

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 2-7 , 2020. 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

Sitka and Hoonah Area – Justin Koller, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
Justin Koller, (907)747-4297 jpkoller@fs.fed.us

Herring – There was no commercial herring fishery in Sitka Sound in 2020. Please see this [summary of Sitka Sound herring 2020](#). Also, [summary of southeast Alaska herring 2020](#).

Falls Lake - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake operate the Falls Lake trap and video net weir which will be operational the last week of June. The final escapement estimate in 2019 was 1,983 Sockeye Salmon while the final subsistence and sport harvest in the marine terminal area was 528. Subsistence harvest accounted for 92% of terminal area harvest.

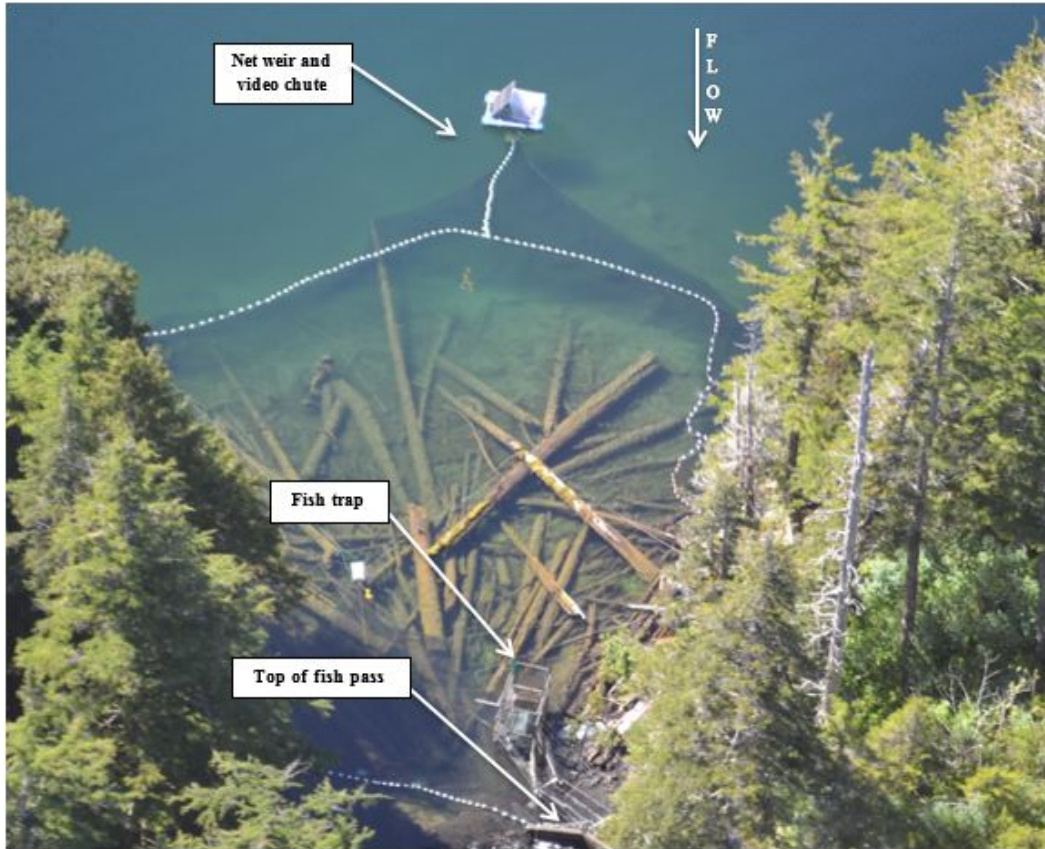


Figure 1. Aerial photo of the Falls Lake outlet illustrating the typical location of weir equipment.

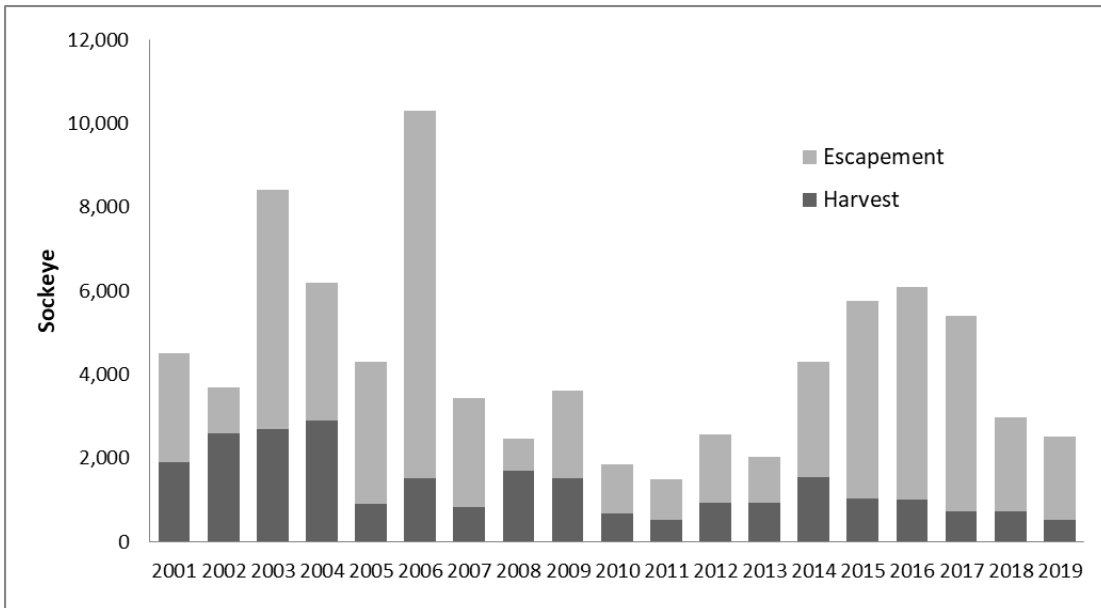


Figure 2. Escapement plus harvest equals total terminal run of Sockeye Salmon at Falls Lake, 2001-2019.

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 2019, approximately 3,036 sockeye migrated past the weir while an estimated 1,450 were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fishery. Subsistence harvest accounted for over 99% of terminal area harvest.

