

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JULY 1-7, 2019. Report #6
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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. Please keep in mind, many of the authors do not have alternates or are deployed in the field on occasion and do not have access to communications to submit a weekly report. 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

Falls Lake - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake operate the Falls Lake trap and video net weir which was operating as of June 26. No Sockeye Salmon have been counted at the trap but that is not unusual because they typically begin entering the lake around July 10. There are Sockeye Salmon being caught in the State subsistence fishery at the outlet of Falls Creek. The final escapement estimate in 2018 was 2,261 Sockeye Salmon while the final subsistence and sport harvest in the marine terminal area was 720. Subsistence harvest accounted for 90% of terminal area harvest.

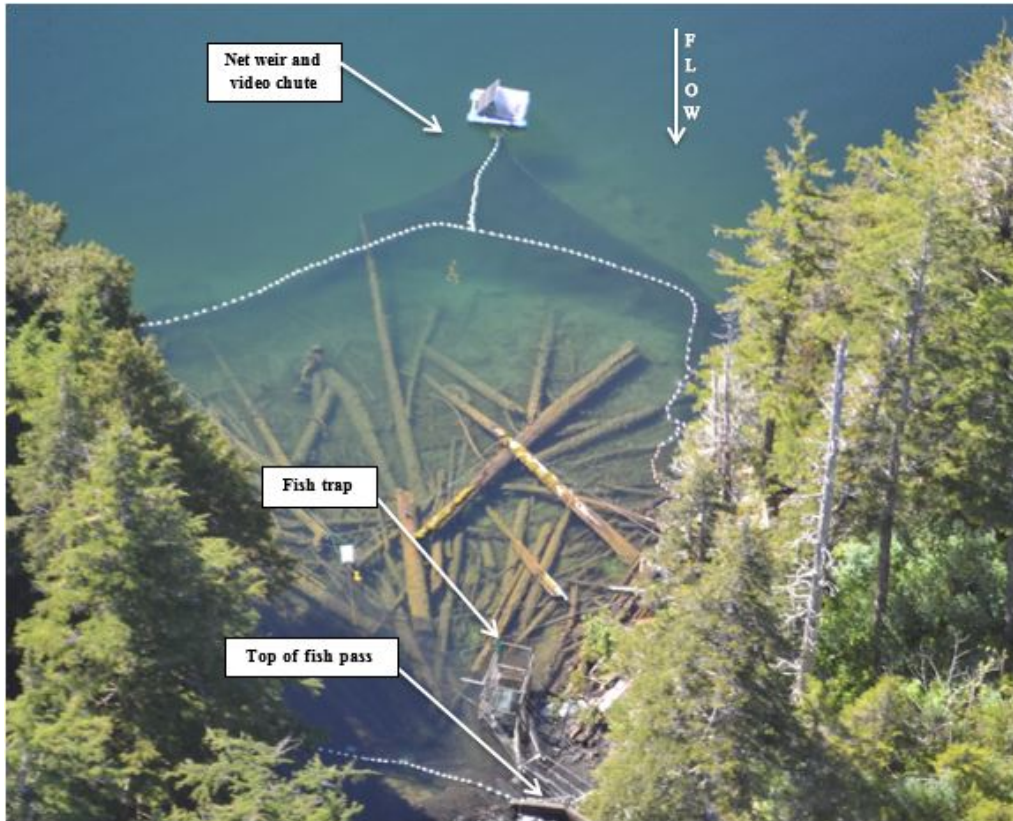


Figure 1. Aerial photo of the Falls Lake outlet illustrating the typical location of weir equipment.

