

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 18-24, 2017. Report #4.

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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 fisheries managers that provided weekly updated information by the close of business on Friday of the reporting week. The goal is to have the weekly report posted on the OSM website, <https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/news/fishing>, by the close of business the following Monday. Additional information on a fishery of particular interest may be obtained by contacting the in-season manager, visiting the additional web links at the end of each area report, or by contacting George Pappas.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA

To date, 160 permits have been issued for the 2017 subsistence salmon fishery for Southeast Alaska and Yakutat areas.

Sitka and Hoonah Area – Justin Koller, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
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Falls Lake - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake operate the Falls Lake trap and video net weir which are scheduled to be installed this week. The final escapement estimate in 2016 was 5,098 Sockeye Salmon while the final subsistence and sport harvest in the marine terminal area was 1,000. Subsistence harvest accounted for 99% of terminal area harvest.

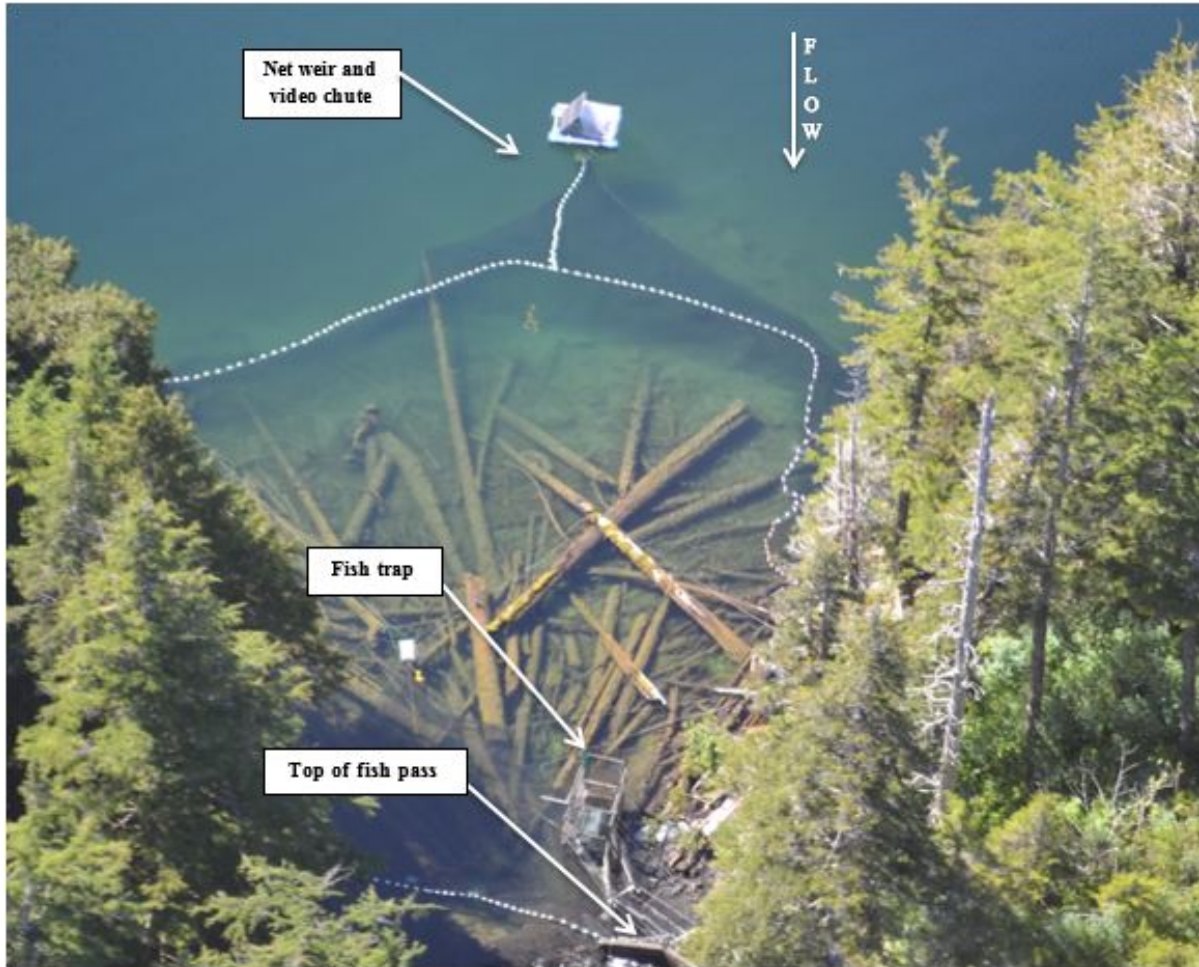


Figure 1. Aerial photo (2013) of the Falls Lake outlet illustrating the typical location of weir equipment.