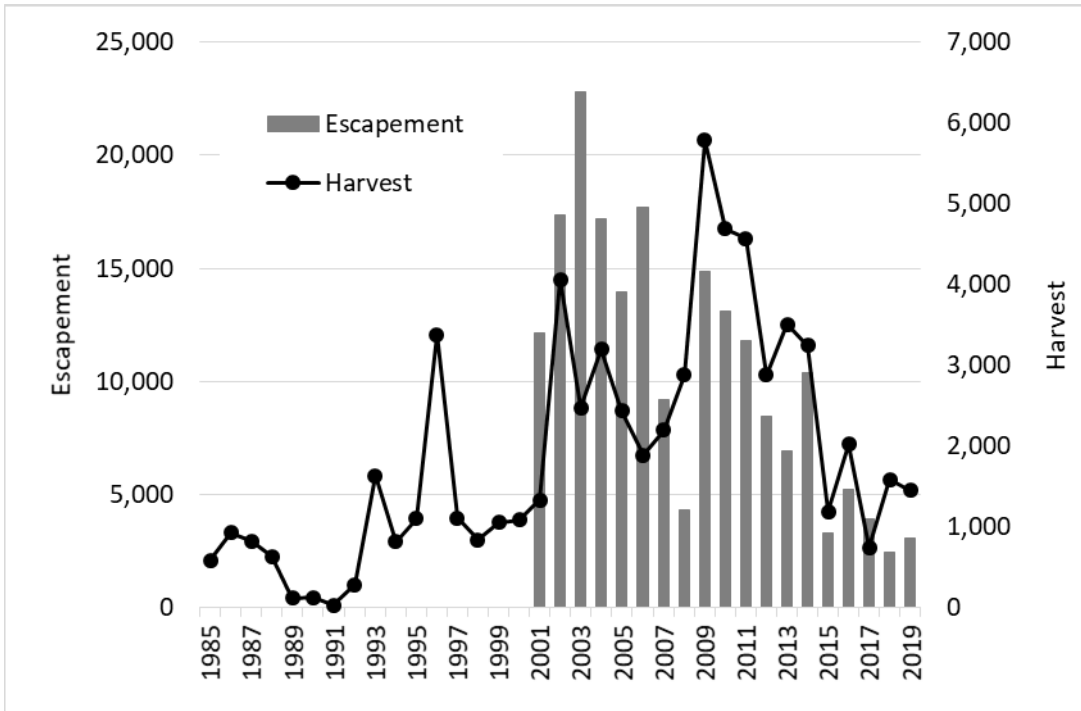


Figure 3. Reported harvest and escapement for Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon, 2001-2019.

Redoubt Lake - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which is scheduled to be operational in mid-June. In 2019, an estimated 59,917 Sockeye Salmon passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake and about 11,000 were harvested. On July 3, in accordance with the Redoubt Lake Management Plan, the individual/household subsistence sockeye possession limit was set at 25 and the individual/household subsistence sockeye annual limit was set at 100. Almost 30,000 sockeye were harvested in commercial fishery openings throughout the season.

[News release, sockeye limits 2019](#)

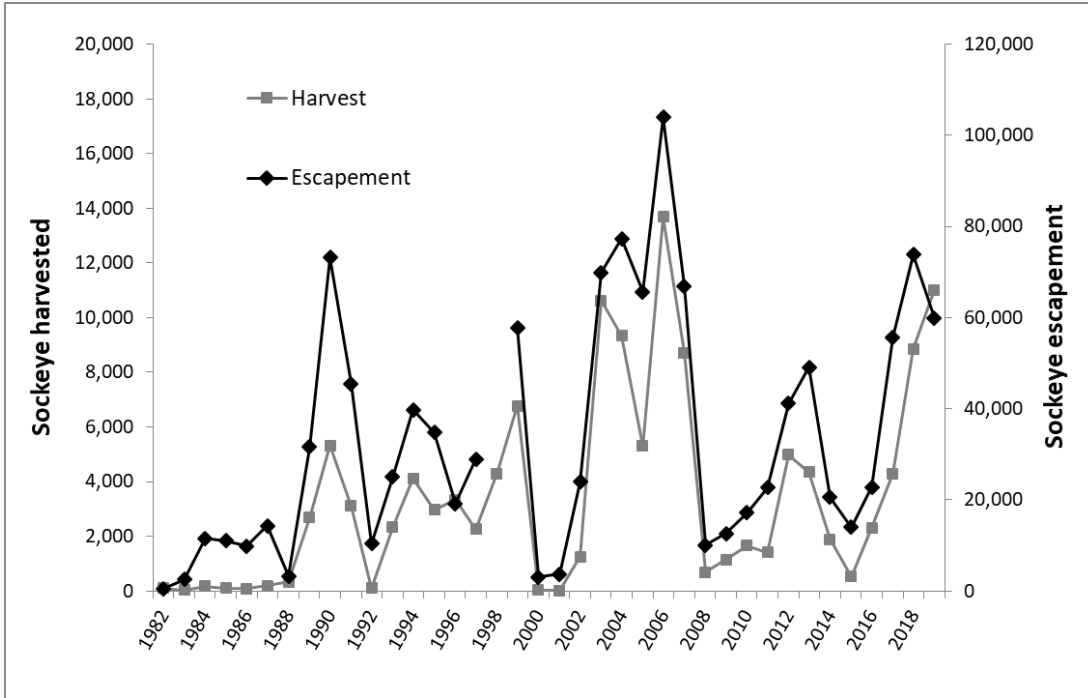


Figure 4. Annual Sockeye Salmon expanded escapement into Redoubt Lake and subsistence harvest for years with data: 1953 to 1955, 1982 to 1997, and 1999 to 2019. The weir was not operated in 1998.

Gut Bay - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake monitor escapement and harvest of Gut Bay Sockeye Salmon. Gut Bay is located south of Falls Lake on Baranof Island and an important source of sockeye for the village of Kake. Very little is known about the magnitude of this sockeye run. In 2019, 881 sockeye were counted at the weir and about 200 were harvested in the state subsistence fishery. The camp and equipment will be installed this week.