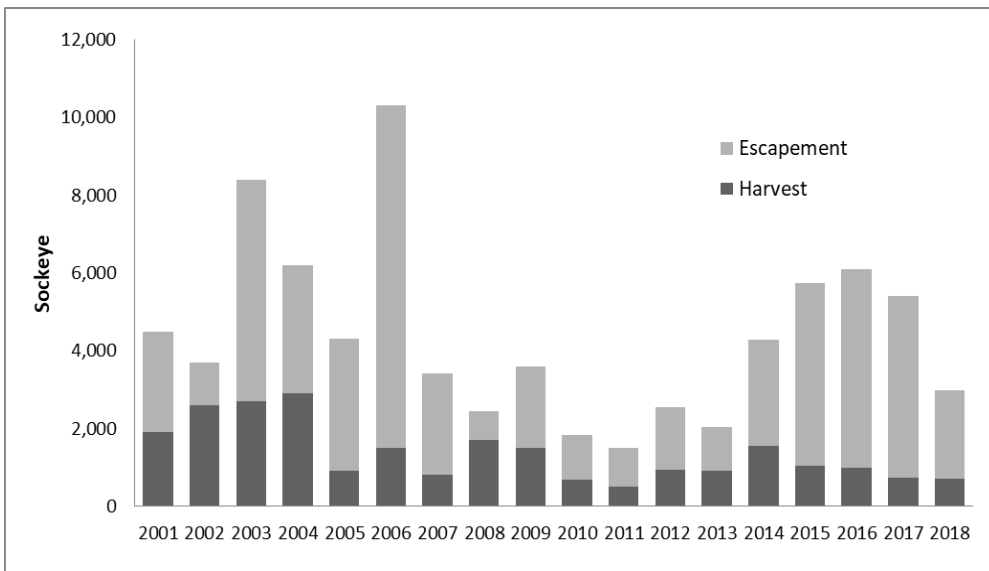


Figure 2. Escapement plus harvest equals total terminal run of Sockeye Salmon at Falls Lake, 2001-2018.

Klag Bay - The Sitka Tribe of Alaska operates the Sockeye Salmon monitoring weir at Klag Bay which was operational the last week in June. No Sockeye Salmon have been counted yet. In 2018, approximately 2,444 sockeye migrated past the weir while an

estimated 1,387 were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fishery. Subsistence harvest accounted for over 99% of terminal area harvest.

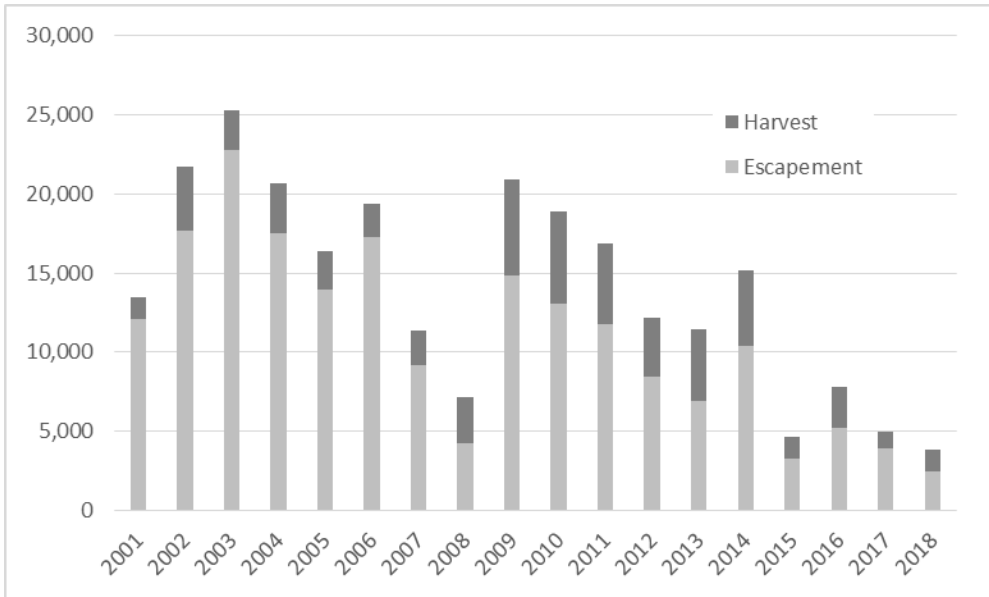


Figure 3. Reported harvest, escapement, and exploitation rate for Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon, 2001-2018.

Redoubt Lake - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which was operational June 15. As of July 7, 9,258 Sockeye Salmon have been counted which is above average. In 2018, an estimated 73,810 Sockeye Salmon passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake. On July 9, 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 95,000 sockeye returning.