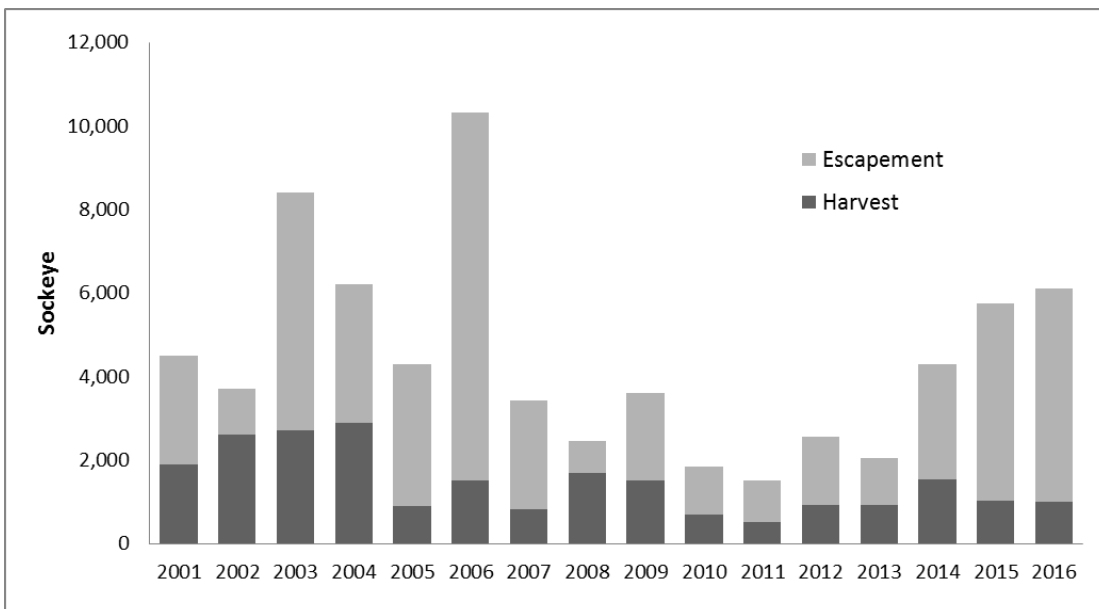


Figure 2. Escapement plus harvest equals total terminal run of Sockeye Salmon at Falls Lake, 2001-2016.

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 2016, approximately 5,234 sockeye migrated past the weir while an estimated 2,605 sockeye were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fishery. Subsistence harvest accounted for over 99% of terminal area harvest.

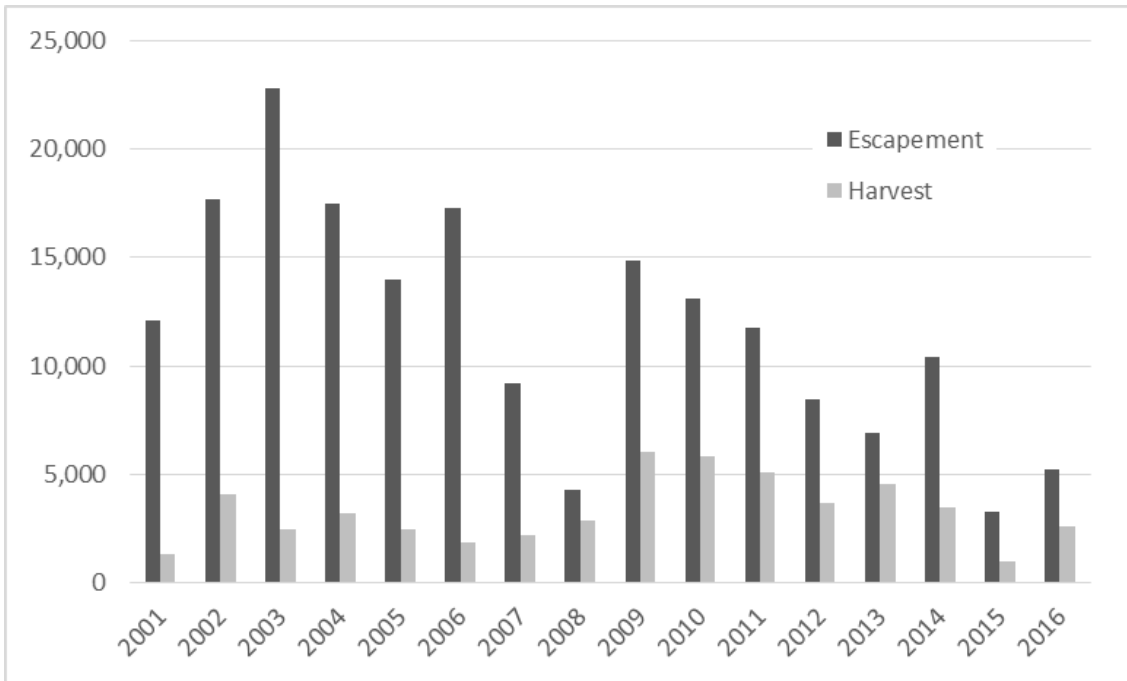


Figure 3. Escapement and harvest of sockeye at Klag Bay, 2001-2016.

Redoubt Lake - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which was operational as of June 16th. As of June 25th 1,964 Sockeye Salmon have passed the weir, 1,055 of which passed on June 24th. In 2016, an estimated 22,937 Sockeye Salmon passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake. On July 14th, 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. These limits were based on an in-season model prediction of about 33,000 sockeye returning. Subsistence sockeye harvest reported to ADF&G was 2,304.

