salmon. For this

most recent open period, the projected harvest was 40,664 Sockeye Salmon. The Copper River District will open June 6 for a 12-hour commercial fishing period.

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 17. Salmon passage was first recorded on May 18. Early season ice flow delayed the operation of the South Bank sonar, which began operation on May 25. As of June 5, 183,259 salmon have been estimated migrating upstream for the season. This estimate is 82% of the cumulative management objective of 223,804 for this date. A daily estimate of 30,554 salmon migrated by the sonar on June 5.

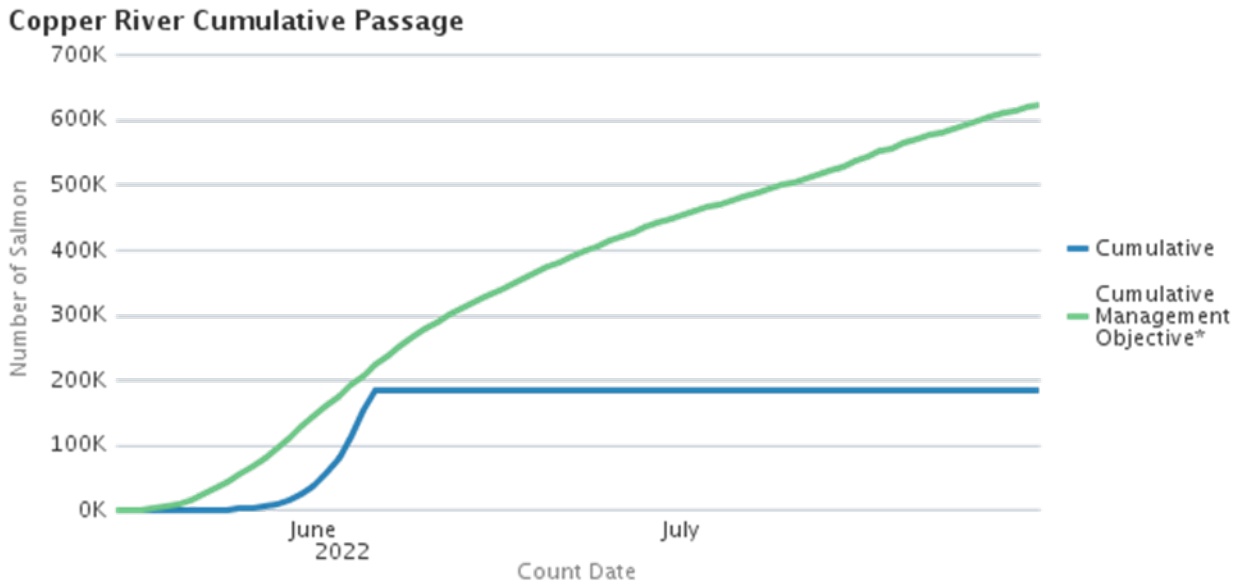
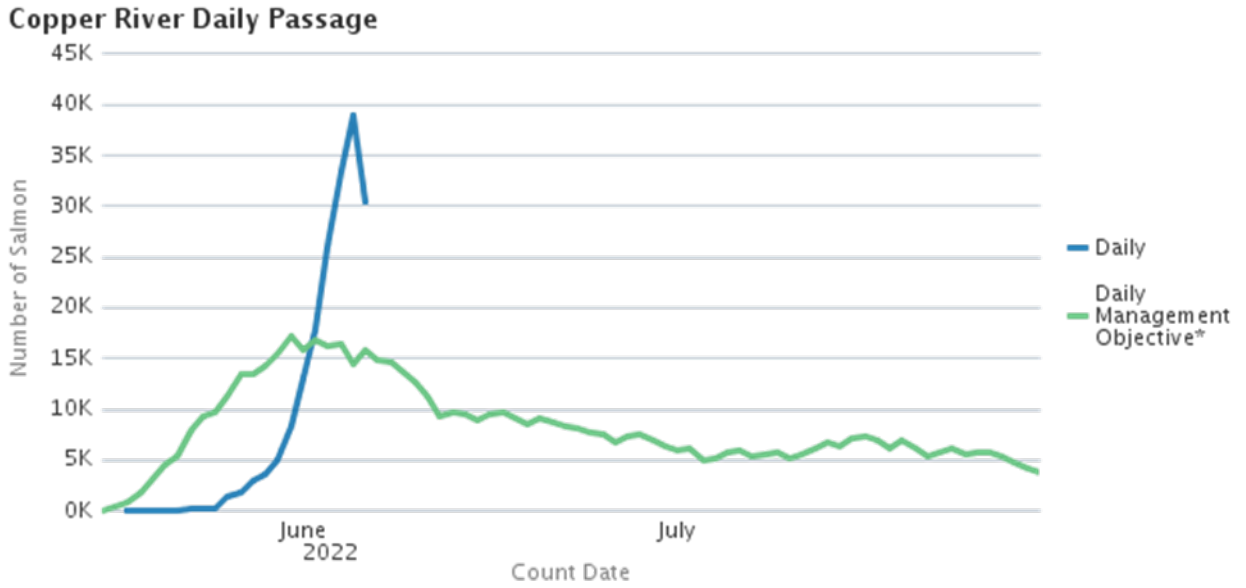
Performance in the commercial fishery and in river sonar salmon passage estimates are the primary early season assessments of the Sockeye Salmon return to the Copper River. The initial two commercial fishing periods resulted in relatively low harvest. However, the most recent two periods have had significant increases in Sockeye Salmon harvest, both of which exceeded the projected harvest for each period. Daily sonar estimates have continued a significant increasing trend during the past week.

