

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 15-21 , 2020. Report #4
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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.

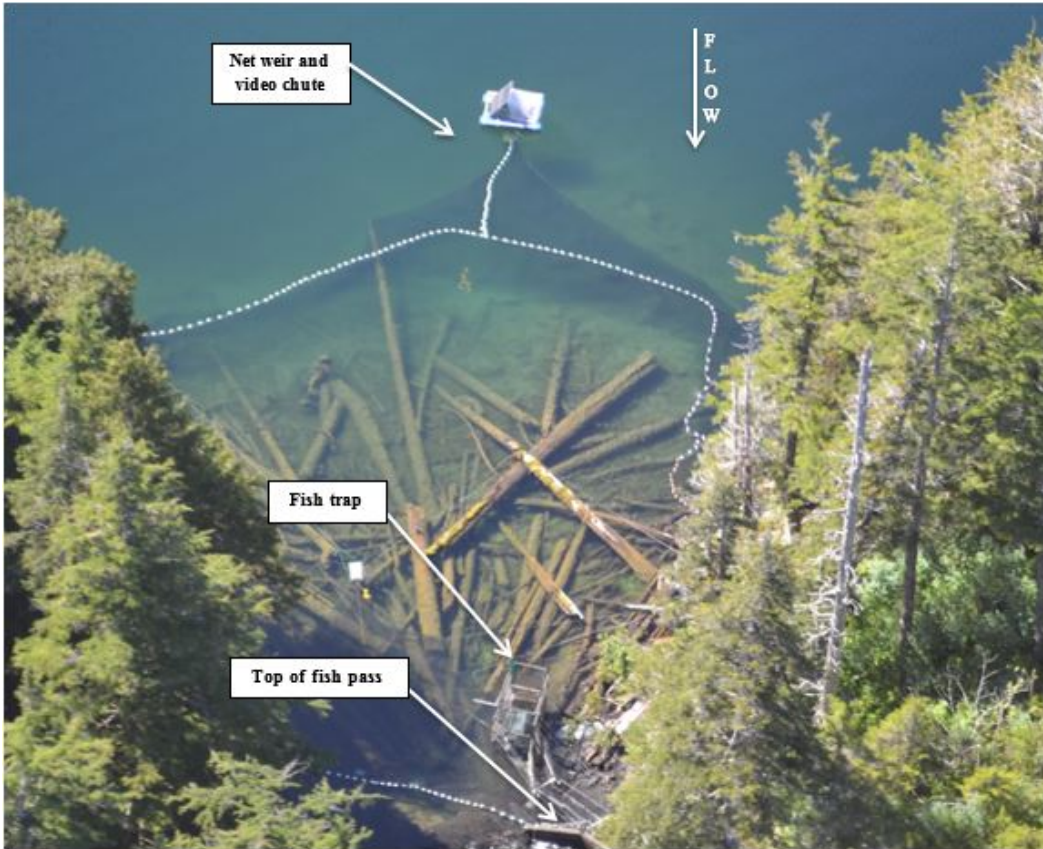


Figure 1. Aerial photo of the Falls Lake outlet illustrating the typical location of weir equipment.

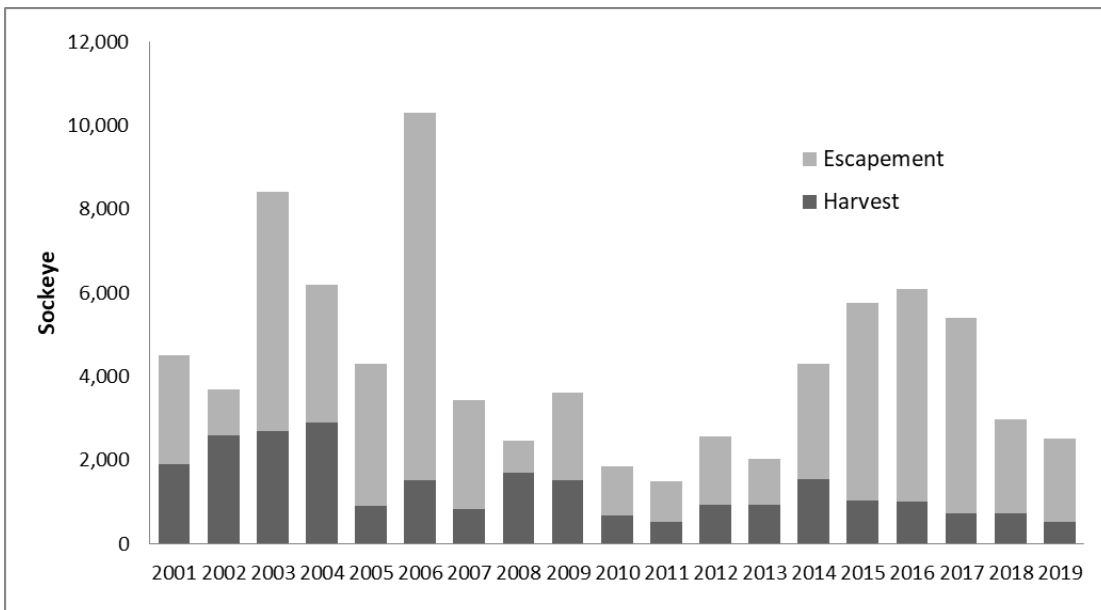


Figure 2. Escapement plus harvest equals total terminal run of Sockeye Salmon at Falls Lake, 2001-2019.