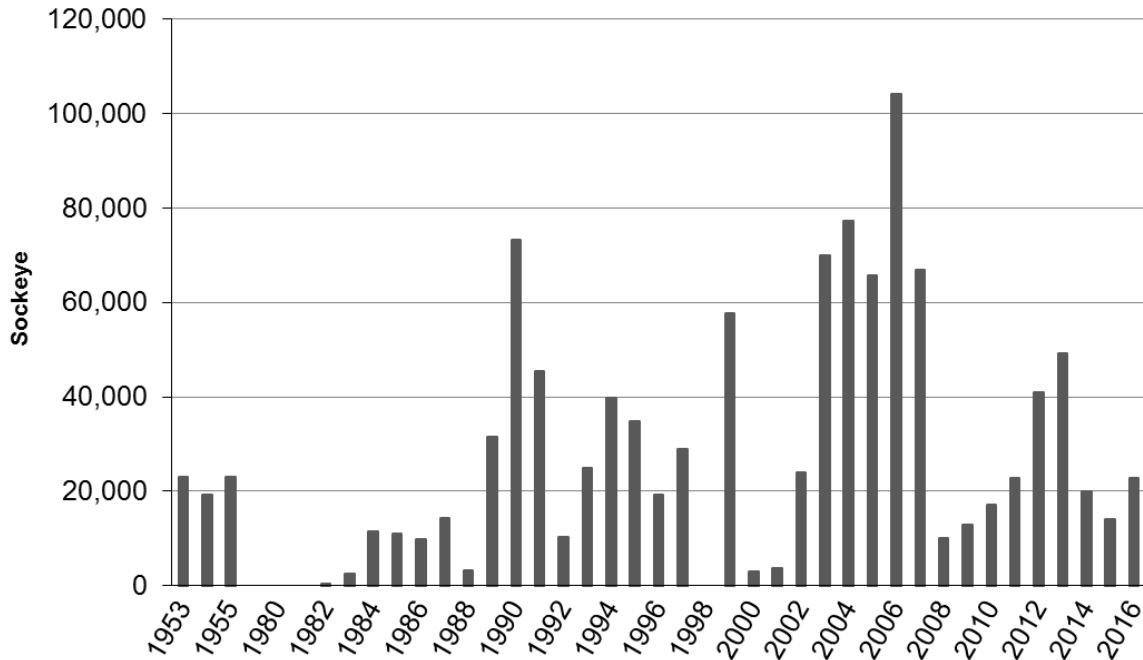


Figure 4. Annual Sockeye Salmon expanded escapement into Redoubt Lake for years with data: 1953 to 1955, 1982 to 1997, and 1999 to 2016. The weir was not operated in 1998.

Wrangell/Petersburg Area Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, Contact to be announced.

Stat Week 25, ending June 24

There have been 53 fishing permits issued for the Stikine River subsistence salmon fishery. Fishing pressure so far has been light due to the Chinook Salmon closure delaying fishing to the Sockeye fishing opening (June 21). Fishing success for Sockeye Salmon has been low. The estimated cumulative subsistence harvest is 40 Sockeye Salmon, no large Chinook, and no Coho. Two participants reported releasing undersized Chinook Salmon that were captured unharmed.

This year’s run of Chinook Salmon to the Stikine River is weak and likely less than the 18,300 fish forecasted. Commercial, sport, or subsistence fisheries in the area are still being managed to reduce the take of this species.

Yakutat, Juneau, and Admiralty areas of Northern Southeast Alaska - Ben Van Alen (907-789-6257; bvanalen@fs.fed.us) and Jake Musslewhite (907-789-6256; jgmusslewhite@fs.fed.us), Tongass National Forest

Yakutat Area. Alaska Department of Fish and Game has been counting fish through their weir on the lower Situk River since May 6. Weir counts through June 22 are 44 large Chinook Salmon, 33,957 Sockeye Salmon, and 5,881 steelhead kelts. The count of

Sockeye Salmon is high compared counts in other years. This season's first opening for the commercial set gillnet fishing in the Situk-Ahrnklini Inlet was June 18-20. Commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries for Chinook Salmon in the Situk River and estuary will remain closed unless weir counts climb within escapement goal ranges. The third set gillnet opening for the Alsek River and second for Yakutat Bay and Dangerous River was also on June 18.

Northern Inside Waters.

The commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries for salmon are just starting in the Admiralty and Juneau areas. Sport fishing for Chinook Salmon in the Juneau area was closed until June 15th to reduce harvests on Taku River stocks. Sport fishing for Chinook Salmon remains closed in the Haines area to protect stocks returning to the Chilkat River.

Taku and Lynn Canal drift gillnet fisheries were opened for the first time this season from June 18-20. Harvests of hatchery Chum Salmon were good but harvests of wild Chum, Pink, and Sockeye Salmon were below averages. Likewise, commercial purse seine fishing was opened for the first time this season at Point Augusta, Tenakee Inlet, and the Hidden Falls Hatchery terminal harvest area for a 15-hour opening on June 18th. ADF&G choose not to report harvest and effort numbers but the effort was low as were harvests of wild and hatchery salmon.

The video weirs were installed at the outlet of Kook Lake this week. We made the lower net weir deeper and wider this year so it will perform better during high water conditions (Figures 1 to 3). Will install the video net weirs at Sitkoh Lake next week.



Figure 1. Personnel from Angoon Community Association and Forest Service prepare to install the video net weirs at the outlet of Kook Lake - locally translated to be "where black flies go to feed".



Figure 2. Building nets in nets, Kook Lake, June 23, 2017.



Figure 3. We didn't plan on dismantling and rebuilding the tent platform this year - must tie more knots.

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

Of the 160 permits issued to date across the region (as noted above), 121 have been issued to Federally-qualified subsistence users residing on Prince of Wales Island.

With Chinook Salmon and Halibut available in local marine waters, most subsistence users are still actively fishing under sport fishing regulations at this time. Although a couple of Prince of Wales Island streams have June returns of sockeye, most subsistence users are in preparation for subsistence harvest in July.

The Hydaburg Cooperative Association projects at Hetta and Eek Lakes are on-going. The Hetta weir has had 125 Sockeye Salmon counted to date. The bipod weir has been installed at Eek Lake; however no Sockeye Salmon have been counted to date. The Klawock Lake project will begin July 1.