As with Sockeye Salmon, fisheries managers are also monitoring early season assessments of Chinook Salmon run strength; primary indicators are commercial harvest rates and data from the Chinook Salmon in river abundance project operated by NVE. Additional insight is gained from the recent application of updated technology at the Miles Lake sonar site to provide species apportionment data. Although still early in the season, assessments are indicative of a weak inriver 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 opened June 1. The State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict will open for a 24-hour fishing period on June 11. This initial open period was delayed from the scheduled date of June 7 due to poor early season run assessments.

2022 Upper Copper River Salmon Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through June 6



Source:

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

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. Through the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Federal subsistence permit website, seventy-two (72) Chitina Subdistrict permits, ninety-nine (99) Glennallen Subdistrict permits, and zero (0) Batzulnetas permits have been issued to date.

In April 2022, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) adopted a proposal to allow subsistence salmon harvest opportunities in the Lower Copper River near Cordova. The season was adopted to be open from June 1 through September 30. As regulations of this new fishery would not be in effect until later in the year when the Federal Register was published, a Fisheries Special Action Request, was considered and adopted by the Board on May 19 which put these regulations in place temporarily for the 2022 season. This fishery opened on June 1. Permits are available at the Cordova Ranger Station (Chugach National Forest). 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. Reports are being directed to a drop box at the Cordova Ranger Station and will then be directed to the inseason manager.

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 was attempted on May 31 to begin installation; however, trail conditions were too wet to be passable. Another attempt is planned for June 7.

Links:

ADFG Miles Lake daily sonar estimates

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

NVE's Chinook Escapement Monitoring project in the Copper River

<http://eyak.fishscan.com/Summary/DailySummary.aspx>

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 and Copper River Delta – Milo Burcham, Chugach National Forest, Cordova. 6 June 2022

A total of 2 Federal Subsistence fishing permits have been issued for freshwaters within the Chugach National Forest portion of the Prince William Sound area (FFPW01) to date. Harvest statistics of this year's permit holders will not be known until reports are returned this winter. Most harvest under these permits takes place during the coho fishery in fresh waters of the Copper River Delta in August and September. Seventy-four permits were issued in 2021 and 28 were fished. Reported harvest was 459 Coho Salmon, 19 Sockeye Salmon and 4 Cutthroat Trout.

The new dip net fishery in the Lower Copper River Area (FFPW05) began last week (on June 1). Twenty-six permits have been issued so far and given the 48-hour reporting requirement, in-season harvest updates will be presented throughout the season. Snow drifts were blocking access to all but the first 2 channels of the Copper River for the first days of the fishery. No fish were caught on day one but a single Sockeye was captured on day two. Increased effort, and more road access resulted in additional salmon being caught over the weekend. Fifteen Sockeye and three King Salmon have been harvested in this fishery thus far.

COOK INLET AREA – Kenneth Gates, Senior Fish Biologist, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (907) 260-0132 Kenneth_Gates@FWS.GOV

The 2022 Cook Inlet Federal subsistence fishing is nearing. Federal fisheries on Kenai and Kasilof rivers begin 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 opens June 11.

A total of 361 permits have been issued to date to residents of Cooper Landing, Hope, and Ninilchik. Permit types include a general fishing, household, designated fisher, and community gillnet permits.

No special actions have been issued to date. However, escapement is poor for early-run Chinook Salmon returning to the Kenai River. State fisheries targeting these fish have already been restricted to catch and release and will be closed Wednesday June 8, 2022 at 12 AM. Current in-season projects are 2,200 fish--well below the OEG of 3,900 early-run Chinook Salmon.