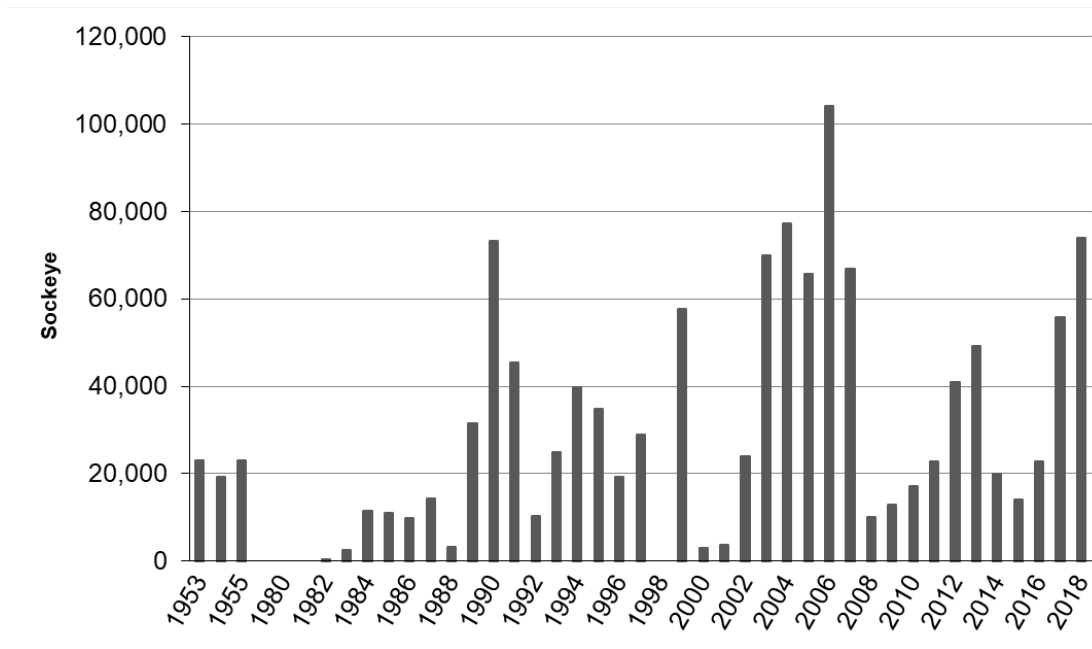


Figure 4. Annual Sockeye Salmon expanded escapement into Redoubt Lake for years with data: 1953 to 1955, 1982 to 1997, and 1999 to 2018. The weir was not operated in 1998.

Gut Bay - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake began monitoring escapement and harvest of Gut Bay Sockeye Salmon this year. Gut Bay is located south of Falls Lake on Baranof Island and is an important source of Sockeye Salmon for the village of Kake. Very little is known about the magnitude of this run. The weirs were installed on June 20 and as of July 7, 159 Sockeye Salmon have been counted. No fish passed the weir last week because the water level is very low.