Commercial seine and drift gillnet fishing in Districts 1-4 has started. The Chinook troll fishery opens on July 1. Estimated harvests for Districts 1-4 are: 350 Chinook, 5400 Sockeye, 550 Coho, 200 Pink, and 41,500 Chum Salmon

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 – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve, (907) 822-7281, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

As of June 24, 2017 the ADF&G sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) estimated that 485,229 salmon had migrated upstream for the season. This estimate is 24% more than the projected escapement of 391,679 for this date, or 93,550 more salmon. A daily estimate of 9,618 salmon migrated by the sonar counter on June 24.

The Chitina Subdistrict is currently open and scheduled to remain open through July 2. It is then tentatively scheduled to reopen immediately on July 3 and remain open July 4. The state and federal fisheries usually follow identical fishing schedules which are set by the state. Eighty-three (83) Federal Chitina Subdistrict permits have been issued on the FWS online data base. Additional permits for this subdistrict have been issued in Chitina and Kennecott, NPS ranger stations that do not have internet connectivity.

The Glennallen Subdistrict opened for Federal subsistence users on June 1 and is expected to remain open until September 30th. Two hundred forty-seven (247) Federal Glennallen permits have been issued on the FWS online data base. Additional permits for this subdistrict have been issued in Chitina and Kennecott, NPS ranger stations that do not have internet connectivity. The state subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened on June 1.

The Batzulnetas fishery is open. One (1) Federal permits has been issued so far.

The Tanada Creek fish weir was installed and fish tight on June 7. The first Sockeye Salmon was counted past the weir on June 11. As of June 23, cumulative weir counts are 1,869 Sockeye Salmon and 0 Chinook Salmon.

As of June 25, 3,352 Chinook Salmon had been tagged at the two project fishwheels in Baird Canyon operated by the Native Village of Eyak. The upriver fishwheels at Canyon Creek have captured 1,319 Chinook Salmon, of which, 119 were recaptured fish that had been tagged at the downstream wheels.

ADF&G's counting tower in the Gulkana River began operation on June 2. As of June 22, two hundred forty (240) Chinook Salmon have been estimated past the site.

Six Special Actions have been issued by the inseason manager this season:

- Delaying Upper Coper River District Federal subsistence fisheries until June 1.
- Reducing the Chinook Salmon harvest limit to 2 for the combined gear types of dip net or rod and reel in Upper Copper River District Federal subsistence fisheries.
- Delaying the starting date of the Chitina Subdistrict Federal subsistence salmon fishery to June 8 and setting the tentative pre-season schedule for this fishery.

- Allowing the use of bait and multiple hooks by Federal subsistence users while fishing with rod and reel in the mainstem Copper River.
- Revising the starting date for the Chitina Subdistrict Federal subsistence salmon fishery to June 7.
- Rescinding the Chinook Salmon harvest limit reduction for dip net or rod and reel and returning the limit to 5 taken by dip net and 5 taken by rod and reel, in the Upper Copper River District Federal subsistence fisheries.

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>

Gulkana River counting tower – ADF&G

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/index.cfm?ADFG=main.LocSelectYearSpecies>

PWS and Copper River Delta – Milo Burcham, Chugach National Forest, Cordova.
(907) 424-4759 mburcham@fs.fed.us

A total of 38 Federal Subsistence fishing permits have been issued for freshwaters within the Prince William Sound of Chugach National Forest to date. One-hundred and ten permits were issued in 2016. Harvest by this year's permit holders will not be known until reports are returned this winter. In 2016, 555 Coho Salmon and 234 Sockeye Salmon were reported harvested on Copper River Delta fresh waters in this fishery.

Cook Inlet Area – Jeff Anderson, Field Supervisor, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office (907) 260-0132 jeffry_anderson@fws.gov

A total of 271 permits for Cook Inlet Federal subsistence fisheries have been issued to qualified households through June 22. This includes 79 Kenai River permits (FFCI01) and 6 Designated Fisher permits to Cooper Landing households; 28 Kenai River permits (FFCI01) and 1 Designated Fisher permit to Hope households; and 77 Kenai River permits (FFCI01), 75 Kasilof River permits (FFCI02), and 5 Designated Fisher permits to Ninilchik households.

The 2017 subsistence dip net fisheries for salmon opened on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers June 15 and June 16, respectively. Harvest reported to date in the dip net fishery at Russian River Falls is 800 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 gillnet fishery began on June 16 and continues through August 15. Harvest reported through June 22 includes 147 Sockeye Salmon. Regulatory periods for the Kenai River community gillnet fishery are from July 1 through August 15 and from September 10 – 30.

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>

Alaska Department of Fish and Game emergency orders and news releases affecting upper Kenai Peninsula sport fisheries can be found at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=area.list&Year=2017&AreaID=>

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SOUTHWEST ALASKA

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

Sockeye salmon returns continue to be strong along the west side of Kodiak Island. As of Wednesday, June 21, 2017, the Karluk, Ayakulik, Upper Station (Olga Lake), and Buskin River systems have met their lower escapement goals for sockeye salmon. The sockeye salmon returning to Buskin and Litnik (Afognak) Rivers have slowed considerably over the past week. The number of subsistence users has slowed considerably over the past week.