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

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF June 6, 2022.

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

Sockeye and Chinook salmon started returning to their natal streams over 2 weeks ago. The Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge staff have given out 12 subsistence fishing permits, as of June 7. Throughout the past 2 weeks several subsistence fishermen have attempted to harvest sockeye salmon in front of the Buskin River, with very little success. Their catch per unit effort is very low, which is normal for this time of year. Discussion with locals, many subsistence fishermen have ventured to Litnik to attempt to meet their subsistence needs.

The southern districts are showing strong sockeye salmon returns, with numbers increase each day. Upper Station weir was installed on May 18 and have a total count of 9,729 fish. This count is slightly below the 9-year average of 10,202 fish. An Advisory Announcement was released on June 6 by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game – Division of Commercial Fisheries for a 33-hour commercial opening in the Alitak District starting on June 9 and ending on June 10.

The Ayakulik River weir was installed on May 20 and have total count of 14,223 fish. This count is below the 9-year average of 24,901 fish. The Karluk River weir was installed on May 24 and have a total count of 46,857 fish. This count is slightly below the 9-year average of 52,141 fish.

The Sockeye Salmon returning to the northern systems, Litnik and Buskin, have started medium to low, respectively. The Litnik weir was installed on May 12 and have a total count of 2,300 fish. This count is well below the 9-year average of 6,577 fish. The Buskin River weir was installed on May 16 and have a total count of 199 fish. The sockeye salmon returning to the Buskin River is very slow and has recently recorded a large pulse of fish moving through the weir.

Fishermen have indicated that the Sockeye Salmon returns might be a little later than normal, which according to them could be due to colder spring weather. The Chinook Salmon counts for Ayakulik and Karluk Rivers are very weak. As of June 5, 2022, Ayakulik River recorded 171 fish and Karluk counted 112 fish passing their weirs, respectively. The 171 Chinook Salmon counted on the Ayakulik River is slightly below the 9-year average of 191 fish and the 112 Chinook Salmon counted on the Karluk River is also slightly below the 9-year average of 147 fish (Data from ADF&G daily salmon counts). The Alaska Department of Fish and Game – Sport Fish Division has restricted any sport fishing on both systems targeting Chinook Salmon.

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

***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, 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.

Bristol Bay:

The 2022 Bristol Bay Sockeye Salmon run is forecast to be approximately 73 million fish for the nine river systems: Kvichak, Alagnak, Naknek, Egegik, Ugashik, Wood, Igushik, Nushagak, and Togiak. Based on the forecast 60 million fish are available for commercial inshore 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 = 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
Togiak	SEG = 120,000 – 270,000

Chignik:

The Chignik River weir was fish tight on May 27, and the cumulative weir count as of June 5 is 318 Sockeye Salmon. The interim escapement objective for June 5 is 12,000 to 17,000; however, it is still early in the run timing for early run Chignik bound Sockeye Salmon. The 2022 Sockeye Salmon forecasted total-run size for the Chignik River Management Area (CMA) is 1,272,000 fish with a harvest estimate of 562,000 Sockeye Salmon. The CMA is composed of five fishing districts: Eastern, Central, Chignik Bay, Western, and Perryville. In June, the first commercial fishing period in the Chignik Bay, Central, and Eastern districts and the Inner Castle Cape Subsection of the Western District may occur after approximately 20,000 Sockeye Salmon have escaped or are expected to escape into the Chignik River. The Chignik River Chinook Salmon harvest is dependent upon the amount of commercial fishing time for Sockeye Salmon in July. The commercial harvest 10-year average is approximately 6,000 fish.

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:

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 2022 Sockeye Salmon run size projections are 285,000 fish for the Nelson River and 394,000 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 – Gerald Maschmann, Fish Biologist USFWS Fairbanks Office. May 30 – June 5, 2022

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

The USFWS Emmonak Field Office will be **closed** this season due to staffing shortages. Essential services will be provided to fishermen online and over the phone. ADF&G management staff arrived at their Emmonak Field Office on June 1 and USFWS will continue to work closely with their management and research staff daily.

Summer Season Outlook and Management Strategies

The drainagewide Chinook salmon outlook is for a run size of 99,000 to 150,000 fish, and the Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run size outlook is for a run of 41,000 to 62,000 fish. Therefore the 2022 run is likely to be similar to 2021. Because of the poor projected run size, salmon fishing closures are required until inseason run strength estimates indicate a harvestable surplus above escapement needs. This will likely require closures at least through the midpoint of the run.