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.

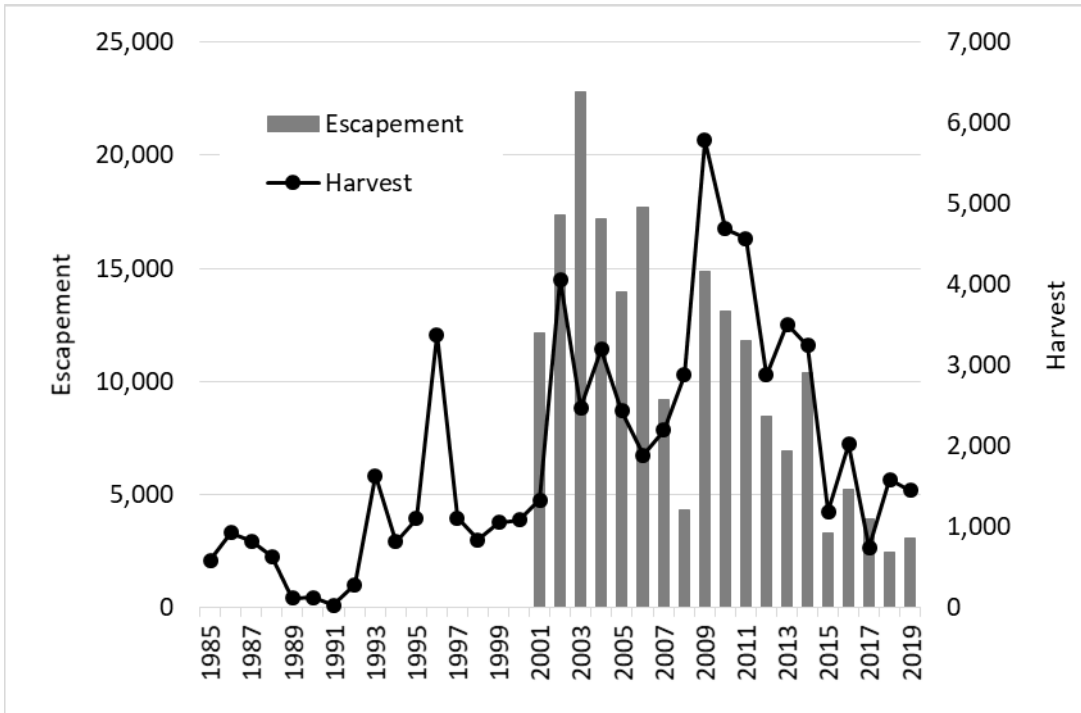


Figure 3. Reported harvest and escapement for Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon, 2001-2019.

Redoubt Lake - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which was operational as of June 13. As of June 21, 21 sockeye have been counted. In 2019, an estimated 59,917 sockeye 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](#)