System	June 21, 2017 Count	Escapement Goal Range
Karluk River	196,050	110,000 – 250,000
Ayakulik River	101,177	60,000 – 120,000
Dog Salmon	22,456	
Frazer Lake	545	750,000 – 170,000
Upper Station (Olga Lake)	60,914	25,000 – 93,000
Litnik (Afognak) River	14,357	20,000 – 50,000
Buskin River	6,032	5,000 – 8,000

Chinook salmon returns are still weak and vary between the Ayakulik and Karluk Rivers. The Karluk River Chinook salmon escapement is low, 970 fish, and is below the 10 year average. The Ayakulik River Chinook salmon escapement is much better with 2,144 fish being counted through the weir. Bases on the current Karluk River escapement rate that the lower escapement goal (3,000 and 4000 Chinook salmon) will be achieved. Due to the low numbers of Chinook salmon on the Karluk River, a news release was issued by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and USFWS Federal Subsistence Board (Emergency Order: #4-FS-K-SUB-02-17) which closes the taking of Chinook salmon for subsistence purposes. Chinook salmon escapement will continue to be monitored daily.

Earlier in the week gillnetters at the mouth of the Buskin River were reporting good catches with 7 – 10 boats fishing at a time. Litnik salmon numbers up river have slowed this week but additional fishing activity is expected there over the weekend. At Port Lions, gillnetters are still making steady effort to fish in the lagoon, although reports are that this run is slowing down. Residents of Larsen Bay and the village of Karluk are gillnetting in Karluk Lagoon. Akhiok residents have been getting their subsistence salmon around Trappers Point or Kempf Bay. Commercial salmon fishing is delayed in the Alitak Bay District giving subsistence harvesters who normally commercial fish, more free time to engage in subsistence harvests.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kodiak Area

<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/pdf/fishregs13/kodiak.pdf>

Bristol Bay and Chignik – Johnathon 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.

Bristol Bay:

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.

Current escapement counts as of June 21:

Kvichak – Escapement project not operational, typically begins in mid-June

Alagnak – Aerial surveys

Naknek – 6,408 Sockeye Salmon

Egegik – 121,062 Sockeye Salmon

Ugashik – Escapement project not operational, typically begins in late June

Wood – (As of June 22) 304,056 Sockeye Salmon

Igushik – Escapement project not operational, typically begins in late June

Nushagak – (As of June 22) 14,910 Chinook Salmon and 580,183 Sockeye Salmon

Togiak – Escapement project not operational, typically begins in early July

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opened on June 1 by regulation.

Commercial fishing opportunities are being announced. The total commercial harvest from the Ugashik (7,516 fish), Egegik (525,424 fish), Nakene-Kvichak (31,410 fish), Nushagak (466,850 fish), and Togiak (4,649 fish) is 1,035,449 fish, 94% of the harvest is Sockeye Salmon. As each run develops and Sockeye Salmon run characteristics become defined within individual districts, fishing time will be adjusted accordingly. In the Nushagak District, management of the Chinook Salmon fishery will govern fishing time to minimize harvest as they move through the district.

The Port Moller test fishery began on June 10. The primary genetic stocks represented for Sockeye Salmon are 38% Egegik, 17% Nushagak, 16% North Peninsula, 16% Wood based on 176 analyzed fish collected between June 14-17.

Chignik:

As of June 21, the escapement counts at the Chignik weir are 192,097 Sockeye Salmon and 6 Chinook Salmon with a total commercial harvest of 360,347 Sockeye Salmon and 677 Chinook Salmon. The Chinook Salmon run typically begins in early to mid-July as measured at the Chignik River weir.

Alaska Peninsula:

As of June 21, the Nelson River escapement count is 4,886 Sockeye Salmon and the early run Bear Lake escapement count is 30,782 Sockeye Salmon. The cumulative commercial harvest is approximately 2.5 million (3,500 Chinook Salmon, 1.6 million Sockeye Salmon, 15 Coho Salmon, 563,000 Pink Salmon, and 389,000 Chum Salmon) for the Alaska Peninsula Management Area.

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

YUKON REGION

Yukon River – Gerald Maschmann, Fish Biologist USFWS Fairbanks Office.

gerald_maschmann@fws.gov or Fred Bue fredrick_bue@fws.gov

Emmonak Summer Office (907) 949-1798

The Emmonak Field Office is open for summer management activities. The office can be contacted by calling (907) 949-1798.

Summer Season Outlook

The Summer Chum Salmon run is projecting to be well above average and will provide for escapement and subsistence uses. A surplus of over 1.5 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 Summer Chum Salmon run is tracking on a record high through June 23.

The inseason Chinook Salmon outlook is projecting a run abundance above the upper end of the preseason projection. Subsistence conservation measures have been implemented to spread out the available subsistence harvest and meet escapement goals. At this time, subsistence salmon fishing opportunities are being relaxed to allow for Chinook Salmon harvests. No directed Chinook Salmon commercial fishery is anticipated, although there may be consideration into selling Chinook that may be incidentally harvested in the Chum Salmon directed commercial fishery if the run continues above expectations.