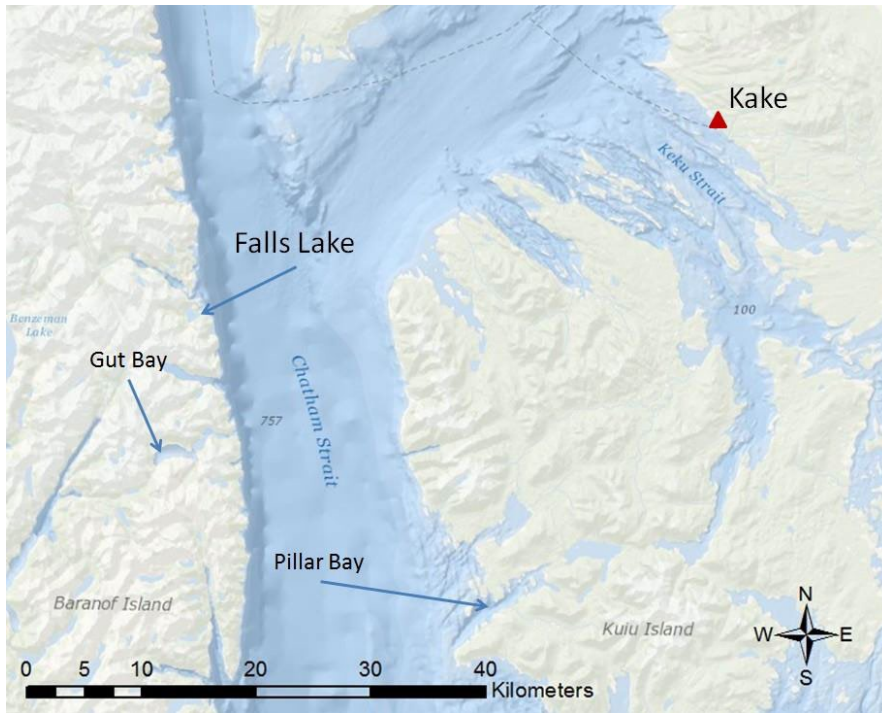


Figure 5. Location of Gut Bay in relation to Falls Lake and the village of Kake

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

Nothing to report this week.

Yakutat, Juneau, and Admiralty areas of Northern Southeast Alaska - Jake Musslewhite (907-789-6256; jgmusslewhite@fs.fed.us), Forest Service, Tongass National Forest

The Sockeye Salmon subsistence fisheries will be starting this month in the Admiralty and Juneau areas. The Forest Service and the Hoonah Indian Association will be installing the Neva Lake video weir around June 24. The Sitkoh Lake weir will be installed in early July by a Forest Service and Angoon Community Association crew. Both projects will use underwater video to record Sockeye Salmon and other fish swimming through a pair of weirs, and the video will be transmitted to an offsite computer. Project personnel will use motion-triggered recordings to make daily counts of salmon swimming through the weirs.

In Yakutat, the Situk River weir was installed on May 13, and is currently focused on counting Steelhead moving downstream after their spawning migration. As of June 4, a total of 4,021 Steelhead had been counted downstream, with more continuing to be counted on their way upstream. Later in the season, the focus will shift to counting Chinook and Sockeye. The first commercial opening is scheduled for today, with the

Alsek open from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. Due to conservation concerns for Chinook in the area, the mouth of Situk River and nearby areas have been closed to subsistence and commercial fishing until further notice. Subsistence fishermen are reminded that when fishing in the Situk River they are required to attend their gillnet at all times, and to report and turn over any Chinook caught to the Yakutat Fish and Game office. The preseason forecast for Situk Chinook is for a total run of 850 large fish, which would meet the escapement goal of 450-1,050 fish as long as conservation measures are in place.

Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area – Jeff Reeves, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest. (907) 826-1649 jreeves@fs.fed.us

The 2020 subsistence salmon fishery for Southeast Alaska and Yakutat areas has 226 permits issued for the fishery.

The 2020 Prince of Wales/Kosciusko spring subsistence steelhead fishery ended on May 31st. A total of 38 permits were issued to Prince of Wales Island residents during this fishery. Permits from this fishery are being returned and are not due back until June 15. The total reported harvest to date is 13 Steelhead Trout.

Although Chinook Salmon abundance has been determined to be low this year, hatchery production Chinook Salmon are present in the local Craig and Klawock area are being harvested by subsistence users fishing under sport fishing regulations at this time.

Although a couple of Prince of Wales Island streams have June returns of Sockeye Salmon, most subsistence users are in preparation for subsistence harvest in July.

There are currently some commercial Chinook troll fisheries occurring within terminal harvest areas in the Craig and Ketchikan areas. While the Craig area opened on May 1, the Ketchikan area harvest areas just recently opened on June 1. Harvest to date is 1339 Chinook from the Craig and Ketchikan terminal harvest areas. The Kendrick Bay terminal seine fishery for Chum Salmon will begin soon.

There are no active Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program funded projects on-going at this time. The Hetta and Eek Lake weirs will be installed towards the end of the month.

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, 6/8/2020 Update – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), (907) 205-0544, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

In January of 2020, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) provided preseason forecasts of 60,000 Copper River Chinook salmon and 1,422,000 wild stock Copper River sockeye salmon. Relative to recent 10-year averages, these forecasts are 20% above average for Chinook salmon and 33% below average for sockeye salmon. In early May, Federal and State fisheries managers met to discuss this forecast, anticipated early season management strategies, and plans for maintaining communications with local stakeholders regarding the run strength assessments and management actions throughout the season.

The commercial fishery in the Copper River District has been limited in response to low numbers of salmon observed in run strength indices. Four open commercial fishing periods have occurred through June 1. Total commercial harvest reported for the season was 71,370 sockeye salmon and 5,751 Chinook salmon. The ADFG reports this to be the third lowest commercial harvest in the last 50 years for the district.

The ADFG sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) began recording salmon passage on May 19. As of June 7, 156,337 salmon have been estimated migrating upstream for the season. This estimate is 61% of the cumulative management objective of 254,621 salmon for this date. A daily estimate of 11,080 salmon migrated by the sonar on June 7.

The Native Village of Eyak Baird Canyon fish wheels captured and tagged 1,496 Chinook salmon through June 6. The upriver fish wheels at Canyon Creek have captured and examined 436 Chinook salmon through June 7, of which, 33 were recaptured fish that had been tagged at the downstream wheels.

Performance in the commercial fishery and in river sonar salmon passage estimates are the primary early season assessments of the salmon return to the Copper River. Based on long-term average run timing and harvests, both indicators are well below the expected levels for this date of the season. The overall returns of sockeye and Chinook salmon could both be very weak or simply delayed in run timing. 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.

A Cordova resident has submitted a Special Action Request (FSA20-04) to allow Federal subsistence harvest of salmon in the lower Copper River due to public safety / food

security concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Federal Subsistence Board is responding to this and several similar requests by issuing letters to local field managers (USFS, NPS, FWS, or BLM, as appropriate), authorizing field managers to issue emergency special actions related to food security and public safety in their local community. In this particular case, it is anticipated that the "delegation of authority letter" (DAL) will be issued to the U.S. Forest Service Cordova District Ranger, as this manager would be most closely familiar with the concerns of the Cordova community. The specific scope of authority would be completely distinct and separate from the authority delegated to the WRST Superintendent to issue emergency special actions pertaining to Federal subsistence fisheries in the Copper River Drainage. Once the DAL has been issued, the Cordova District Ranger would be responsible for determining the appropriate course of action in response to this request. WRST staff will be providing technical support as needed, particularly as it relates to coordination with up-river managers and stakeholders.