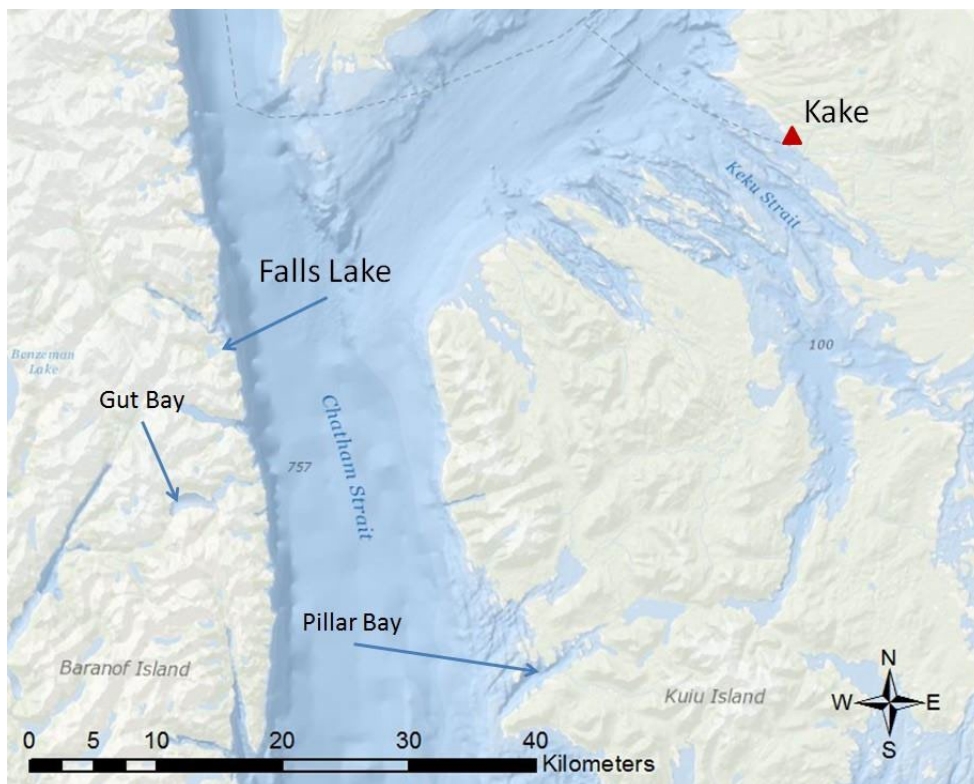


Figure 5. Location of Gut Bay in relation to Falls Lake and the village of Kake

Sitka Sound Pacific Herring – The commercial, subsistence, and spawning season for Pacific Herring in Sitka Sound occurs about mid-March through mid-April. The commercial sac roe herring fishery did not occur in 2018. The guideline harvest level (GHL) was 12,869, however, marketable size fish could not be located in high enough quantity to warrant a fishery. Accounts from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska and other harvesters indicate good quantity and quality of subsistence roe harvest. Miles of shoreline receiving herring spawn indicates the spawning season was about average. However, preliminary estimates of spawn-extent from shore, and deposition are encouraging and may bolster the post spawn biomass population estimate. This estimate will be available this Fall.

[Alaska Department of Fish and Game news release with a synopsis of the commercial season](#)

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

This year's run of Chinook Salmon to the Stikine River is weak, forecasted at 8,250 fish. This forecast is well 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.

Currently, all purse seine and non-terminal harvest area troll fisheries are closed in the area. There was a restricted drift gillnet opportunity in Districts 6 and 8 open from 30 June and scheduled to close 3 July.

The Federal Stikine River Chinook subsistence fishery was closed by the in-season manager. The Sockeye fishery opened on 21 June 2019. There have been 80 fishing permits issued for the Stikine River subsistence salmon fishery. Fishing conditions and weather have been good, and participation continues to be quite high. The catch rates per unit effort have substantially improved. The estimated cumulative subsistence harvest is 420 Sockeye Salmon. An estimated 3 large Chinook were taken and at least 3 subsistence users reported to have released unharmed large Chinook Salmon. So far, no Chum Salmon have been reported, but Pink Salmon is starting to show.

Yakutat, Juneau, and Admiralty areas of Northern Southeast Alaska Forest Service, Tongass National Forest - Jake Musslewhite (907-789-6256; jgmusslewhite@fs.fed.us).
Report not updated this week as author deployed in field.

Yakutat area: Returns of Sockeye and Chinook Salmon to the Situk remain below the ten-year average. The Situk River weir has counted 8,421 Sockeye Salmon and 85 Chinook Salmon as of June 27. The forecast is for a total return of just 300 Chinook Salmon to the Situk, well below the escapement goal of 450-1,050 large fish. Chinook retention is prohibited in both subsistence and commercial fisheries, and all Chinook should be released. Subsistence fishermen are required to monitor their gillnets at all times when fishing for salmon.

Northern Southeast inside waters: Still not much in action in both purse seine and drift gillnet fisheries. The chum salmon return to both Hidden Falls and DIPAC projects appears to be well below expectations. Catches in the initial test fisheries at Point Gardner and Hawk Inlet were also below the ten-year average.

Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon: Crew from the Forest Service and the Hoonah Indian Association (HIA) installed the Neva Lake weir near Excursion Inlet on June 19. This swim-through video weir is remotely monitored and maintained by a HIA crew living in Excursion Inlet. The installation of the weir also kicked off the annual battle between the resident beavers and the crew, with one of the four underwater cameras falling prey to beaver teeth almost immediately. Only one Sockeye Salmon has been counted swimming

through the weir to date. Live video from the weir is available on the internet at <http://216.252.161.242:81/>

Viewers can see underwater views of the video chute, site views from the surveillance cameras, and view recent motion-triggered clips.