Assessment Information

With ice out earlier than average and climate modeling provided by NOAA, ADF&G, and AOOS, managers anticipated earlier entry timing for Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon. The combined Big Eddy/Middle Mouth Chinook Salmon set gillnet test fishery CPUE of 17.34 through June 23 is above the average of 13.61, but behind the “early years” average of 20.76. The Big Eddy Chinook Salmon drift gillnet test fishery CPUE of 371.17 through June 23 is ahead of the average of 261.81. The Big Eddy/Middle Mouth combined Chum Salmon drift gillnet test fishery has a cumulative CPUE of 21,116 through June 23, well ahead of the average of 4,084. Efforts are being made to release Chinook Salmon alive that are caught in the test fisheries in order to conserve Chinook Salmon. The Pilot Station sonar Chinook Salmon passage estimate through June 23 is 165,593 fish, ahead of the average of 89,527, and ahead of the early year average of 147,355. Pilot Station detected what appears to be the first pulse of Chinook Salmon passing on June 9 when 6,677 Chinook were estimated to have passed. The second pulse started passing the Pilot Station sonar on June 14 when 17,000 Chinook Salmon were estimated to have passed. A third pulse of 17,400 passed on June 18, a fourth pulse of 26,000 passed on June 21, and a fifth pulse of 22,600 starting passing on June 23. The Pilot Station sonar Summer Chum Salmon passage estimate through June 23 is a record high of 1.7 million, well ahead of the median on this date of 519,340. Efforts are being made to release Chinook Salmon alive that are caught in the test fisheries in order to conserve Chinook Salmon. Managers are have switched from managing based on the pre-season projection to in-season assessment. The average first quarter point at the Pilot Station sonar for Chinook Salmon is June 14 for early run years and June 19 for normal run years. The mid-point at the Pilot Station sonar for the 2017 Chinook Salmon run is anticipated to between June 20 and June 22. The average first quarter point for Summer Chum Salmon at the Pilot Station sonar is June 21. The FWS escapement monitoring project at the Andreafsky River weir began operations on June 14 and passed their first Summer Chum Salmon on June 15 and their first Chinook Salmon on June 17. The Gisasa River weir project began operations on June 18 and passed their first Summer Chum Salmon on June 18 and their first Chinook Salmon on June 21.

Management Actions

The pre-season management strategy was for subsistence fishing to be open 24/7 with to 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets from ice out till the arrival of early Chinook Salmon, when subsistence fishing would be placed on their regulatory windows schedule restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear. Subsistence salmon fishing would then be placed on selective gear types to protect the first pulse of Chinook Salmon and provide opportunity to harvest Summer Chum Salmon. This plan was followed in Districts 1, 2, and 3, and Subdistrict 4-A. Due to the timing of the arrival of the first pulse of Chinook Salmon in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C, subsistence salmon fishing went from being open 24/7 with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet, straight to being open 24/7 and restricted to selective gear with only a 24 hour closure between the changes, skipping the 6-inch or less mesh gillnet opportunity. Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B was placed on their regulatory schedule of two, 42-hour periods per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels. Current inseason assessment of the Chinook Salmon run is gaining confidence the 2017 run is better than 2016 based on the Pilot Station estimates; therefore, subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C transitioned straight to selective gear

types as the first pulse of Chinook Salmon arrived in the subdistricts, skipping the 6-inch or less mesh gillnet gear periods. During subsistence salmon fishing closures, gillnets with mesh size 4-inches or less of 60 feet or shorter length will be allowed to target non-salmon species. Any salmon incidentally caught with small mesh gill net gear may be retained. However, fishermen are encouraged to avoid Chinook Salmon. The first pulse of the Chinook Salmon run is expected to be protected all the way upriver and into the spawning areas.

Since current Chinook assessment is indicating a run strength above escapement needs, subsistence fishing is being relaxed in the Coastal Districts and Districts 1, 2, 3, and 4 to allow the harvest of Chinook Salmon with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear, as per the management strategies outlined pre-season. Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will relax to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on their regulatory schedule of two, 48-hour periods per week on June 27. Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 5-D will close for four days and then reopen to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. No directed sport harvest of Chinook Salmon or commercial sales are anticipated at this time.

The first 12-hour commercial Summer Chum Salmon fishing period in District 1 opened 3 p.m. Saturday, June 10. The District 1 commercial salmon fishery has been on a regular schedule of 12 hours per day, six days per week restricted to dip nets and beach seine gear, with all Chinook Salmon caught in this openings being required to be released alive. Through June 22, the preliminary harvest estimates are 91,384 Summer Chum Salmon with 3,746 Chinook Salmon caught and released from seven openings. The first four hour, 5.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet commercial fishing opportunity occurred in District 1 on June 23. Preliminary harvests estimates are 19,386 Summer Chum Salmon and 599 Chinook Salmon caught and retained for subsistence purposes. District 2 had their first six-hour commercial period with dip nets and beach seines on June 21. Preliminary harvest estimates are 5,500 Summer Chum Salmon and 133 Chinook Salmon caught and released.

Consultation

Extensive public outreach and consultation was performed during the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017 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 Board meeting. In April, a pre-season planning meeting was held in Fairbanks that brought together representatives from most Alaskan Yukon River communities to discuss the run outlook and management options. The third Yukon River Drainage Fishermen's Association teleconference was held on June 20. Participation was light, but fishermen in the lower Yukon reported getting some good chums, and fishermen in the middle Yukon reported catching a few early fish.

KUSKOKWIM REGION

Kuskokwim River – Ken Stahlnecker, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Contact kenneth_stahlnecker@fws.gov; (907) 543-3151 or lewis_coggins@fws.gov

Summary:

The Kuskokwim river will be open to a 12-hour gillnet opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest fish other than Chinook Salmon on Federal public waters be emergency special action 3-KS-04-17. During this opportunity, Federally qualified subsistence users may fish from 12:01 p.m. (noon) June 24, 2017, until 11:59 p.m. (midnight) June 24, 2017 using set or drift gillnets with 6 inch or less stretched mesh and not exceeding 45 mesh in depth. Nets cannot exceed 25 fathoms (150 feet) in length. Federally qualified subsistence users identified in the ANILCA Section 804 subsistence user prioritization may retain Chinook Salmon incidentally harvested in gillnets.

The waters of the Kuskokwim River 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) are closed to subsistence gillnet fishing.