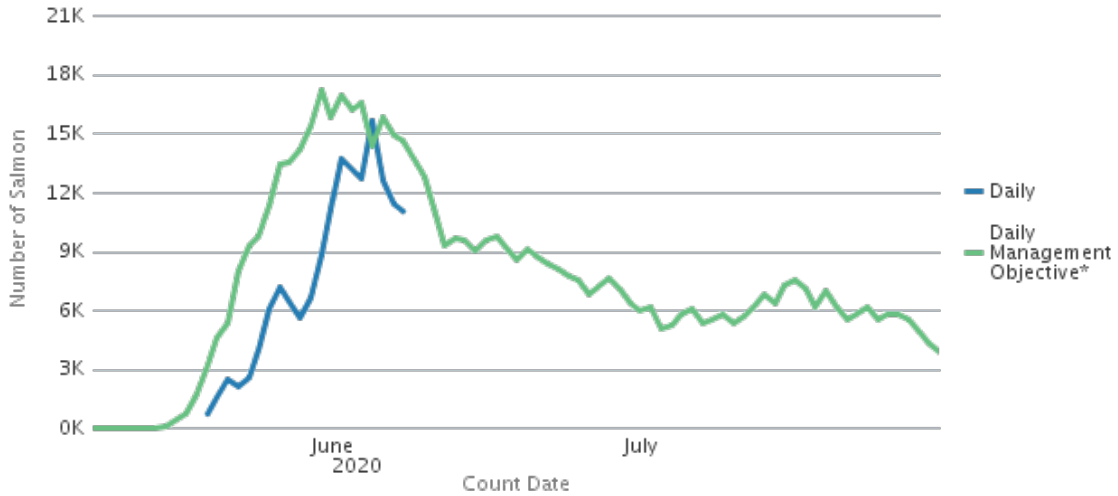
The State subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened on June 1. The State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict to opened for a 24-hour fishing period on June 7 and is scheduled to reopen for an 84-hour fishing period on June 11.

The Federal subsistence fisheries in the Chitina Subdistrict, the Glennallen Subdistrict, and the Batzulnetas area opened on May 15 and are expected to remain open through September 30. Through the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Federal subsistence permit website, one hundred and twenty-nine (129) Chitina Subdistrict permits, two hundred and forty-four (244) Glennallen Subdistrict permits, and zero (0) Batzulnetas area permits have been issued to date. With the park offices and visitor contact stations closed to the public due to public health advisories and staffing delays related to COVID-19, the permitting process has been adapted to ensure the safety of permit applicants and park staff.

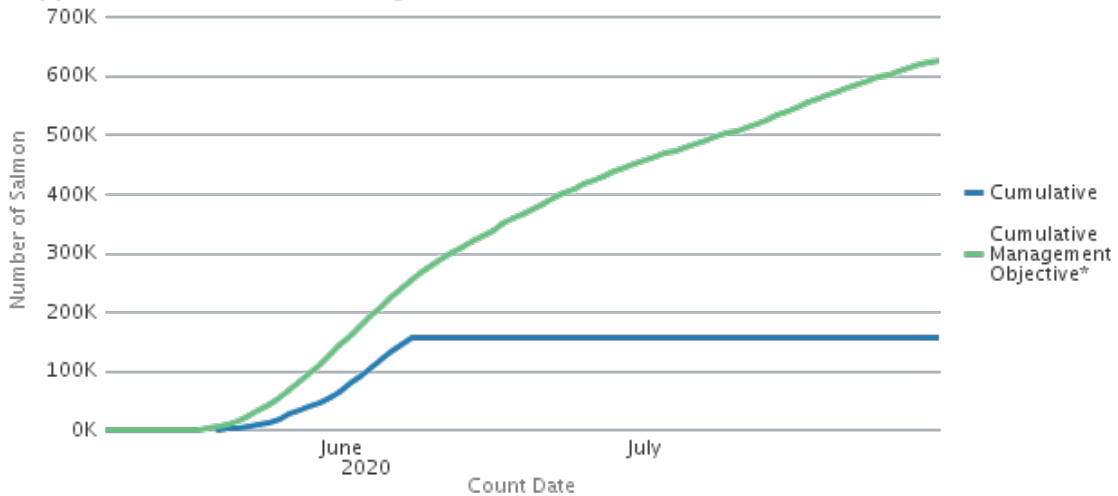
With funding through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP), WRST is again planning to operate the Tanada Creek salmon weir located at Batzulnetas. Installation of the weir is scheduled to begin in mid-June.

2020 Upper Copper River Salmon Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through June 7

Copper River Daily Passage



Copper River Cumulative Passage



Source:

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

Links:

ADF&G 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>

ADF&G Copper River Inseason Commercial Harvest Estimates

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

ADF&G Emergency Orders and News Releases

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=area.list&Year=2018&AreaID=33>

**PWS and Copper River Delta – Milo Burcham, Chugach National Forest, Cordova.
6 June 2017.**

(907) 424-4759 mburcham@fs.fed.us

A total of 9 Federal Subsistence fishing permits have been issued for freshwaters within the Chugach National Forest portion of the Prince William Sound area of to date. Harvest by this year's permit holders will not be known until reports are returned this winter. One-hundred and twenty permits were issued in 2019 resulting in the reported harvest of 617 coho and 116 sockeye from fresh waters of the Copper River Delta.

COOK INLET AREA – Jeff Anderson, Field Supervisor, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office (907) 260-0132 Jeffry_Anderson@fws.gov

The 2020 subsistence dip net fisheries for salmon will begin on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers June 15 and June 16, respectively. 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 at Sockeye Salmon in the Upper Kenai and Russian Rivers which opens on June 11.

Permits have been issued for community gillnet fisheries on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. Regulatory dates for the Kasilof River community gillnet fishery are from June 16 through August 15. Regulatory periods for the Kenai River community gillnet fishery are from July 1 through August 15 and from September 10 – 30.

USFWS and USFS staff have been issuing permits to residents of Cooper Landing, Hope, and Ninilchik since early May while minimizing interactions between employees and the public.

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) 487-0226 or michael_brady@fws.gov or Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230

Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov

The 2020 sockeye salmon returning to monitored systems within the Kodiak archipelago started about 2 weeks ago. The sockeye salmon numbers started slow but have picked up in the past week.