The drainagewide summer Chum salmon outlook is for a run size of 333,000 fish, with a range of 162,000 to 542,000 fish. This outlook is poor, and unless the run comes in at the upper end, the fishery will likely require closures for most of the run.

The drainagewide fall Chum salmon outlook is for a run size of 110,000 fish, with a range of 78,100 to 148,000 fish. The fall Chum salmon projection will be revised in mid-July based on the 2022 summer Chum salmon run size.

Assessment Information

Assessment projects in the lower river will be launching the first week of June. Beginning June 7, 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#**. To hear the fishing schedule and fish counts please call the toll-free Fishing Schedule and Fish Counts hotline: 866-479-7387.

Management Actions

The Federal Subsistence Board closed Federal public waters of the Yukon River drainage to the harvest of Chinook, summer and fall Chum, and Coho salmon except by Federally qualified subsistence users, effective June 1, 2022, through September 30, 2022, with harvest opportunities to be determined by the Federal fisheries manager if run strength is sufficient to allow a Federal subsistence fishery. Under the Delegated letter of Authority, and in consultation with Regional Advisory Council chairs and Office of Subsistence management staff, the Federal In-season Manager will be issuing emergency special actions to close salmon fishing in each district, starting on June 2, and moving the closures upriver based on salmon migration timing. Until more assessment data becomes available, management decisions will be based on the preseason projections.

Subsistence salmon fishing in the Coastal District and District 1 closed by Emergency Special Action (2-KS-01-22) effective 8 p.m. Thursday, June 2. Subsistence salmon fishing in District 2 closed effective 8 p.m. Saturday, June 4. Emergency Special Action

(2-KS-02-22) announced the closure of District 3 (except the Innoko River) effective 8 pm, June 7, 2022.

Subsistence salmon fishing in the remainder of Yukon River drainage is open 24 hours per day, seven days per week, with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. These management actions were taken in consultation with ADF&G.

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

For Federal News Releases and Emergency Special actions, like www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

KUSKOKWIM RIVER

In Season Manager – Boyd Blihovde, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Contact Boyd_Blihovde@fws.gov; (907) 543-3151 or spencer_rearden@fws.gov

Summary:

The Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager determined that Federal management is necessary for the conservation and the continuation of subsistence uses for Chinook and Chum salmon within the Kuskokwim River drainage. This action is based on the provisions of Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and delegation of authority letter from the Federal Subsistence Board. Plans to manage the salmon fishery are intended to take an adaptive management approach while coordinating with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and local interest groups.

Regulation: 50 CFR 100.27(e)(4)(ii) is amended to read:

(A) Unless re-opened by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, the following Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge are closed to the harvest of all salmon by using gillnets by all users effective June 01, 2022:

(1) The Kuskokwim River main stem within the boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

(2) Tributary Details: Additionally, unless re-opened by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, the following Federal public waters within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge are closed to the

harvest of Chinook and Chum Salmon and the use of all gillnets by all users effective June 01, 2022:

- **The Eek River;**
- **The Kwethluk River drainage beginning at its confluence with Kuskokuak Slough**
- **The Kasigluk and Kisaralik river drainages including Old Kuskokuak Slough to ADF&G regulatory markers at the confluence of Old Kuskokuak Slough and Kuskokuak Slough;**
- **The Tuluksak River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately 1-mile to ADF&G regulatory markers;**
- **The Aniak River drainage to ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River; and**
- **The Aniak box defined as: The waters of the Kuskokwim River main stem from the Yukon Delta NWR boundary at Aniak downstream to a line formed from the northwest corner of the runway (latitude 61° 35' 16" N, longitude 159° 33' 28" W), due north to a point on the southeast corner of the sandbar (latitude 61° 35' 37" N, longitude 159° 33' 16" W).**

Fishing from tributaries not listed above is restricted to fishing 100 yards upriver from the mouth of the river (confluence with the main stem Kuskokwim River).

(3) Federally Qualified Subsistence fishing in the main stem Kuskokwim River using dip nets, beach seines, fish wheels, and rod and reel will remain open throughout the closure and retention of Chinook salmon and Chum salmon is allowed.