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>

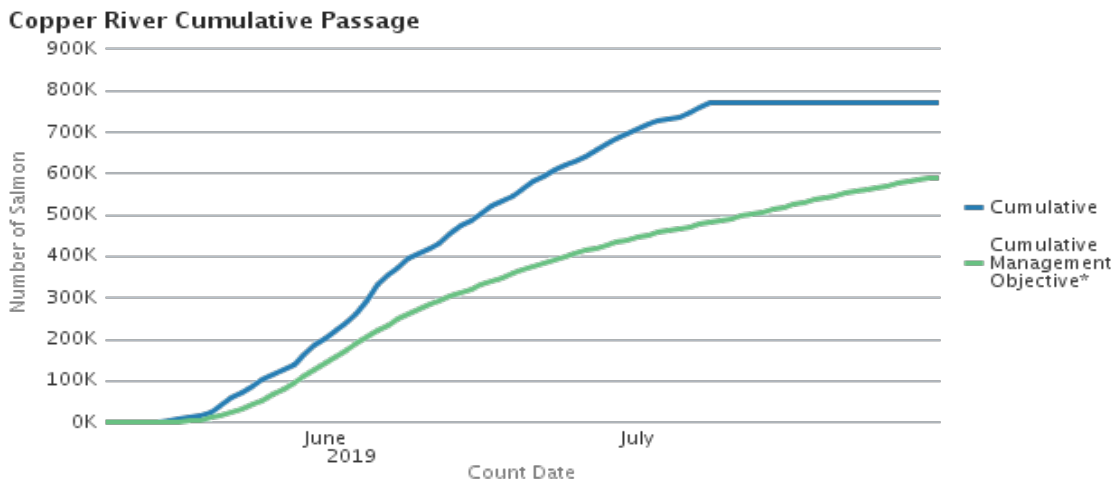
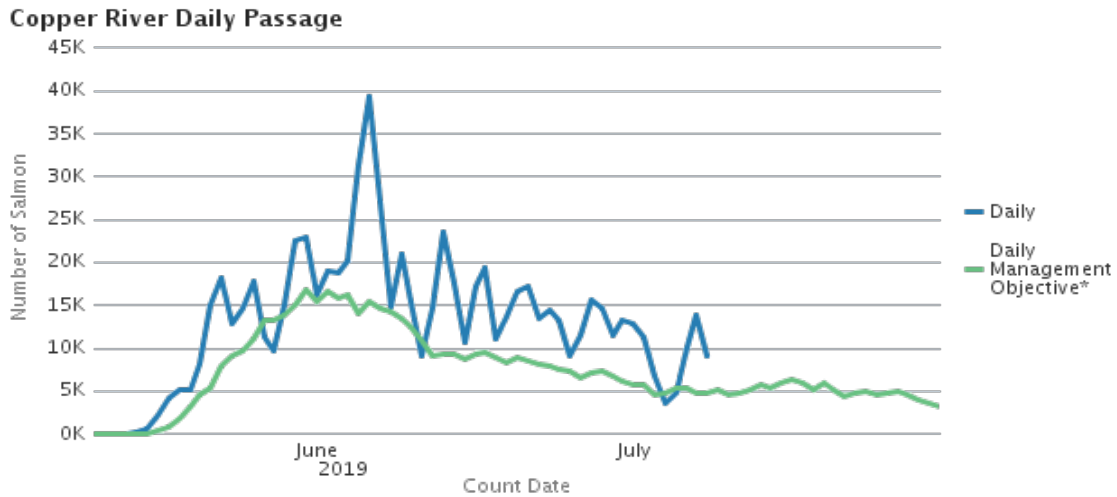
Statewide ADF&G Fish counts
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/>

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND – COPPER RIVER

The ADFG sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) has estimated 769,351 salmon to have migrated upstream for the season through July 7. This estimate exceeds the lower bound of the in-river goal for the season (618,000 to 1.01 million salmon) and is 59% above the projected passage of 482,409 for this date, or 286,942 more salmon. Due to recent high water levels in the Copper River, the sonar located on the north bank ceased operating on July 2. Estimates are still being reported from the south bank sonar, with a daily estimate of 9,159 salmon passing the sonar on July 7.

2019 Upper Copper River Salmon Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through July 7.



Source:

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

The commercial fishery in the Copper River District has opened for 15 fishing periods between May 16 and July 5. Total commercial harvest reported for the season is 1,087,615 Sockeye Salmon and 17,746 Chinook Salmon.

The State subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened on June 1. The State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict opened on June 7 and is currently scheduled to be open through July 14.

The Federal subsistence fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict opened on May 15 and is expected to remain open through September 30. One hundred and sixty-five (165) 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 May 15 and is expected to remain open until September 30. Three hundred and eight (308) 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 Batzulnetas fishery is open. One (1) Federal permit has been issued.

The Native Village of Eyak Baird Canyon fish wheels captured and tagged 4,946 Chinook Salmon through July 1. Due to safety concerns associated with extremely high water level of the Copper River, the project discontinued tagging operations on July 2. The upriver fish wheels at Canyon Creek have captured and examined 2,485 Chinook Salmon through July 6, of which, 286 were recaptured fish that had been tagged at the downstream wheels.

Due to a lack of funding, the fish weirs at Tanada Creek and Long Lake will not be operated this year.