As of Tuesday, June 2, 2020 the Kodiak Refuge staff have given out 18 subsistence fishing permits. Throughout the past week the number of subsistence fishermen has increased at Litnik and Buskin River areas. The catch per unit effort is fairly low at this time but is expected to pick up over the next week.

Fishermen have indicated that the sockeye salmon returns might be a little later than normal, which according to them could be due to colder weather.

The Chinook salmon counts for Ayakulik and Karluk Rivers are very weak. As of June 3, 2020, Ayakulik River counted 29 and Karluk counted 35 fish passing their weirs, respectively. The 29 Chinook salmon counted on the Ayakulik River is well below the 9 year average of 139 fish and the 35 Chinook salmon counted on the Karluk River is also well below the 9 year average of 108 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.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kodiak Area
<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/pdf/fishregs13/kodiak.pdf>

**BRISTOL BAY, CHIGNIK, ALASKA PENINSULA, and ALEUTIAN ISLANDS –
Jonathon Gerken Fisheries Branch Chief Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office
(907) 271-2776 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.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game issues information for COVID-19: Under Alaska's Health Mandates 10, 17, and 18, Subsistence fishing is Essential and is part of Alaska's Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Subsistence fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Mandates. COVID-19 Health Mandates may be found here:
<https://gov.alaska.gov/home/covid19-healthmandates/>

Bristol Bay:

The 2020 Bristol Bay Sockeye Salmon run is forecast to be approximately 48 million fish for the nine river systems: Kvichak, Alagnak, Naknek, Egegik, Ugashik, Wood, Igushik, Nushagak, and Togiak. Based on the forecast 36 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 opened June 1 by regulation in the Ugashik, Egegik, and Naknek/Kvichak Districts. Harvest estimates are not available at this time.

Escapement projects are being installed throughout the region, but are not yet operational. 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 = 150,000 – 270,000

Chignik:

The 2020 Sockeye Salmon forecasted run size for the Chignik River Management Area (CMA) is 1,296,000 fish with a harvest estimate of 586,000 Sockeye Salmon. The CMA is composed of five fishing districts: Eastern, Central, Chignik Bay, Western, and Perryville. The ADFG hosted a Chignik Commercial Salmon Stakeholder Meeting on June 3 by teleconference.

The Chignik River weir was fish tight on May 29. As of June 7, approximately 1,300 Sockeye Salmon have been enumerated.

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. Preseason forecasts are made only for the Nelson River and late-run (post July 31) Bear Lake stocks. The 2020 Sockeye Salmon run size projections are 362,000 fish for the Nelson River and 408,000 fish for late-run Bear Lake. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Commercial fishing began on the South Peninsula on June 6.

Escapement projects are being installed throughout the region, but are not yet operational.

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.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Bristol Bay Area
http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Bristol.pdf

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Chignik Area
http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/chignik.pdf

Southcentral Alaska Web Links

Federal Subsistence Management Fisheries News Releases
<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/news/fishing/index.cfm>

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order link
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingSportFishingInfo.R2>

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 Southcentral Alaska
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R2.Home>

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

Yukon River – Gerald Maschmann, Fish Biologist USFWS Fairbanks Office.
(907) 456-0406, Gerald_Maschmann@fws.gov

The Emmonak Field Office will be **closed** for summer management activities due to COVID-19 concerns. Essential services will be provided to fishermen online and over the phone.

Summer Season Outlook and Management Strategies

The Summer Chum Salmon outlook is for an above average run size large enough to provide for escapement and subsistence uses. A surplus of up to 1.1 million Summer Chum Salmon is anticipated to be available for commercial harvest. However, commercial harvest opportunity will depend upon available markets and the strength of the overlapping Chinook Salmon run. The 2020 drainage-wide Chinook salmon outlook is for a run size of 144,000 to 220,000 fish. This would be a slightly smaller run size than 2019. A cautionary approach will be taken early in the season, and management strategies will be adjusted based on run assessment information as fish enter the river. If assessment indicates the Chinook salmon run size is near the upper end of the outlook range and goals are projected to be met, subsistence fishing restrictions would likely be relaxed. If inseason assessment indicates a poorer than anticipated run, subsistence fishing time may be reduced, or gear may be limited to selective gear types with no retention of Chinook salmon allowed.

Assessment Information

According to Alaska-Pacific River Forecast Center, ice-out on the lower Yukon River at the village of Emmonak occurred on May 14, earlier than the historical median of May 20. Additionally, Bering Sea ice retreated off the coast early, leaving the Yukon River mouth ice free with only minor spring flooding. Climate modeling provided by NOAA, ADF&G, and AOOS indicates we can expect a near normal entry timing for Chinook Salmon. Subsistence fishermen in the lower Yukon River area have been fishing since ice out and are reporting high water and high debris loads. The first report of a subsistence caught Chinook Salmon within the Yukon River was on May 27. The first Summer Chum Salmon was caught on May 28. The Lower Yukon test fishing (LYTF) project began on May 29 with drift fishing for Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon. Set netting began on June 3, however the project has been hampered by drift and debris. With the ADF&G Emmonak management office closed this season, the LYTF is being operated by local fishermen employed by the Yukon Drainage Fisheries Development Association (YDFDA) with coordination by ADF&G through their Anchorage and Fairbanks offices. The Middle Mouth site of the LYTF will be canceled this year due to safety concerns with COVID-19, however the Big Eddy site will continue. The Pilot Station sonar is began full operations on June 7. At this time, it is too early to assess the overall strength of either the Chinook or Chum Salmon runs. The average first quarter point in the LYTF for Chinook Salmon is June 16 for the years 1989-2019. The average first quarter point in the LYTF for Summer Chum Salmon is June 19 for the years 2001-2019.

Management Actions

Until more assessment data become available, management decisions will be consistent with the preseason projections. At this time, subsistence salmon fishing in the southern Coastal District is open 24/7 but has been restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. Starting June 5 and 6, Districts 1 and 2 have been placed on half their regulatory windows schedule of two 18-hour periods per week restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. District 3 will have the same restrictions beginning June 10. The personal use fishery in Subdistrict 6-C is open on its regulatory schedule of two, 42-hour periods per week restricted to 7.5-inch or less mesh gillnet gear and fish wheels. The rest of the Yukon drainage is open 24/7 with 7/5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. During subsistence salmon fishing closures, gillnets that have mesh size 4-inches or smaller may be used to target non-salmon species. Sequential activation of subsistence fishing restrictions will continue in all districts as the Chinook Salmon migrate upstream.