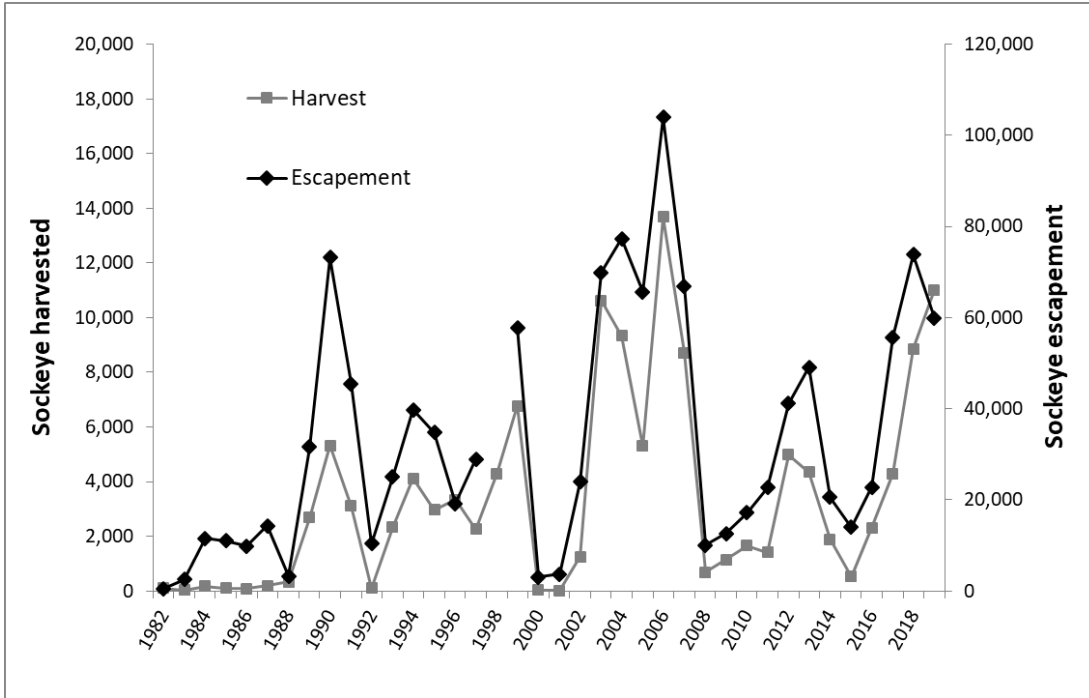


Figure 4. Annual Sockeye Salmon expanded escapement into Redoubt Lake and subsistence harvest for years with data: 1953 to 1955, 1982 to 1997, and 1999 to 2019. The weir was not operated in 1998.

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 installation was completed on June 18. As of June 21, four sockeye have been counted and no harvest has been documented.

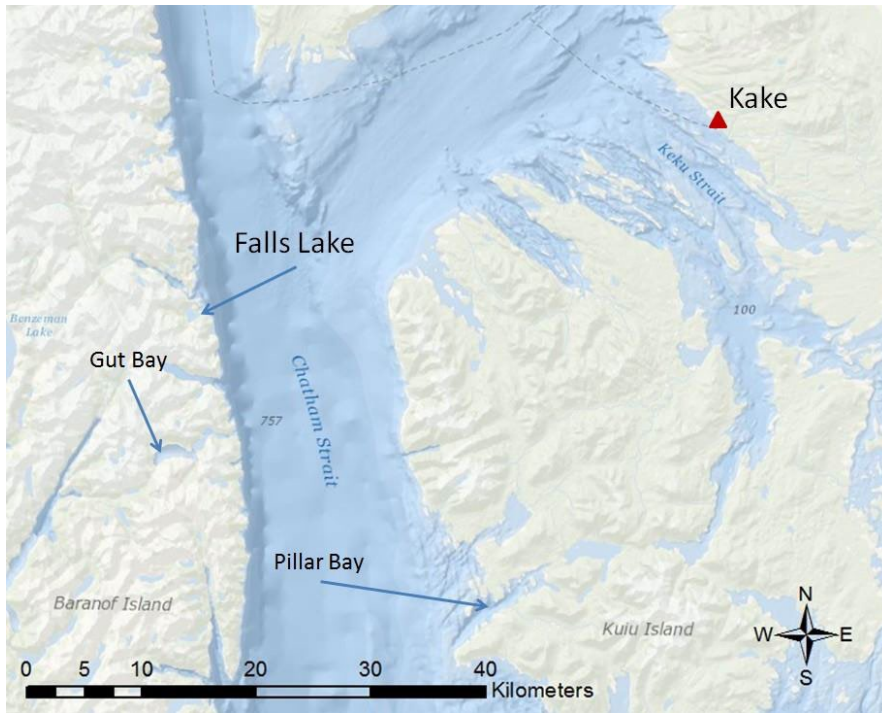


Figure 5. Location of Gut Bay in relation to Falls Lake and the village of Kake

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

The pre-season terminal run forecast for large Chinook Salmon in the Stikine River is 13,350 fish. This forecast is below the bottom range of the 14,000 to 28,000 fish goal. Directed commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries in the area have been closed to protect this return. There is a restricted commercial drift gillnet opportunity in District 6 from 12:01 p.m., Sunday, July 21, through 12:00 noon, Tuesday, July 23, 2020. The 2020 pre-season Sockeye Salmon forecast is 103,400 fish, with 64,500 Tahltan and 38,900 Mainstem fish. The 2019 Sockeye Salmon forecast was 90,000 fish, which included 66,000 Tahltan Lake and 24,000 Mainstem Sockeye. The escapement objective for Tahltan bound Sockeye Salmon is 18,000 and 30,000 for Mainstem fish. The low Mainstem return resulted in an in-season closure of the 2019 Federal subsistence Sockeye Salmon fishery on July 22, 2019. The 2020 forecast is above the escapement objectives and a season closure is not anticipated.

The 2020 Federal Stikine River Chinook subsistence fishery was closed by the in-season manager. The Federal Stikine River Sockeye Salmon subsistence fishery began Sunday, June 21. This weekend the river level was high with a lot of debris in the water, so participation on the opening day of the fishery was low. A total of 87 Stikine River

Federal subsistence salmon permits (FFSE07) and 18 General Fish permits (FFSE04) have already been issued for residents in the Wrangell and Petersburg Districts.