Subsistence fishing with dip nets, beach seines, fish wheels, and rod and reel may also be used during this opportunity. Fish wheels are required to have a live box with no less than 45 cubic feet of water and must be checked at least every 6 hours. Fish wheels must be equipped with a chute and must be closely attended while in operation. All authorized gear types, except gillnets, must return Chinook Salmon to the water alive.

REGULATION

In accordance with 50 CFR 100.19, 50 CFR 100.27(e)(4) is temporarily modified to include:

Unless re-opened by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, Federal public waters in that portion of the Kuskokwim River drainage and its salmon tributaries, within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, are closed to the harvest of Chinook salmon by Federally qualified subsistence users. Salmon tributaries are the Eek, Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisarialik, Tuluksak and Aniak and their tributaries. Based on observed run strength and in consideration of conservation concerns and escapement goals, the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager may open Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River to the harvest of Chinook salmon by Federally qualified subsistence users identified under a ANILCA Section 804 analysis, which includes residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefornek, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Kongiganek.

Federally qualified subsistence users can use set or drift gillnets to harvest fish other than Chinook Salmon in Federal public waters of the main-stem of the Kuskokwim River from June 24, 2017 at 12:01 pm (noon) until 11:59 p.m. (midnight) June 24, 2017. Gillnets are restricted to 6 inches or less stretched mesh and may not exceed 45 mesh in depth and 150 feet in length (25 fathoms).

The waters of the Kuskokwim River 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) are closed to subsistence gillnet fishing.

Federally qualified subsistence users identified in the ANILCA Section 804 subsistence user prioritization may retain Chinook Salmon incidentally harvested in gillnets. Additional authorized gear for use by Federally qualified subsistence users are rod and reel, dip net, beach seines, and fish wheel. All authorized gear types, except gillnets, must return Chinook Salmon to the water alive.

JUSTIFICATION

The prohibition of gillnets for subsistence fishing has severely restricted Federally qualified subsistence users from harvesting fish other than Chinook Salmon. State actions between May 20 and June 12 closed the river and salmon producing tributaries to the use of gillnets, and only dipnets, beach seines, fish wheels, and rod and reel have been allowed so that Chinook Salmon could be live released. Additionally, the State of Alaska provided a few short periods of opportunity for the use of 4 inch or less mesh size gillnets between May 20 and June 12. On June 12, the Federal in-season manager provided one 12-hour fishing opportunity with 6-inch mesh drift gillnets where approximately 5,500 salmon were harvested. However, the river and salmon producing tributaries have been closed to the use of gillnets since that time.

The limited opportunities have prevented Federally qualified subsistence users from harvesting Chum and Sockeye Salmon in large enough numbers to fill smokehouses in June when good drying weather is most likely to occur, as is their custom, or using gillnets to harvest non-salmon fishes such as whitefish, that have been traditionally harvested during summer and in large quantities. Currently there are no conservation concerns for fish other than Chinook Salmon, however, the continuation of subsistence uses of fish other than Chinook Salmon has been severely restricted. Additional opportunity to harvest Chum and Sockeye Salmon and non-salmon fish species is warranted to protect the continuation of subsistence uses of these fish species and ensures the Federal subsistence priority as required by ANILCA Title VIII, Section 804. The Federal manager is maintaining authority on Federal public waters for Chinook Salmon until it is clear that Federal management is no longer necessary for conservation purposes. Allowing limited use of this gear type will provide subsistence opportunity for Chum Salmon, Sockeye salmon and other fish species. While Federally qualified

subsistence users will be allowed to retain Chinook Salmon caught in gillnets during this period, time and gear restrictions are being implemented in order to minimize the number of Chinook Salmon incidentally harvested on Federal public waters.

Currently, the Chum and Sockeye Salmon CPUE at the BTF are at or slightly above average for this date, indicating that increased harvest of these species will not negatively affect their escapement. Provided the Chum/Sockeye to Chinook ratio remains favorable, the Federal in-season manager may be able to provide additional opportunity to harvest these species, after consulting with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while minimizing the harvest of Chinook Salmon.

Test Fisheries:

As of June 25, the cumulative catch per unit of effort (CPUE) of Chinook salmon at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Bethel Test Fishery is 148. Cumulative CPUE on this date during 2016 and 2015 were 378 and 345, respectively.

Cumulative CPUE for chum salmon is at 700. Cumulative CPUE on this date during 2016 and 2015 were 364 and 471, respectively.

Cumulative CPUE for sockeye salmon is at 317. Cumulative CPUE on this date during 2016 and 2015 were 110 and 225, 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

Kuskokwim River Updates Hosted on OSM Website

<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/kuskokwim.cfm>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kuskokwim Area

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

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order link:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=region.R3>

ADF&G Commercial Fisheries News Release and Emergency Order Link:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Interior Alaska:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R3.home>

Statewide ADF&G Fish counts:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/>

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Norton Sound District

Fishing activities are beginning to pick up. The ADF&G has announced that the escapement counting projects in Norton Sound from Golovin Subdistrict south to the Unalakleet Subdistrict are now operational. The Nome Subdistrict escapement counting projects and the Pilgrim River weir are expected to become operational in the coming weeks. The Department thanked Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) for their operation of over half the salmon escapement counting projects in Norton Sound, and for their financial support of salmon counting projects for nearly two decades.

Sport Fishing:

All freshwaters from Bald Head to Point Romanof remain closed to sport fishing for king salmon by Emergency Order issued by the ADF&G Division of Sport Fish. The closure includes, but is not limited to, the Unalakleet, Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Inglutalik and Golsovia River drainages. The EO will remain in effect through August 15, 2017 or until inseason stock assessment indicates that the escapement goal for king salmon will be met on the Unalakleet River.