Consultation

Extensive public outreach and consultation was performed during the fall of 2019 and spring of 2020 to inform and seek input from Yukon River fishermen and stakeholders. Run outlook and possible management strategies were discussed at Federal RAC meetings and State AC meetings, the Yukon River Panel meeting, and at the annual Yukon River Drainage Fishermen's Association (YRDFA) Board meeting. Due to uncertainties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, managers began holding weekly management meetings in April. The Executive Director of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission participated in some of these meetings and provided vital feedback from local fishermen to the managers. On May 12, a pre-season planning teleconference lead by YRDFA was held that brought together representatives from most Alaskan Yukon River communities to discuss the run outlook and management options. The fourth regular weekly YRDFA teleconference was held on June 2. Fishermen reported high water and mixed debris loads. A few early fishermen reported catching a few Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon but not in great numbers. One Chinook Salmon was reported caught as far upriver as Anvik. Assessment project and management updates will continue to be given on the **YRDFA weekly teleconferences each Tuesday at 1:00 pm at the following number: 1-800-315-6338, Passcode: 98566#**. Fishermen have been encouraged to participate.

KUSKOKWIM RIVER

In Season Manager – Vernon “Ray” Born, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Contact Vernon_Born@fws.gov (907) 543-3151 or Aaron Mosses Aaron_Moses@fws.gov (907) 545-3252

The Federal in season manager for the Kuskokwim River has announced three 24-hour set gillnet opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users identified in the Section 804 subsistence user prioritization analysis, which includes residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefornak, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Kongiganak, to harvest Chinook Salmon on Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River main stem, except for the waters of the Kuskokwim River mainstem referred to as the Aniak Box (see **3-KS-01-20** or regulatory language below for description) on June 3-4, June 6-7, and

June 9-10, 2020. The start time and end time for these opportunities is from 11:00 AM to 11:00 AM the following day.

The following waters of the Kuskokwim River Drainage within the boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) under Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction will remain closed to the harvest of Chinook Salmon by all users:

- Eek River;
- Kwethluk River drainage starting 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 with 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
- Aniak Box defined as: 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).

Set gillnets are limited to 6-inch or less mesh, may not exceed 60 feet in length, and may not exceed 45 meshes in depth. Set gillnets may not be operated more than 100 feet from the ordinary high water mark, must be attached to the bank, and oriented perpendicular to the river.

Subsistence fishing for all fish, including Chinook Salmon, with dip nets, beach seines, fish wheels, and rod and reel will remain open in mainstem Kuskokwim River (per 3-KS-01-20).

Once this 24-hours opportunity expires, Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River, identified in Federal Special Action 3-KS-01-20, which was issued on May 15, 2020, will remain closed to the use of gillnets to harvest Chinook Salmon by Federally qualified subsistence users.

This action was made after coordination with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), Western Interior RAC, Yukon Kuskokwim RAC, Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (KRSMWG), and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). All parties agreed to openings starting on June 3, 6, and 9. KRITFC recommended 16 hour openers from 6 am to 10 pm (48 hours of total opportunity). KRSMWG recommended and ADF&G announced 24 hour openers from 11 am to 11 am (72 hours of total opportunity). Western Interior RAC chair recommended 16 hour opportunities due to the concern for fish falling out of nets with 6 inch mesh.

For the 2020 season, the Federal in-season manager wants to limit the possibility of going below the lower bound of ADF&G's drainage wide sustainable escapement goal of 65,000 Chinook

Salmon to a 20% chance. Centered on this lower limit (65,000) and risk tolerance (20%), this implies a potential harvest of 106,000 Chinook Salmon, with an expected escapement of 121,000 Chinook Salmon.

It is not expected that Federally qualified subsistence users will harvest enough Chinook Salmon during these opportunities to exceed the manager's harvest limit. Based on last year's 6" or less set gillnet opportunities (24 hours total), it is expected the maximum harvest during these three opportunities will not exceed 6,000 Chinook Salmon. This in combination with expected drift gillnet opportunities after June 11 is unlikely to exceed the Federal in-season manager's overall harvest limit of 106,000.

The Federal in-season manager believes that limited Chinook Salmon harvest during this time period is primarily due to net length and operational restrictions, rather than the mesh size restrictions. Restricting net length to 60 feet or less, 45 meshes or less, bank orientation, and cannot be operated more than 100 feet from the ordinary high water mark provides additional conservation measures for Chinook Salmon. This prevents Federally qualified subsistence users from using gillnets to fish in the deeper channels of the river where Chinook Salmon typically swim. However, restrictions to mesh size do allow for the protection of older and larger female Chinook Salmon, while allowing for the harvest of more abundant, smaller male Chinook Salmon. Moving from 4" gear to 6" gear will minimize waste of Chinook Salmon (via dropout mortality), while still allowing for effective capture of smaller fish.

These harvest opportunities are unlikely to exceed the in-season managers harvest limit because it allows fishing for only 72 hours over an 11 day period; restricts using Chinook Salmon conservation gear to 6-inch or less stretched mesh gillnets; restricts net length and operational requirements to 60 feet net length; and nets may not be operated more than 100 feet from ordinary high water mark. This is a conservative management action that protects the viability of the Chinook Salmon population, while allowing for the continuation of subsistence uses.

Yukon-Kuskokwim-Interior Alaska Web Links

Federal Subsistence Management Fisheries News Releases:

<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/news/fishing/index.cfm>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Yukon–Northern Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Yukon.pdf

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kuskokwim Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Kusko.pdf

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order link:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=region.R3>

ADF&G Commercial Fisheries News Release and Emergency Order Link:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Interior Alaska:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R3.home>

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

Northwest Alaska – Ken Adkisson, National Park Service, Nome.
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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.

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Large areas of broken pack ice continue to remain north of the Bering Strait and the northern Seward Peninsula coast. The distribution and concentration of the ice are heavily influenced by the variable wind direction and strength making for increasingly difficult and risky hunting of sea mammals. It is still a little too early to be concentrating on fish.

Norton Sound District

2020 Run Outlook

Salmon outlooks and harvest projections for the 2020 salmon season are based on qualitative assessments of parent-year escapements, sibling relationships, subjective determinations of freshwater overwintering and ocean survival, and in the case of the commercial fishery, the projections of local market conditions. Continuing the trends seen over the past three years there were high coho and chum salmon harvests with last year's commercial coho salmon harvest, the fourth highest on record, and the chum salmon harvest, the third highest harvest

since 1983. The department expects better coho and chum salmon runs in 2020, and a Chinook salmon run like last year.