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.

The first purse seine and gillnet fisheries of the year will begin on June 21, with the Pt. Augusta and Hidden Falls areas open for seining, and Districts 11 and 15 open for gillnetting. These early openings are mainly directed at hatchery chum salmon returns, and are the season's first indications of run strength for these stocks.

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 11, a total of 5,531 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. 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 had 100 permits issued to date 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 15 Steelhead Trout.

Chinook Salmon are still present in good numbers in the local Craig and Klawock area are being harvested by subsistence users fishing under sport fishing regulations at this time. The State of Alaska increased harvest opportunity in outside waters by increasing the daily harvest limit to three fish starting June 15.

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. Recent visits to Hatchery Creek and Sarkar showed above average water levels but no fish. It is hoped the fish are delayed. Continued visits will occur weekly.

There are currently commercial Chinook Salmon 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 2064 Chinook Salmon from the terminal harvest areas. The Kendrick Bay (District 2) terminal seine fishery for Chum Salmon and the Tree Point (District 1) drift-gillnet fishery both began on June 21.

There are two Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program funded projects funded on Prince of Wales Island this season. The Hetta Lake weir became operational on June 8 but has not had any Sockeye Salmon pass through yet. The Eek Lake weir became operational on June 15, but has not had any Sockeye Salmon pass through yet.

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, 6/22/2020 Update – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), (907) 205-0544, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

The commercial fishery in the Copper River District has been limited in response to low numbers of salmon observed in run strength indices. Only five (of potentially twelve) open commercial fishing periods have occurred this season. Total commercial harvest reported for the season was 81,228 sockeye salmon and 5,815 Chinook salmon. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) reported this to be the fourth 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 21, 311,590 salmon have been estimated migrating upstream for the season. This estimate is 79% of the cumulative management objective of 393,603 salmon for this date. A daily estimate of 8,703 salmon migrated by the sonar on June 21.

The Native Village of Eyak Baird Canyon fish wheels captured and tagged 2,300 Chinook salmon through June 21. The upriver fish wheels at Canyon Creek have captured and examined 839 Chinook salmon through June 21, of which, 77 were recaptured fish that had been tagged at the downstream wheels.

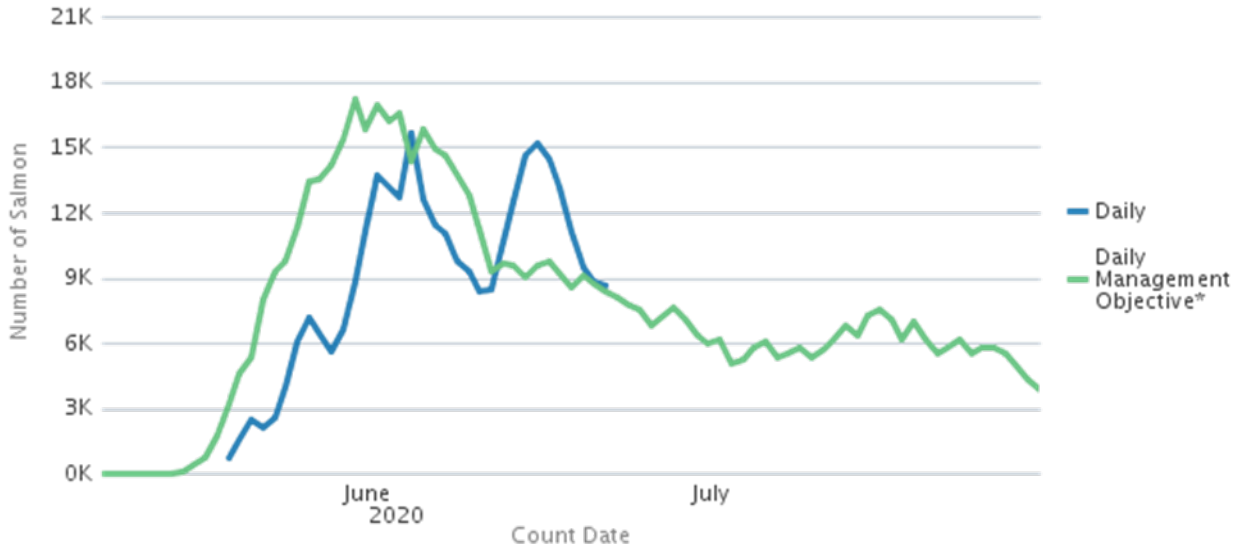
Performance in the commercial fishery and in river sonar salmon passage estimates are the primary early season assessments of the salmon return to the Copper River. Based on long-term average run timing and harvests, both indicators are well below the expected levels for this date of the season. The overall returns of both sockeye and Chinook salmon appear to be weak. 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 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 responded 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, the "delegation of authority letter" (DAL) was issued on June 6 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 is 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. With this DAL, the Cordova District Ranger is 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.