The ADFG counting tower in the Gulkana River was set up for operation on May 31. The reported cumulative passage estimate through July 7 is 6,978 Chinook Salmon.

No Federal Special Actions have been issued by the in-season manager this 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 In-season Commercial Harvest Estimates

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

ADF&G Gulkana River counting tower

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

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 37 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. Ninety-seven permits were issued in 2018 resulting in the reported harvest of 255 coho and 96 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

A total of 329 permits for Cook Inlet Federal subsistence fisheries have been issued to qualified rural residents through July 6. This includes 242 Household Annual permits (KKTCI3), 79 General Subsistence Fishing permits (KKTCI2), and 8 Designated Fisher permits.

The 2019 subsistence dip net fisheries for salmon began on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers June 15 and June 16, respectively. Harvest reported through July 6 in the dip net fishery at Russian River Falls is 978 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 July 6 includes 336 Sockeye Salmon.

Regulatory periods for the Kenai River community gillnet fishery are from July 1 through August 15 and from September 10 – 30. No effort has been reported to date in this fishery.

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 Buskin River sockeye salmon escapement is strong this year with it exceeding the upper escapement goal, 8,671 fish (5,000 to 8,000 escapement goal) as of July 3 2019. An emergency order (#4-FS-K-SUB-02-19) and emergency special action (9-RS-01-19) were issued on June 28 2019, which states that Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service have reduced the fishing area to the stream terminus at the ocean shoreline at the Buskin River. This order came into effect on June 29 and will close on July 31 2019.

The sockeye escapement for the Afognak drainage (Litnik) is also strong with 21,536 fish passing the weir on July 3 2019 and thus within its escapement goal range (20,000 to 50,000 fish).

The Karluk sockeye salmon escapement has been strong with 151,163 fish passing the weir on July 3 2019, and thus being within its escapement goal range (150,000 to 250,000 fish). The Ayakulik River sockeye salmon is not fairing as good with only 101,676 fish passing the weir (escapement goal 140,000 to 280,000 fish). Discussions with villagers from Karluk and Larsen Bay have indicated catch per unit effort for subsistence harvest to be medium to strong.

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

Bristol Bay:

All rivers are projected to meet escapement goals and provide for subsistence fisheries.

Sockeye Salmon escapement counts for the date of July 6 are:

- 24,492 fish on the Alagnak
- 792,996 fish on the Egegik River
- 39,708 fish on the Igushik River
- 60,492 fish on the Kvichak River
- 870,282 fish on the Naknek River
- 473,839 fish on the Nushagak River, 38,850 Chinook Salmon.
- 4,902 fish on the Togiak River
- 33,606 fish on the Ugashik River
- 1,183,008 fish on the Wood River

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opens June 1 by regulation and commercial fishing openings have been announced. The preliminary commercial harvest estimate for July 6 is 19.7 million. As each run develops and Sockeye Salmon run characteristics become defined within individual districts, fishing time will be adjusted accordingly.

Chignik:

The cumulative weir count as of July 7 is 258,924 Sockeye Salmon. The interim escapement goal based on historical run timing for this date is 300,000 to 390,000 fish. Current information indicates that the early run Sockeye Salmon is weak and unlikely to meet the lower end of the biological escapement goal of 350,000 fish. The ADF&G conducts weekly genetic sampling to distinguish early and late run fish, on average July 10 is when the genetic composition between early and late run fish is 50/50.

The Bristol Bay Native Association hosted a teleconference on July 3 to provide a forum for local subsistence users and managers to share information. The teleconference was valuable and included input from Chignik Bay, Chignik Lagoon, and Chignik Lake. Observations from local fisherman noted seeing some fish jumping and that the fish are good quality, but that subsistence fishing was slow. Also reported was that subsistence fisherman are putting away fish earlier than normal because they perceive there will be less Sockeye Salmon caught later due to the high Pink Salmon numbers caught as bycatch in subsistence nets. Federal waters in the Chignik River Management Area remain open to federally qualified users only through July 31.

Chinook Salmon counts enumerated at the ADF&G weir as of July 7 are 439 fish, which is greater than the 2018 count of 184 for the same day in 2018. The mid-point of the Chinook Salmon run is near July 15.

Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands:

There are numerous salmon stocks and fisheries throughout the Alaska Peninsula. Federal waters are primarily located on upper headwater portions of the streams flowing on the North Peninsula, whereas Federal waters on those streams flowing on the South Peninsula are more encompassing within each watershed. Subsistence fisheries in these areas take place in marine environments under State of Alaska subsistence fishing permits. Annual subsistence harvest for all species in all areas is typically around 10,000 fish. On the Alaska Peninsula, the largest fisheries are managed under management plans by the ADF&G. Management objectives vary by district and time. Commercial periods have been scheduled and implemented with the total commercial harvest as of July 7 at 10.7 million fish, with Pink Salmon accounting for 81% of the harvest. The cumulative weir count as of July 7 for the Nelson River was 37,744 Sockeye Salmon and 439 Chinook Salmon, Bear River was 100,271 Sockeye Salmon, Ilnik River was 67,285 Sockeye Salmon, Sandy River was 24,098 Sockeye Salmon, and Orzinski River (south peninsula) was 1,116 Sockeye Salmon. Aleutian Island fisheries are projected to provide for escapement and subsistence harvests.

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.

Gerald_Maschmann@fws.gov or

Fred Bue Fredrick_Bue@fws.gov

Emmonak Summer Office (907) 949-1798

The Emmonak Field Office is closed until fall management activities in mid-July. The management team can be contacted by calling (907) 455-1842.

Summer Season Outlook

Managers have shifted the basis for management decisions from the pre-season outlook to the in-season run projections because of increasing confidence in run assessment data. The Summer Chum Salmon preseason outlook was for an above average run size, large enough to provide for escapement and subsistence uses, with a surplus of up to 1.2 million Summer Chum Salmon for commercial harvest. Last week the Summer Chum Salmon run was coming in well below expectations and had the potential to be similar to the 2000 and 2001 runs, which were the worst runs on record. However, the two largest pulses of Summer Chum Salmon totaling nearly 600,000 fish have passed the sonar this week, pushing the projection to 1.4 million which is below the average of 2.1 million. In less than 5 days, assessment went from necessary Summer Chum Salmon subsistence restrictions to having a possible surplus of over 800,000 fish.

The Chinook Salmon outlook was for a below average run size ranging from 168,000 to 241,000 fish. Last week assessment information indicated that the Chinook Salmon run may be coming in somewhere in between the lower end and midpoint of the pre-season projection, somewhat similar to the 2018 run in both timing and magnitude. A run of this size would have required restrictions to harvest opportunity to meet escapement goals and harvest sharing objectives with Canada. However, the two largest pulses of Chinook Salmon totaling nearly 70,000 fish have passed the sonar this week, pushing the projection to above the average and just below the top end of the preseason outlook. Therefore, subsistence salmon fishing restrictions to Chinook Salmon harvest opportunity are being relaxed.

Assessment Information

Subsistence fishermen in the lower Yukon River report that most have met their Chinook Salmon needs or are nearly done. Many are finishing up their Summer Chum Salmon harvest needs on the recent pulses that have entered the river.

The Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) Chinook Salmon test set net has a cumulative CPUE of 36.88 through July 6, above the average of 23.47. The LYTF Chinook Salmon test drift net has a cumulative CPUE of 389 through July 6, near the average of 390. The cumulative passage of Chinook Salmon past the sonar through July 6 is 201,937 fish, above the average of 165,379 fish. Efforts are being made to release Chinook Salmon alive that are caught in the test fishery in order to conserve Chinook Salmon. The run was tracking very similar to the 2018 run in timing and magnitude through the first half of the season, but is now tracking better than 2018 with a later run timing. At this time, the Chinook Salmon run should be 90% done in the lower river based on average run timing at Pilot Station.

The LYTF Summer Chum Salmon drift net has a cumulative CPUE of 7,221 through July 6, above the median of 6,544. The cumulative passage past the Pilot Station sonar is 1,116,839 Summer Chum salmon, below the median of 1,485,668 fish. The average $\frac{3}{4}$ point for summer chum runs at the sonar is July 5, however, this run appears to be coming in late. At this time, the Summer Chum Salmon run is projecting a total run size near 1.4 million with a potential commercial surplus of 800,000 fish.

Escapement projects on the East Fork Andreafsky River, Gisasa River, and Henshaw Creek are just starting as installation of the weirs were delayed by high water.