Nome (Subdistrict 1)

Subsistence Fishing: The Nome Subdistrict was placed on a subsistence salmon gillnet fishing schedule effective June 15. The marine waters east of Cape Nome will continue to be open seven days a week. All Nome subdistrict freshwater subsistence areas and the marine waters west of Cape Nome were opened to gillnet fishing for five days each week from 6 PM Wednesday until 6 PM Monday. This schedule is set by regulation. Beach seining for salmon was opened in all subsistence areas of the Nome subdistrict effective June 15 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 also be used anytime gillnet fishing is open.

Also, effective June 15, all gillnet and beach sein fishing upstream of Boulder Creek on the Sinuk River was closed in order to protect migrating sockeye salmon that hold in the Sinuk River bridge area before reaching the spawning grounds.

Golovin (Subdistrict 2)

Subsistence Fishing: Subsistence fishing is open seven days a week with no mesh size restrictions and gillnets limited to 50 fathoms in length.

Fish River Tower - A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from Fish & Game. No escapement goals have been established. Counting began June 16 which was the earliest date in the 4-year history of the project. The first salmon were counted on that day. The cumulative count to June 20 was 6 kings and 462 chums.

Elim (Subdistrict 3)

Subsistence Fishing: Subsistence fishing is open seven days a week with no mesh size restrictions, and gillnets limited to 50 fathoms in length.

Kwiniuk River Tower – Camp Joel – A Fish & Game project with assistance from NSEDC has escapement goals of 250 kings; 11,500 – 23,000 chums; 8,400 pinks; and 650-1,300 silvers (aerial survey goal). Counting began June 15, which tied for the earliest date ever. The first salmon were counted on that day. The cumulative count to June 20 was 99 chums.

Norton Bay (Subdistrict 4)

Subsistence Fishing: The Koyuk River is open seven days a week. In the marine waters and other fresh waters the schedule is from 6 AM Mondays until 6 PM Tuesdays with gillnets restricted to a mesh size of 6 inches or less, and from 6 AM Saturday until 6 PM Sunday with no mesh size restrictions. Gillnets are limited 50 fathoms in length.

Inglutalik River Tower – A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from ADF&G. No escapement goals have been established. Counting began June 12, the earliest date ever. The first salmon were counted on June 16. The cumulative count to June 20 was 36 kings and 111 chums.

Shaktoolik (Subdistrict 5)

Commercial Fishing: Because of restrictions to subsistence fishing in order to protect king salmon, there can be no commercial gillnet fishing periods until after June 30 by regulation.

Subsistence Fishing: There will be one 36-hour gillnet fishing period per week in the marine waters. The Subdistrict had a 36-hour fishing period from noon Wednesday, June 21 to midnight Thursday evening, June 22. That fishing period applied only to the marine

waters and gillnets were restricted to a mesh size of 6 inches or smaller and 50 fathoms in length. The ADF&G will wait for a favorable weather forecast before announcing another subsistence fishing period next week.

Shaktoolik Tower – A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from Fish & Game has no escapement goals yet established. Counting began June 8, the earliest date ever. The first salmon were counted June on June 10. The cumulative count to June 20 was 63 kings and 273 chums.

Unalakleet (Subdistrict 6)

Commercial Fishing: Because of restrictions to subsistence fishing in order to protect king salmon, there can be no commercial gillnet fishing periods until after June 30 by regulation.

Subsistence Fishing: There will be one 36-hour gillnet fishing period per week in the marine waters. The Subdistrict had a 36-hour fishing period from noon Wednesday, June 21 to midnight Thursday evening, June 22. That fishing period applied only to the marine waters and gillnets were restricted to a mesh size of 6 inches or smaller and 50 fathoms in length. The ADF&G will wait for a favorable weather forecast before announcing another subsistence fishing period next week.

Unalakleet River Floating Weir – a cooperative project of Fish and Game, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC), Native Village of Unalakleet and BLM, with major funding provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management. The weir was operational on the evening of June 8, the earliest in the 8-year history or the project. The first salmon passed through the weir on June 10. The cumulative count to June 20 was 6 kings, 81 chums and 12 pinks.

North River Tower – Camp J.B. - A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from Fish & Game has escapement goals of 1,200-2,600 kings; 25,000 pinks; 550-1,100 silvers (aerial survey); and no goal yet established for chums. The cumulative count to June 20 was 261 chums.

North River Tower – Camp J. B. – A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from ADF&G. Counting began June 14 and the first salmon were counted on June 17. The cumulative count to June 20 was 261 chums.

For Other Eastern Norton Sound and Coastal Waters

All marine waters from the western tip of Cape Denbigh east to Point Dexter, and all marine waters from Black Point south to Wood Point, east of St. Michael were closed to subsistence salmon fishing effective June 8 at midnight. However, subsistence salmon fishing is open seven days a week in all waters from Wood Point west to Point Romanof.

Port Clarence District

Subsistence gillnet and beach seining are open seven days a week. The annual Pilgrim River subsistence catch limit is 25 sockeyes per household to ensure that everyone gets their first taste of the bounty. If the run strength is similar to last year, then the ADF&G will waive the sockeye limit later in the season.

Kotzebue District

Commercial Fishing: The ADF&G plans on opening commercial fishing any time after July 9 when buyers are ready or permit holders are ready to fish and a market is available. The commercial fishing season closes after August 31 by regulation. The ADF&G announced that two to three buyers are expected this season. For the first time since the 1990s, one buyer plans to bring in a floating processor and tender the first week of August.

Kobuk River Test Fish - a Fish and Game project. The project is scheduled to start the third week of July.

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