(4) Federally Qualified Subsistence Fishing Opportunities

Set gillnet opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users (as defined by an 804 analysis from Office of Subsistence Management) will be open in Federal public waters of the main stem in the Kuskokwim River during the following dates and times:

- **June 1, 2022 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM**
- **June 4, 2022 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM**
- **June 8, 2022 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM**

During these three opportunities, gillnets are restricted to set gillnets with 6-inch or less mesh, 60 feet or less in length, and may not exceed 45 meshes in depth. Additionally, set gillnets must be attached to the bank, oriented perpendicular to the river and may not be operated more than 100 feet from the ordinary high-water mark. Set gillnets need to be spaced 150 feet apart from another set gillnet. The salmon bearing tributaries listed in section (A)(2) will remain closed to the use of all gillnets for all salmon and all methods and means for Chinook salmon to all users during these periods. During a set gillnet opportunity, Federally qualified subsistence users may retain all salmon during these periods.

See Section (A)(2) Tributary Details

After each set gillnet opportunity expires, Kuskokwim waters revert to closed under section (A).

(5) Gillnet (set or drift) opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users will be open in Federal public waters in the main stem of the Kuskokwim River during the following dates and times:

- **June 12, 2022 06:00 AM to 06:00 PM**
- **June 16, 2022 06:00 AM to 06:00 PM**

During these two opportunities, gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or less mesh and may not exceed 45 meshes in depth and 50 fathoms (300-feet) in aggregate (total set and drift gillnet) length below the Johnson River and 25 fathoms (150 feet) in aggregate (total set and drift gillnet) length above the Johnson River. The waters listed in section (A)(2) will remain closed to all gillnets for all salmon and all methods and means for Chinook and Chum salmon to all users during these gillnet periods:

See paragraph (A)(2) Tributary Details

(6) After each gillnet opportunity expires, Kuskokwim waters revert to closed under paragraph (A).

Additional opportunities with the use of gillnets by Federally qualified subsistence users may be announced by subsequent special action after assessment of run strength and coordination with the KRITFC, ADF&G, and other parties identified in the Delegation of Authority provided to the Federal in-season manager by the Federal Subsistence Board.

Justification

The closure of Federal public waters to the harvest of salmon with gillnets beginning June 1 is based on conservation concerns and provisions of opportunity for subsistence uses. Based on the 2022 ADF&G pre-season forecast of 99,000-161,000 Chinook Salmon, the depressed run in recent years, resulting in the failure in the past eight years to meet long-term historical Chinook Salmon harvest (67,200-109,800 for years 1990-2009), it is evident that restrictions will be necessary to meet tributary and drainage-wide escapement goals while allowing some harvest by Federally qualified subsistence users. The 2021 chum salmon run was the lowest ever recorded on the Kuskokwim. The preliminary escapement count of 4,153 Chum Salmon at the Kogruklu River weir was well below the escapement goal range of 15,000 to 49,000 Chum Salmon. Also, passages of Chum Salmon at all other weir sites within Kuskokwim tributaries were well below average. Due to the uncertainty of returning 2022 Chum Salmon, it is evident that restrictions are necessary to protect Chum Salmon populations within the Kuskokwim River drainages.

Restricting the use of gillnets during June and July is intended to conserve Chinook and Chum salmon. It is understood that this will impact the harvest of other salmon species, namely Sockeye Salmon, present due to overlapping run timing but is considered necessary as gillnets are not selective. Selective alternative gear types – dip nets, beach

seines, fish wheels, and rod and reel – may be used throughout gillnet closures, and Federally qualified subsistence users may retain all salmon caught using these gear types.

Test Fisheries and Harvest Estimate:

As of June 5, 2022 the CPUE at the Bethel Test fishery for Chinook Salmon is at 5. There have been two set net opportunities that occurred on the 1st and the 4th of June with an estimated harvest of 30 and 80 chinook respectively. The next set net harvest is to occur on the 8th of June.

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/>

**FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 29–June 4, 2022. REPORT
#2**

Northwest Alaska – Ken Adkisson, National Park Service, Nome.
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There is still considerable pack ice north of the Seward Peninsula, Communities like Shishmaref, Wales, Little Diomed, the St. Lawrence Island communities of Gambell and Savoonga, and further north are still heavily engaged in marine mammal hunting. However, the waters south of Bering Strait are mostly ice free.