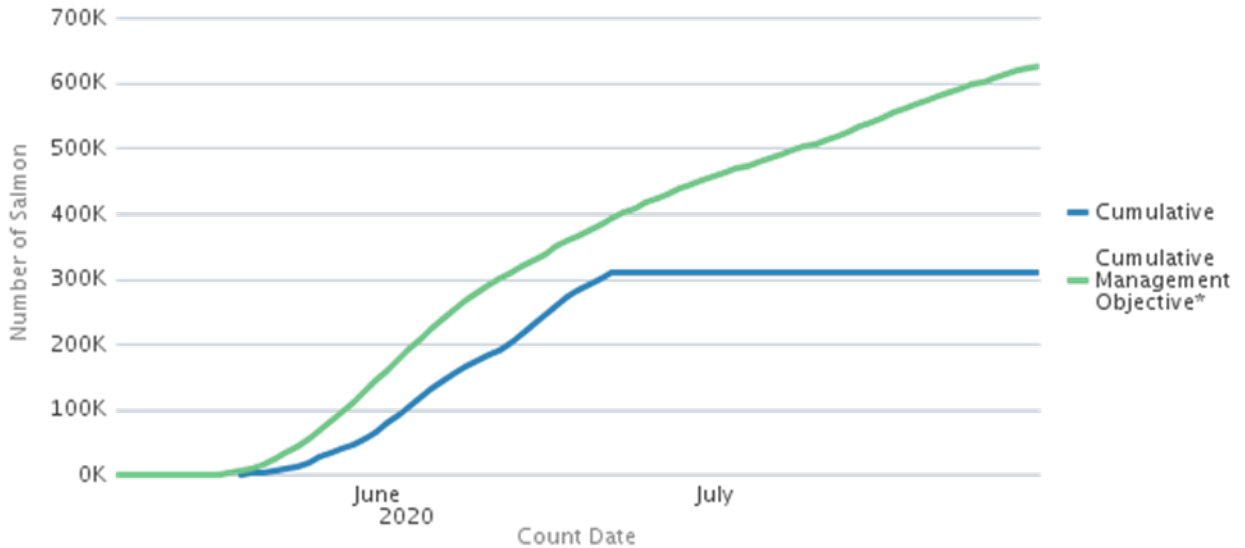
The State subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened on June 1. Effective 12:01 a.m. Saturday June 20, the State sport fishery annual limit was reduced from 4 to 1 Chinook salmon for the Upper Copper River drainage. The State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict was open for 120-hours from June 15 through June 21, and is scheduled to be open for a total of 138-hours during the week of June 22 through June 28. Effective 12:01 a.m. Monday June 22, the Chitina personal use fishery will be closed to the retention of Chinook salmon for the remainder of the season.

2020 Upper Copper River Salmon Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through June 14

Copper River Daily Passage



Copper River Cumulative Passage



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 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 sixty-five (165) Chitina Subdistrict permits, two hundred and eighty (307) Glennallen Subdistrict permits, and one (1) 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 was scheduled to begin in mid-June. However, a combination of a delayed spring time melt off of an above average snowload and elevated levels of early season precipitation created water levels that were too high for working in the creek. Site visits were performed on June 17 and 18 revealed evidence of recent, extreme flooding, with debris and silt deposits well above the stream bank. Structural components of the weir appear to be damaged. Efforts to assess the need for repairs will begin once conditions allow.

The ADFG counting tower in the Gulkana River began operation on June 2. The reported cumulative passage estimate through June 18 is 144 Chinook salmon. This is a relatively very low estimate for this date in the season.

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>

ADF&G Gulkana River counting tower

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/index.cfm?ADFG=main.displayResults&COUNTLOCATIONID=6&SpeciesID=410>

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

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

A total of 20 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 Jeffrey_Anderson@fws.gov**

The 2020 subsistence dip net fisheries for salmon began on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers June 15 and June 16, respectively. Harvest reported through June 18 in the dip net fishery at Russian River Falls is 114 Sockeye Salmon. The rod and reel fishery on the Kenai River also opened on June 11 with the same seasons and areas as for the taking of fish under Alaska sport fishing regulations.

The Kasilof River experimental community gillnet fishery began on June 16 and continues through August 15. Harvest reported through June 18 includes 82 Sockeye Salmon. Regulatory periods for the Kenai River community gillnet fishery are from July 1 through August 15 and from September 10 – 30.

Emergency Special Action 10-KS-01-20 that closed the Federal subsistence rod and reel fishery for early-run Chinook Salmon in the Kenai River downstream from the outlet of Skilak Lake remains in effect through July 15.

