

THE KVICHAK WATERSHED SUBSISTENCE SALMON FISHERY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

**FINAL REPORT TO THE U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE OFFICE OF
SUBSISTENCE MANAGEMENT TO FULFILL OBLIGATIONS FOR STUDY NUMBER
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ABSTRACT

This final report presents the results of an ethnographic project that investigated how families in 4 communities of the Kvichak District of the Bristol Bay Management Area of Southwest Alaska develop subsistence fishing strategies, such as when to fish, where to fish, who to fish with, and how much to harvest, in response to changing sociocultural, economic, and environmental circumstances. Research methods included participant observation at fish camps, key respondent interviews, family case studies, and systematic household surveys. This report describes case examples of summer subsistence fishing for sockeye salmon *Oncorhynchus nerka*, examples of subsistence fishing in the fall for spawning sockeye salmon, and a review of the use of seine nets as a subsistence sockeye salmon fishing method at Nondalton. The report concludes that the subsistence fishery is vital to the way of life of the study communities, and is accomplished in an efficient and sustainable manner informed by traditional knowledge. Annual and long term variations in the fishery are shaped by a complex set of environmental, economic, cultural, and personal factors. Also, findings based on household surveys and permit returns suggest that relying solely on permit returns results in an underestimate of subsistence sockeye salmon harvests. Additional outreach is necessary to encourage households to obtain permits and keep accurate records of their harvests.

Key words: Kvichak District, Kvichak River, Nondalton, Iliamna, Newhalen, Port Alsworth, Sixmile Lake, Iliamna Lake, Newhalen River, Bristol Bay, Southwest Alaska, Pacific salmon, sockeye salmon, *Oncorhynchus nerka*, subsistence fishing, subsistence salmon processing methods, subsistence harvests, case study method, fish camps, traditional ecological knowledge.

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