*Shishmaref hunters heading out in the afternoon on Monday, 30 May 2022.
Photo by Curtis Nayokpuk*

The area covered in these weekly Fisheries Updates for Northwest Alaska include two federal subsistence management regions (the Seward Peninsula and the Northwest Arctic) and three State of Alaska districts (Norton Sound, Port Clarence and Kotzebue). The Seward Peninsula Region (Federal) contains two of the State districts: Norton Sound and Port Clarence. In turn, the Norton Sound District includes six numbered subdistricts: Unalakleet (6), Shaktoolik (5), Norton Bay (4), Elim (3), Golovin (2) and Nome (1). The Port Clarence District also includes the Pilgrim River and Salmon Lake. The Northwest Arctic Region contains one district (Kotzebue). The districts and subdistricts are based on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game organizational structure for the management of commercial and subsistence fisheries. Two other references a reader might encounter are Northern Norton Sound and Southern Norton Sound. Northern Norton Sound includes all marine and fresh waters of Subdistricts 1 through 3 (Nome, Golovin and Elim) as well as the Cape Wooley area of the Norton Sound District, and the Port Clarence District. Southern Norton Sound waters include the Norton Bay Subdistrict beginning at Bald Head, between Elim and Koyuk, to the southern Norton Sound District boundary at Point Romanof. This area includes Subdistricts 4 (Norton Bay), 5 (Shaktoolik) and 6 (Unalakleet). Report updates will generally begin with the southernmost areas, then move progressively northwards.

Since we are so far north, our commercial fishing seasons tend to trail behind those in the more southerly areas so that we currently are seeing very little fishing activity. However, since commercial fishing season is rapidly approaching, it might be useful to take a deeper look at the 2022 season outlook.

Norton Sound District

The department expects a better coho salmon run in 2022 than last year if there is an average return of four-year-old fish. However, the chum salmon run is again expected to

be poor. The Chinook salmon run is expected to be similar to or slightly lower than last year's run. The regular subsistence fishing schedule will start June 15 in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts and the possibility of a subsistence fishing closure is likely during the last week June if the run is like the last two years when the escapement goal was not reached. No commercial fishing for Chinook salmon is expected and the sale of incidentally caught Chinook salmon in commercial fisheries will not be allowed if subsistence fishing is closed. Chum salmon harvest is forecasted to be 5,000 to 10,000 fish with almost all the harvest expected to be an incidental catch in the pink and coho salmon fishery. The department expects the pink salmon run to be average for an even-numbered year and nowhere near the record runs of the three previous even-numbered year runs. However, even-numbered year runs are almost always much stronger than odd-numbered year runs and the pink salmon harvest could be 250,000 to 1 million fish if there is buyer capacity. The coho salmon run is expected to be much better than last year, but below average based on ocean survival conditions in recent years and the commercial harvest is expected to be 50,000 to 100,000 fish. In the Port Clarence District, the commercial fishery will remain closed because the in-river goal of 30,000 sockeye salmon at Pilgrim River is not expected to be reached. The department expects a poorer run than last year and subsistence fishing closures in the Pilgrim River may occur after July 4 if the run is projected to not reach the sockeye escapement goal..

Counting Projects

Because of high snowfall this past winter, river levels are expected to again be higher than normal and delays getting escapement projects operational may occur. In cases where subdistricts do not have escapement projects operational, the department will follow escapements in an adjacent subdistrict. If there is a commercial fishing period, the department will compare the commercial catch with historical catch values during similar time periods to determine if additional fishing time is warranted.

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 Unalakleet (6) Subdistricts

Subdistricts 5 (Shaktoolik) and 6 (Unalakleet) 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 Unalakleet River weir and a counting tower on the North River, an important Chinook salmon spawning tributary in the Unalakleet 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 Unalakleet 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 close subsistence fishing the last week of June, have shortened fishing openings in July, and gillnet restrictions to 6 inches or smaller mesh size until Chinook salmon escapement improves. Beach seining would be allowed beginning in July with the requirement that all Chinook salmon be immediately released alive to the water. Based on the recent 5-year trend in run performance and sibling relationships, the 2022 Chinook salmon run to southern Norton Sound is expected to be like 2021. If that occurs, there will likely be subsistence fishing closures because the 2021 run was nearly 30% below the low end of escapement goal range. Subsistence regulations allow beach seines with a maximum mesh size of 4 ½ inches to be used from July 1 through August 10 to harvest salmon other than Chinook salmon seven days a week.

Coho salmon commercial fishing is expected beginning in late July or early August and the run is expected to be below average to average. Department management for coho salmon season is considered to begin on July 25, or when coho salmon catches exceed chum salmon catches. Coho gear will be restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches. The first period will likely be 24 hours in length and if there are no escapement or buyer capacity concerns, then regular 48-hour fishing periods will follow.