Chum salmon runs are expected to be well above average and the harvest is expected to be 180,000 to 230,000 fish. The department expects the pink salmon run to be well above average for an even-numbered year, but harvest will depend on buyer interest and could range from 25,000 to 75,000 fish. No pink salmon directed fishing periods would be expected because of buyer interest in more valuable salmon species and the pink salmon harvest would likely be an incidental harvest only. However, the department does have the authority to increase fishing net aggregate length from 100 fathoms to 200 fathoms if there were a pink salmon directed fishery. The coho salmon run is expected to be well above average based on ocean survival conditions in recent years and the commercial harvest is expected to be 200,000 to 250,000 fish. In the Port Clarence District, the department expects the commercial fishery to remain closed because of a lack of buyer interest despite the in-river goal of 30,000 sockeye salmon at Pilgrim River expected to be reached. Subsistence fishing closures in the Pilgrim River are not expected, but the department will limit sockeye salmon subsistence harvest to 25 fish initially and will increase or waive the limit if the run is like the last several years.

Other Coastal Waters (Stebbins and St. Michael)

Subsistence Fishing:

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

Subdistricts 6 (Unalakleet)

2020 Run Outlook

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. If there is a salmon surplus a commercial fishery will occur, but no commercial fishing is expected for Chinook salmon. Chum and pink salmon will be targeted commercially depending on market interest and gillnet fishing would likely occur the second half of June to allow more time for Chinook salmon to pass through the subdistricts. Based on the recent 5-year trend in run performance and sibling relationships. The 2020 Chinook salmon run to southern Norton Sound is expected to be like 2019. There is the possibility of reaching Chinook salmon escapement goal.

Subsistence Fishing:

The regular subsistence fishing schedule from mid-June until mid-July in Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts is expected to be in effect for Chinook salmon with no additional subsistence restrictions. To protect Chinook salmon the subsistence fishing schedule in regulation will go into effect on June 15 in Subdistricts 5 and 6. The subsistence fishing schedule in the marine waters of 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 falls behind the amount necessary to reach the escapement goal the department will suspend the subsistence fishing schedule. There is the possibility of reaching Chinook salmon escapement goal without the need for subsistence fishing closures. 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.

Commercial Fishing:

If there is a salmon surplus a commercial fishery will occur, but no commercial fishing is expected for Chinook salmon. Chum and pink salmon will be targeted commercially depending on market interest and gillnet fishing would likely occur the second half of June to allow more time for Chinook salmon to pass through the subdistricts. Incidentally caught Chinook salmon in commercial fisheries will be allowed to be sold. Chum and pink salmon directed commercial gillnet fishing periods are expected beginning in late June. Chum and pink salmon runs are expected to be well above average. Chum salmon gillnet fishing periods will have gear restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches and pink salmon directed fishing periods will have gear restricted to a maximum mesh size of 4 ½ inches. Coho salmon commercial fishing openings are expected in late July with a well above average run forecast. 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 and the regular 48-hour periods will be in effect or extended if there are no escapement and buyer capacity concerns.

Subdistrict 5 (Shaktoolik)

2020 Run Outlook

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. If there is a salmon surplus a commercial fishery will occur, but no commercial fishing is expected for Chinook salmon. Chum and pink salmon will be targeted commercially depending on market interest and gillnet fishing would likely occur the second half of June to allow more time for Chinook salmon to pass through the subdistricts. Based on the recent 5-year trend in run performance and sibling relationships, the 2020 Chinook salmon run to southern Norton Sound is expected to be like 2019. There is the possibility of reaching Chinook salmon escapement goal.

Based on the recent 5-year trend in run performance and sibling relationships, the 2020 Chinook salmon run to southern Norton Sound is expected to be like 2019. If that occurs there is the possibility of reaching Chinook salmon escapement goal without the need for subsistence fishing closures. 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.

Subsistence Fishing:

The regular subsistence fishing schedule from mid-June until mid-July in Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts is expected to be in effect for Chinook salmon with no additional subsistence restrictions. To protect Chinook salmon the subsistence fishing schedule in regulation will go into effect on June 15 in Subdistricts 5 and 6. The subsistence fishing schedule in the marine waters of 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 falls behind the amount necessary to reach the escapement goal the department will suspend the subsistence fishing schedule.

Commercial Fishing:

If there is a salmon surplus, a commercial fishery will occur, but no commercial fishing is expected for Chinook salmon. Chum and pink salmon will be targeted commercially depending on market interest and gillnet fishing would likely occur the second half of June to allow more time for Chinook salmon to pass through the subdistricts. Incidentally caught Chinook salmon in commercial fisheries will be allowed to be sold.

Shaktoolik Subdistrict directed chum and coho salmon fisheries may be managed somewhat differently. Recurring high surf conditions have sometimes severely limited commercial fishing time in this subdistrict. Whereas Unalakleet Subdistrict permit holders are often able to fish two 48-hour commercial fishing periods a week, the department may have a 72-hour commercial fishing period in Shaktoolik if weather prevents permit holders for setting gear for extended periods of time. This strategy should help maintain interest in the fishery and lead to safer fishing conditions and improved quality of fish delivered to buyers. Additionally, severe weather conditions affecting fishing should also allow enough chum and coho salmon to enter the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet rivers for escapement and subsistence needs. Changes to the fishing schedule from previous years may occur depending on the buyer requesting a change based on capacity limits and quality issues.

Subdistrict 4 (Norton Bay)

2020 Run Outlook

Commercial salmon fishing returned to Subdistrict 4 (Norton Bay) in 2008 after 10 years without a buyer, and commercial fishing has occurred every year since. Previously, salmon markets had not been able to attract interested fishermen or buyers. Inseason escapement monitoring indices for this subdistrict were not available in previous years and the department used information from nearby subdistricts to determine if commercial fishing time was warranted along with historical CPUE comparisons. However, 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 2020. If the project proves to be an accurate assessment over several generations of salmon escapement the department would be able to set tower-based escapement goals. NSEDC also plans to again have a counting tower on Ungalik River this season. In the last decade there have been record commercial harvests of pink (2012), chum (2013) and coho (2015) salmon.

Subsistence Fishing:

No restrictions on subsistence fishing are expected this year.

Commercial Fishing:

Commercial salmon fishing harvests are expected to be below average for chum and coho salmon in 2020 based on runs in recent years.

Subdistrict 3 (Elim)*2020 Run Outlook*

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 other than the possibility of inseason Chinook salmon restrictions no other restrictions are expected.

Subsistence Fishing:

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 other than the possibility of inseason Chinook salmon restrictions no other restrictions are expected.