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**

Chinook salmon escapement on Karluk showed a big push over the past week, with the overall numbers (804 fish) being below that the 9 year average (1,079 fish). The Chinook salmon on the Ayakulik River continues to be low (861 fish) and is below the 9 year average (1,132 fish). Sport fishing continues to be restricted on both the Karluk and Ayakulik Rivers for Chinook salmon. Due to the low numbers of Chinook salmon no subsistence user has targeted this species on either system.

The Buskin River sockeye salmon escapement is well below (1,930 fish) the 9 year average (5,307 fish). Low fish numbers, average about 192 per day passing the weir, has lead to low catch per unit. Many subsistence users have attempted to harvest sockeye salmon in front of the Buskin River, but have little success. Reports have shown that as many as 5 fish have been caught in a 2-3 hours period.

The 2020 Afognak Lake (Litnik) sockeye salmon escapement is below (11,262 fish) the 9 year average (21,147 fish). There has been a solid number of subsistence users sighted outside the ADF&G markers fishing for sockeye. Their catch per unit effort is medium at this time.

Olga Bay Lake sockeye salmon escapement has been poor to date with only 3,490 fish passing as of June 19, 2020. This number is way below the 9 year average of 28,686 fish. It is anticipated that the number of sockeye salmon within this region will increase over the next couple of days.

The Karluk and Ayakulik River sockeye salmon escapements are low to medium in strength with both systems passing between 4,000 and 6,000 fish in the past week. To date, there has been only one commercial fishing opening for these areas, which is allowing subsistence users to attempt to meet their needs. The catch per unit effort is medium to strong for Karluk, with an abundant number of sockeye being within the Karluk Lagoon.

Any additional information that is received by our office will be amended to this report or be incorporated into next weeks' 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.

As of June 21, commercial fishing in the Nushagak and Wood River Districts are being delayed due to low Chinook Salmon returns on the Nushagak River. Commercial fishing using set nets has been announced in the Igushik Section. Commercial fishing has occurred in the Naknek-Kvichak, Egegik, and Togiak Districts with a cumulative harvest of approximately 26,000 Sockeye Salmon.

Escapement projects are being installed throughout the region. The Sockeye Salmon sustainable escapement goals (SEG) for Bristol Bay systems are:

Escapement Goals (current Sockeye Salmon escapement for 6/20/2020):

Kvichak	SEG = 2,000,000 – 10,000,000, current escapement = N/A
Alagnak	SEG = 320,000 minimum, current escapement = N/A
Naknek	SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000, current escapement = 10,250
Egegik	SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000, current escapement = 4,074
Ugashik	SEG = 500,000 – 1,400,000, current escapement = N/A
Wood River	SEG = 700,000 – 1,800,000, current escapement = 24,108
Igushik	SEG = 150,000 – 400,000, current escapement = N/A
Nushagak	SEG = 370,000 – 900,000, current escapement = 51,255
Nushagak	SEG = 55,000 – 270,000 Chinook Salmon, current escapement = 9,320
Togiak	SEG = 150,000 – 270,000, current escapement = N/A

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 Chignik River weir was fish tight on May 29. As of June 20, approximately 22,254 Sockeye Salmon have been enumerated. This count is smaller than the escapement objective for this time period of 150,000 – 230,000 fish. As a result, the Federal Inseason Manager issued an Emergency Special Action, 08-SS-01-20, restricting fishing in federal public waters to only federally qualified users on June 18, 2020. This action unless rescinded or replaced by additional actions is in place until July 31, 2020. The tribal councils of Ivanoff Bay, Perryville, Chignik Bay, Chignik Lagoon, and Chignik Lake submitted a joint letter requesting this action due to low Sockeye Salmon returns on June 16. As of the day of publication of this summary, request for further restrictions are being discussed.

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.

Current Sockeye Salmon escapement as of 6/20/2020 for peninsula projects is below. Commercial fishing in fishing districts located in the Northern Peninsula Management Area remain closed due to low escapement counts.

North Peninsula Management Area Escapement Goals:

Nelson River	BEG = 97,000 – 219,000, current escapement = N/A
Late-run Bear Lake	BEG = 117,000 – 195,000, current escapement = 2,733

South Peninsula Management Area Escapement Counts

Ilnik River current escapement = 2,840
Orzinski River current escapement = 16
Sandy River current escapement = 16
McLees River current escapement = 350

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 was for an above average run size large enough to provide for escapement and subsistence uses, with a surplus of up to 1.1 million Summer Chum Salmon to be available for commercial harvest. The run appears to be late, similar to 2019.

The 2020 drainage-wide Chinook salmon pre-season outlook was for a run size of 144,000 to 220,000 fish, a slightly smaller run size than 2019. Inseason projections are indicating that the run is late and weak, below the lower end of the preseason projection. Unfortunately, a run of this size may not have a harvestable surplus available for subsistence harvests. Therefore, severe subsistence salmon fishing restrictions are being implemented to protect Chinook Salmon while also trying to allow for some harvest of Summer Chum Salmon.