NORTON Bay Subdistrict (4)

In the last decade, there were record commercial harvests of pink (2012), chum (2013) and coho (2015) salmon in Subdistrict 4 (Norton Bay) but the second half of the last decade had very poor salmon harvests. Commercial salmon fishing harvests are expected to be below average in 2022 based on recent runs. Since 2011, NSEDC has operated a counting tower on the Inglutalik River and the department plans to use salmon escapement counts from the project as an index to compare with other projects in 2022. NSEDC also plans to have a counting tower on Ungalik River for the fourth consecutive year.

No restrictions on subsistence fishing are expected this year.

Elim Subdistrict (3)

Except for 2014, when hook and line subsistence fishing for Chinook salmon was closed, there have been no other subsistence restrictions in over 30 years in Subdistrict 3 (Elim). Subsistence permits are required when subsistence salmon fishing in the Elim Subdistrict and no subsistence restrictions are expected.

Commercial fishing for pink salmon is expected if there is buyer interest in pink salmon directed fishing periods. Commercial coho salmon openings are likely beginning the end of July and the run strength is expected to be below average. Directed fishing periods for coho salmon will have gear restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches and if a pink salmon directed fishing period occurs maximum mesh size will be restricted at 4 ½ inches.

Golovin Subdistrict (2)

Commercial fishing is expected for pink and coho salmon, but the chum salmon run may be too weak to allow commercial fishing.

NSEDC plans to operate the Niukluk River counting tower in 2022. The tower project was operational from 1995–2012. Historically, the Niukluk River tower escapement goal and the Kwiniuk River tower escapement goal in the adjacent Elim Subdistrict both were achieved, or both not achieved in the 16 of 18 years when both were operational. The Niukluk River tower site is much farther upstream than the adjacent Elim Subdistrict counting tower on Kwiniuk River, and the department historically has used the counts from Kwiniuk River tower to determine early season chum salmon openings in Golovin Subdistrict. Further commercial chum salmon fishing opportunity after mid-July will depend on chum salmon escapement. The department will also evaluate catch per unit of effort (CPUE), if there is commercial fishing, with historical commercial fishing periods during similar dates to determine if additional fishing time is warranted.

Pink salmon commercial fishing periods are expected to occur in July if there is buyer interest and coho salmon commercial fishing periods are expected beginning in late July. Until mid-August, coho commercial CPUE will be used to set commercial coho salmon fishing time. After mid-August, the department plans to survey the Niukluk River and Ophir Creek to determine if the aerial survey goal of 750–1,600 coho salmon will likely be reached. Directed fishing periods for chum and coho salmon will have gear restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches and for pink salmon to a maximum mesh size of 4 ½ inches.

Nome Subdistrict (1)

The Subdistrict 1 (Nome) salmon run in 2022 is expected to be below average, but commercial fishing targeting pink and coho salmon is expected. From 2010 to 2020, the Nome Subdistrict chum salmon escapement has ranged from 31,000 to 124,000 chum salmon, but because of high water the 2021 chum salmon escapement was unknown. Three rivers have chum salmon escapement goal ranges: Eldorado (4,400 to 14,200), Nome (1,600 to 5,300) and Snake (2,000 to 4,200) and in 2021 only the Eldorado River was known to have reached its escapement goal range with 6,283 chum salmon counted through the weir. Although the Snake River crew only counted for 4 weeks, the

projection estimate is that the lower end of the escapement goal range of 2,000 chum salmon may have been reached. The Nome River weir crew was only able to count 16 days during the historical peak passage time and would likely not have reached the lower end of the escapement goal range of 1,600 chum salmon.

In marine waters, subsistence fishing is allowed 7 days a week prior to June 15 and after August 15. Likewise, in fresh waters, subsistence fishing is open 7 days a week prior to June 15 and after August 31. From June 15 through August 15, the marine waters of Nome Subdistrict west of Cape Nome will be open to set gillnet fishing from 6 p.m. Wednesday until 6 p.m. Monday. Marine waters east of Cape Nome will remain open 7 days a week throughout the season. Beginning June 15 through August 31, subsistence set gillnet fishing will be open in fresh waters from 6 p.m. Wednesday until 6 p.m. Monday. The fishing schedule listed above will be in effect unless reduced or closed by emergency order because of weaker than expected salmon runs. Dip nets and cast nets are legal gear for harvesting salmon in Norton Sound and are allowed during the set gillnet fishing periods. Beach seining is allowed during set gillnet fishing periods from June 15 through August 15. Stream-specific harvest limits are listed on the subsistence salmon fishing permits. There are no catch limits in marine waters.