Commercial Fishing:

Commercial fishing for chum salmon is expected to begin in mid- to late-June and the run is expected to be like last year. The pink salmon run is expected to be well above average for an even-numbered year, but buyer interest in pink salmon directed fishing periods is not expected.

Commercial coho salmon openings are likely beginning the end of July depending on the expected above average run strength. Directed fishing periods for chum and 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.

Subdistrict 2 (Golovin)*2020 Run Outlook*

The chum run is expected to be well above average.

Subsistence Fishing:

Subsistence salmon permits are required when net fishing in northern Norton Sound (from Elim Subdistrict to Port Clarence District) and only Alaska residents qualify for a permit. A sport fish license is required when fishing with a rod and reel in southern Norton Sound. However, in northern Norton Sound rod and reel is a legal subsistence gear but when salmon fishing using rod and reel a sport fish license or subsistence salmon permit is required.

Commercial Fishing:

Commercial fishing expected to begin in mid- to late-June if run strength comes in as expected.

Subdistrict 1 (Nome)

2020 Run Outlook

Subdistrict 1 (Nome) salmon management in 2020 is expected to be like last year. with commercial fishing time targeting chum and coho salmon. Since Tier II chum salmon subsistence fishing was suspended in 2006, the previous subdistrict-wide escapement goal range of 23,000 to 35,000 fish has been reached or exceeded in all years except in 2009. In the last five years the escapement has ranged from 61,000 to 124,000 fish. 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). The range has been exceeded at all three rivers the last five years.

Subsistence Fishing:

In marine waters, subsistence fishing is allowed 7 days a week prior to June 15 and after August 15. 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 unless closed by emergency order. Marine waters east of Cape Nome will remain open 7 days a week throughout the season unless closed by emergency order. In fresh waters, subsistence fishing is open 7 days a week prior to June 15 and after August 31. 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 to other salmon species. However, the Eldorado River chum salmon escapement is expected to be easily met in 2020 and daily escapement counts from the weir will be used to confirm that the run is tracking as expected. This will be the third year of Bonanza weir so no historical comparison can be made except by comparing aerial surveys. Aerial surveys will also be used to index escapement to the Flambeau River.

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. However, both rivers are expected to easily exceed the escapement goal ranges. The Cripple and Penny rivers are closed by regulation to subsistence chum salmon fishing. The Sinuk River is expected to have good chum and sockeye salmon runs in 2020.

Commercial Fishing:

Commercial fishing time targeting chum and coho salmon is expected.

Port Clarence District

2020 Run Outlook

Based on the well above average sockeye salmon runs the last five years the department expects 2020 to have a well above average run again.

Subsistence Fishing:

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.

Based on the well above average sockeye salmon runs the last five years the department expects 2020 to have a well above average run again. The department will compare the 2020 sockeye salmon run with historical escapement counts at the Pilgrim River weir after the first week of July and decide if a change is warranted in subsistence catch limit or if a closure may be necessary to reach the escapement goal range. The Pilgrim River escapement goal range is 6,800 to 36,000 sockeye salmon through the weir. No other subsistence fishing closures are expected in Port Clarence District.

Commercial Fishing:

The sockeye salmon run is expected to reach the inriver goal of 30,000 fish in Pilgrim River and therefore a commercial fishery targeting sockeye salmon could occur but is not expected because of the lack of a buyer.

Kotzebue District

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 (Figure 1). 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 *O. nerka*) occur in lesser numbers, as do Dolly Varden *Salvelinus malma*, and sheefish (inconnu) *Stenodus leucichthys*.

2020 Run Outlook

The outlook for the 2020 season is based on the parent-year escapements and returning age classes observed in the commercial fishery and in the test fish samples from the Kobuk River last year. The 5-year-old component of the run is expected to be above average based on the 4-year-old return in 2019. The 4-year-old component of the run is expected to be 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 average. The commercial harvest is expected to fall within the range of 450,000 to 650,000 chum salmon. Two major buyers are expected in July and a low volume value added buyer has expressed interest in buying fish in August.

Subsistence Fishing:

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.

No subsistence fishing restrictions are expected in 2020.

Commercial Fishing:

In the last three years there have been two major buyers and one of those buyers has brought up a processing vessel and tenders in late July allowing for increased fishing time. The 2017 harvest of 463,749 chum salmon was the second highest in over 30 years and was only the eighth time the harvest exceeded 400,000 chum salmon. There were 100 permit holders that sold chum salmon in 2017 and the average price was \$0.48 per pound. The 2018 harvest was a record 695,153 chum salmon and there were 95 permit holders that sold chum salmon for an average price of \$0.40 per pound. The 2019 harvest was 494,593 chum salmon and there were 92 permit holders that sold chum salmon for an average price of \$0.39 per pound.

The department intends to open the commercial fishery any time after July 9 when the buyers are ready or permit holders indicate they are ready to fish, and a market is available. By regulation, the commercial season closes after August 31.

ESCAPEMENT OBJECTIVES

Inseason escapement-based management will consist of one test fish project on the Kobuk River and reports from subsistence fishers. The test fishing project on the Kobuk River, in the vicinity of Kiana, will provide an inseason index of chum salmon passage. The department has an index objective of 600 for the season at the test fish project. If the index is projected to fall short of 600, then a restriction in commercial fishing time will be necessary to make sure adequate escapement is moving into the Kobuk River.

Aerial surveys may be attempted beginning in September. Aerial surveys are not a direct count or estimate of the salmon population but are used as an index for comparison with surveys both in season and in prior years. Surveys are conducted too late to affect present year fisheries decisions but do provide useful information in evaluating management decisions and help project future salmon returns. Aerial survey data are utilized to: (1) evaluate initial run strength while salmon are traveling to the spawning grounds, and (2) document peak salmon abundance on the spawning grounds as an index to total escapement. These enumeration techniques are best initiated during times of low river water levels, high water clarity, and good sunlight penetration. Unfortunately, these conditions are not always available.

One of the primary fishery management strategies is to provide for escapement within sustainable escapement goal ranges (SEG) for each river system. These ranges developed in 2018 are based on an analysis of historical harvest and escapement information of specific index areas within major drainages. These aerial survey escapement objectives are: (1) subject to continued review, (2) intended to evaluate escapement trends between years, and (3) are not a total count of the salmon escapement. The Noatak and upper Kobuk Rivers may be flown if weather conditions permit. The chum salmon escapement goals are as follows: Noatak River (mouth to Kelly Bar, including the Eli River) — 43,000 to 92,800 fish, and upper Kobuk River and Selby River — 12,000 to 32,100 fish.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for the Kotzebue Area
<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/pdf/fishregs11/norton.pdf>