Assessment Information

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 Lower Yukon test fishery (LYTF) has been canceled this year due to safety concerns with COVID-19, but the Big Eddy site is active. 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. Drift fishing began at the LYTF Big Eddy site on May 29 for Chinook and summer Chum Salmon. Set netting began on June 3, however the project was hampered by drift and debris the

first week of operations. Catches of both Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon have remained fairly steady but low during the past week. As of June 20, the LYTF Chinook Salmon drift net project had a cumulative CPUE of 96, about half the previous years' average CPUE of 208. The average first quartile date for Chinook Salmon at LYTF is June 16; however, for late years, the average first quartile date is June 19. For Summer Chum Salmon, the LYTF drift net project had a cumulative CPUE of 365 as of June 20, less than one-tenth of the median of 4840 at this date. The average first quartile date for Summer Chum Salmon at LYTF is June 19. The Pilot Station sonar began full operations on June 7. The cumulative Chinook Salmon passage estimate at this project was 29,161 on June 20 with daily counts holding steady between about 1,500 and 2,500 for the past week. The 2020 passage is running about half the previous years' average estimates, of 67,580. The cumulative Summer Chum Salmon estimate at the Pilot Station sonar was 28,706 on June 20, less than one-tenth the median cumulative passage of 360,544 on this date. The average first quartile date for Chinook Salmon past Pilot Station sonar is June 18, but the average first quartile date in late years is June 22. The average first quartile date for Summer Chum Salmon past the Pilot Station sonar is June 21. The first pulse has not been detected yet for either species, which indicates that both runs could be late. The LYTF saw their first significant increase in both Summer Chum and Chinook Salmon on June 19 and 20, but whether this bump in fish is the first pulse won't be known until the fish reach the sonar within a few days.

Management Actions

Subsistence salmon fishing was restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear in the South Coastal District on June 5, but remained open 24/7. Subsistence salmon fishing was put on a reduced schedule of half of each regulatory period, starting on June 5 in District 1, June 6 in District 2, and June 10 in District 3 equaling two 18-hour periods per week. A similar reduction to half of each regulatory period, equaling two 24-hour periods per week, followed in Subdistricts 4-A and 4-B and 4-C on June 13 and 16, respectively, and reductions will be implemented in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C starting June 23. All districts were concurrently restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. Due to lower than expected assessment numbers at LYTF and Pilot Station sonar to date, for both Chinook and summer Chum Salmon, the half regulatory schedule was being further restricted to just one half period per week. Cancelled periods began in District 1 on June 19 and District 2 on June 20.

Unfortunately, with the late and weak inseason Chinook Salmon run projection, managers made the difficult decision on June 21 to begin restricting subsistence salmon fishing in the Yukon River to selective gear types to target Summer Chum Salmon while releasing Chinook Salmon alive back into the river. Additionally, the use of 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear to target non-salmon species during closed subsistence salmon fishing periods is being disallowed to protect Chinook Salmon from incidental harvest. Districts 1, 2 and 3 are being restricted to selective gear types immediately during half their normal windows schedule. Subsistence salmon fishing in Districts 4 and 5 will be closed until further notice to protect the early "tricklers" of Chinook Salmon passing through these districts at this time. It's anticipated that subsistence salmon openings restricted to selective gear types will be opened as the Summer Chum Salmon runs enter

these areas. The Innoko and Koyukuk Rivers will be restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets as these are not big Chinook Salmon drainages. District 6 in the Tanana drainage is seeing similar restrictions with the Subdistrict 6-C personal use fishery also being closed until further notice. The South Coastal District schedule remains unchanged, but could see restrictions soon.

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 through the various State, Federal, and stakeholder organizations. 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 sixth regular weekly YRDFA teleconference was held on June 16. Fishermen reported steady but smaller than usual catches, particularly of Summer Chum Salmon. Chinook Salmon catches were reported as far upriver as Ruby. 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

Summary:

The Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR) in season manager, with the authority delegated by the Federal Subsistence Board, announced three subsistence fishing opportunity for Chinook salmon within YDNWR waters for federally qualified users.

On June 3rd, 6th and 9th 2020, the Federal in-season manager provided three 24-hour set gillnet (6” or less mesh) opportunities for Chinook Salmon, of which around 1,430 Chinook Salmon were harvested. On June 12th-15th and 18th the Federal in season manager provided three 12-hour fishing opportunity with 6-inch mesh drift gillnets where an estimated 11,250 Chinook Salmon were harvested. Total harvest across all these provided opportunities is approximately 17,590 Chinook Salmon.

Given these fishing opportunities, people are still highly anticipating more fishing opportunities for Chinook Salmon to continue their traditional way of life and provide for their families. Many of the KRITFC members and the public have continued to express subsistence shortfalls for their families and way of life, as well. The harvest to date has not met the unrestricted historical subsistence harvest levels of 67,000 -109,000 Chinook Salmon.