The department will use the Eldorado weir counts as the primary indicator of chum salmon run strength in Nome Subdistrict east of Cape Nome. If chum salmon escapement begins to lag compared to historical run timing curves and indicates the escapement goal range will not be met, marine and river fishing periods may be reduced or suspended until the department switches to management of other salmon species. However, the Eldorado River chum salmon escapement goal is expected to be met in 2022 and daily escapement counts from the weir will be used to confirm that the run is tracking as expected. Aerial surveys will also be used to index escapement to the Bonanza, Flambeau and Sinuk rivers.

The department will use the Nome River and Snake River escapement counts as an indicator of chum salmon run strength in the Nome Subdistrict west of Cape Nome. If the Nome River and Snake River weir counts project that the chum salmon escapement goal range will not be reached, marine and freshwater subsistence fishing periods may be restricted or suspended. The Cripple and Penny Rivers are closed by regulation to subsistence chum salmon fishing. The Sinuk River sockeye salmon escapement goal range (800–1,600 fish) at Glacial Lake is determined by aerial survey.

Commercial fishing periods are expected in Nome Subdistrict for pink salmon if there is buyer interest. Commercial fishing for coho salmon in August is also expected if the run is as strong as forecast. Directed fishing periods for coho salmon will have gear restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches and for pink salmon to a maximum mesh size of 4 ½ inches.

Port Clarence District

The sockeye salmon run is not expected to reach the inriver goal of 30,000 fish in Pilgrim River and, therefore, a commercial fishery targeting sockeye salmon is not expected. Subsistence salmon fishing permits are required for the Port Clarence District, Pilgrim River drainage, and Salmon Lake. Salmon Lake will only be opened by emergency order and permits are only available at the Fish and Game office in Nome. Catch limits are listed on subsistence permits and in Table 2.

The department expects the sockeye salmon run in 2022 to be lower than the 2021 run. The department will compare the 2022 sockeye salmon run with historical escapement counts at the Pilgrim River weir after July 4 and decide if a closure is necessary to reach the escapement goal range. If the sockeye salmon run comes in much better than expected, then the department would look to increase the subsistence sockeye salmon catch limit. The Pilgrim River escapement goal range is 6,800–36,000 sockeye salmon through the weir. No other subsistence fishing closures are expected in Port Clarence District.

Kotzebue District

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*.

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.

2022 Run Outlook

The outlook for the 2022 season is based on the parent-year escapements and returning age classes observed in the commercial fishery. The 5-year-old component of the run is expected to be well below average based on the 4-year-old return in 2021. The 4-year-old component of the run is expected to be below average based on the 3-year-old return last year. The 3-year-old and 6-year-old age classes are much smaller components of the run and are expected to be below average. The commercial harvest is expected to fall within the range of 100,000 to 200,000 chum salmon. Two major buyers are expected in July and a lower volume, value-added buyer has expressed interest in buying fish.

Management Strategies

The fishery is scheduled to open on July 10 with two buyers expected on the Kotzebue north shore. The fishery closes on August 31 unless extended by emergency order because of a strong unexpected late run.

Primary commercial fishery management objectives are to provide adequate chum salmon passage through the commercial fishery: (1) to ensure sustained runs by allowing adequate escapement, and (2) to meet subsistence harvest uses. Fishery management will be dependent on comparing period and cumulative season catch rates to prior years and test fishing results on the Kobuk River.

Age composition of commercial salmon catches will be monitored to determine the strength of age classes in the run. If there is a low abundance of older salmon, which tend to migrate into freshwater first, catch rates will likely be weak early in the season. A stronger than expected 4-year-old return may cause midseason catches to rise. During the first week of the fishery, there are expected to be daily 8-hour fishing periods, except Saturday. Because of the poor expected return of fish, the department may limit fishing time in the following weeks depending on commercial catches, upriver subsistence catch reports, and test fish catches at the Kobuk River test fish project. If commercial catches indicate adequate run strength and test fish catches are sufficient, the department will allow commercial fishing to continue based on market conditions and escapement indicators. Likewise, in August as the Noatak River chum salmon run passes through the district, the department will consider fishing restrictions if commercial catches indicate a weak run.

Like last year, if poor run strength necessitates fishing restrictions, the department will establish periodic closures of the fishery and fishing time may be reduced to every other

day or less. If concern arises about salmon runs, the department will notify the fishermen and the buyers about the need to reduce commercial fishing time.

Last year during the second week of the fishing season, the department reduced fishing to 5 days a week and then further reduced fishing to 3 days a week for the remainder of the season, except in the late August when the buyers notified the department that they would cease operations before the last week of the season and 5 days a week fishing was allowed for the final week the buyers were present.

No subsistence fishing restrictions are expected in 2022.

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