This action was made after coordination with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), Western Interior Alaska Regional Advisory Council (RAC), Yukon Kuskokwim Delta 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 12, 15, and 18. KRITFC recommended 12-hour openers from 6 AM to 6 PM (36 hours of total opportunity). KRSMWG recommended and ADF&G accepted three 24-hour openers with times to be identified (72 hours of total opportunity). The perspectives of the Chairs of the Western Interior RAC and Yukon Kuskokwim RAC have been considered on these discussions.

Test Fisheries:

As of June 22, 2020 the cumulative catch per unit of effort (CPUE) of Chinook Salmon at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Bethel Test Fishery is 176. Cumulative CPUE on this date during 2019 and 2018 were 438 and 221, respectively.

Cumulative CPUE for Chum Salmon is at 24. Cumulative CPUE on this date during 2019 and 2018 were 52 and 447, respectively.

Cumulative CPUE for Sockeye is at 22. Cumulative CPUE on this date during 2019 and 2018 were 47 and 33, respectively.

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.
(907) 443-6104 Ken_Adkisson@nps.gov

Norton Sound District

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)

Subsistence Fishing:

On the evening of June 14 at midnight, the Unalakleet River drainage from downstream of the North River and the North River drainage closed to all subsistence fishing, except for dip nets and cast nets. Any king salmon caught in a cast net or dip net must be immediately returned to the water. The subsistence net fishing closure will extend out to the marine waters within 500 yards of the Unalakleet River mouth. Also, gillnets with a mesh size greater than 4 inches will be not be allowed in the Unalakleet River upstream of the North River confluence. Set gillnets with a mesh size of 4 inches or less may continue to be fished daily in the Unalakleet River drainage upstream of the North River confluence.

On the evening of June 14 at midnight, the marine waters of Subdistrict 6, from Cape Denbigh to Black Point closed to subsistence salmon fishing.

Beginning on June 15, Subdistrict 6 reopened to subsistence fishing in the marine waters for two 48-hour periods each week. The marine water subsistence fishing schedule 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. There are no gillnet mesh size restrictions. This schedule is in effect through July 15 unless changed by emergency order.

In the Unalakleet River beginning on June 15 the subsistence gillnet fishing reopened on a schedule is from 8 a.m. Monday until 8 p.m. Tuesday and from 8 a.m. Friday until 8 p.m. Saturday. There are no gillnet mesh size restrictions. This schedule is in effect through July 15 unless changed by emergency order.

Beach seining for salmon in all Subdistrict 6 waters is closed until July 1, and then will be open through August 10 with mesh size restricted to 4 ½ inches or smaller and all king salmon must be released to the water immediately unharmed.

Subdistrict 5 (Shaktoolik)**Subsistence Fishing:**

On the evening of June 14 at midnight, the marine waters of Subdistricts 5 from Cape Denbigh to Black Point will be closed to subsistence salmon fishing.

Beginning on June 15, Subdistrict 5 reopened to subsistence fishing in the marine waters for two 48-hour periods each week. The marine water subsistence fishing schedule will be 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. There are no gillnet mesh size restrictions. This schedule is in effect through July 15 unless changed by emergency order.

Beach seining for salmon in all Subdistrict 5 is closed until July 1, and then will be open through August 10 with mesh size restricted to 4 ½ inches or smaller and all king salmon must be released to the water immediately unharmed.

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)**Subsistence Fishing:**

No restrictions on subsistence fishing are expected this year.

Subdistrict 3 (Elim)**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.

Subdistrict 2 (Golovin)**Subsistence Fishing:**

Subsistence salmon permits are required when net fishing in northern Norton Sound (from Elim Subdistrict to Port Clarence District).

Subdistrict 1 (Nome)

Subsistence Fishing:

The summer subsistence salmon gillnet fishing schedule for the Nome Subdistrict went into effect. The marine waters east of Cape Nome will continue to be open 7 days a week. All Nome Subdistrict freshwater subsistence areas and the marine waters west of Cape Nome will be open to gillnet fishing for five days each week from 6 p.m. Wednesday until 6 p.m. Monday. Effective June 15, beach seining for salmon opened in all subsistence areas of the Nome Subdistrict whenever subsistence gillnet fishing is open. Unless closed by emergency order beach seining will remain open during gillnet fishing periods through August 15. Dip nets and cast nets can be also be used any time gillnet fishing is open.

Effective June 15 all gillnet and beach seine fishing upstream of Boulder Creek on the Sinuk River closed. This closure is in effect to protect migrating sockeye salmon that hold in the Sinuk River bridge area before reaching the spawning grounds.

Stream-specific harvest limits are listed on the subsistence salmon fishing permits. There are no catch limits in marine waters.

Port Clarence District

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.

Kotzebue District.

Subsistence Fishing:

No subsistence fishing restrictions are expected in 2020.

Commercial Fishing:

The ADF&G 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.

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