Management Actions

Early assessment indicated that the Chinook Salmon run was coming in at the low end of the pre-season forecast and the Summer Chum Salmon were running in low numbers for the first half of the season. Therefore, management actions were consistent with the preseason outlook and management strategies discussed with fishermen at the preseason fishermen's meeting and regulatory management plans. The northern portion of the Coastal District and District 1 has been managed as one district for 2019. Subsistence salmon fishing in Districts 1-3 was first placed on half their regulatory schedule with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear then further restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear. Due to the low assessment of the Chinook Salmon numbers after the average first quarter point in the run, a period was cancelled in Districts 1-3 and an additional canceled period was being considered in Districts 1 and 2. Also at the time, the low numbers of Summer Chum Salmon triggered restrictive management in the South Coastal District to a reduced fishing schedule of 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ days per week; half their normal 7 days per week schedule. Subsistence salmon fishing in District 4, and Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C were placed on half their regulatory schedule for two, 24-hour open periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear consistent with Chinook Salmon migratory timing upriver. One period was canceled in District 4. Subsistence fishing in the Innoko and Koyukuk rivers had been open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week with 7.5-inch or less mesh gillnet and fish wheel gear. The Innoko was scheduled to be restricted to 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ days per week; half their normal 7 days per week schedule with 7.5-inch gillnets and

fishing time in the Koyuku River was expected to be reduced similarly when Summer Chum Salmon begin to reach that portion of the drainage. Lower and Middle Subdistricts 5-D are scheduled to be reduced to half their normal subsistence fishing schedule to 3 ½ days per week, restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear and fish wheels. Subsistence fishing in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B had been placed on a schedule of two, 24-hour periods per week restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear and fish wheels. The Old Minto area has been placed on their normal schedule of 5 days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear and fish wheels. The personal use fishery in Subdistrict 6-C was placed on a schedule of two, 24-hour periods per week restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear.

With the increase in both Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon seen passing the Pilot Station sonar beginning on June 29, managers are beginning to relax subsistence salmon fishing starting in the lower Yukon. The scheduled restrictions to the South Coastal District and the Innoko River were canceled. Districts 1 and 2 were kept on their half schedule of two, 18-hour periods per week, but the gear restrictions were relaxed back to 7.5-inch or less mesh gillnet gear. Districts 3 and 4 and Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B were returned to their normal regulatory windowed schedules, and relaxed back to 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear. Managers will be in discussion in the coming days on when and how to relax subsistence salmon fishing in District 5, where summer season subsistence harvests are made up of mostly Canadian origin Chinook Salmon. In all Yukon Area waters during subsistence salmon fishing closures, gillnets that have mesh size 4-inches or smaller may be used to target non-salmon species.

The Alaska Board of Fish (BOF), in their January 2019 meeting, passed new regulations making dip nets a legal subsistence salmon fishing gear in the Yukon. Subsistence fishermen may use dip nets for salmon during the open subsistence salmon fishing periods. Additionally, the BOF legalized the use of drift gill nets in District 4. Subsistence fishermen in District 4 may use drift gill nets during the open subsistence salmon fishing periods.

With the late surge of Summer Chum Salmon, directed Summer Chum Salmon commercial fishing in Districts 1 and 2 has begun. At this time, the preliminary harvest of Summer Chum Salmon from the first three periods is 72,600 Summer Chum Salmon. 748 Chinook Salmon are estimated to have been harvested and taken home for subsistence purposes.

Consultation

Extensive public outreach and consultation was performed during the fall of 2018 and spring of 2019 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, at the annual Yukon River Drainage Fishermen's Association Board meeting, and at the Yukon River InterTribal Fish Commission annual meeting. On April 24, 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 fifth YRDFA weekly teleconference occurred on July 2. Many District 1 and 2 fishermen reported being done with their Chinook Salmon fishing needs. Some were finished with their chum needs, but others were still fishing for chum. Fishermen in District 3 appear to be close to finishing up their Chinook Salmon needs, but some still need more. District 4 fishermen have reported catching some Chinook salmon but have not yet met their needs. Fishermen in Districts 5 and 6 have reported catching Chinook salmon in low numbers. Some fishermen reported seeing “puss pockets” in their chum salmon. It’s unclear if fishermen are seeing an increase in diseased fish, or if they are just reporting it more this year.

The OSM held a teleconference on June 26 with the three chairs of the YKRAC, WIRAC, and the EIRAC along with several other council members, and staff at the request of the WIRAC Chair. The main concern was the unexpectedly low Summer Chum Salmon run and whether a federal special action was needed to limit fishing on the Yukon to federally qualified users only. Participants were given a brief run assessment update, summary of the management actions taken so far, and potential upcoming actions focused on Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon conservation. A discussion was had on the merits of limiting the Yukon to federally qualified users only. All agreed that the cooperative management scheme was working well and that a special action was not warranted at this time.

KUSKOKWIM RIVER

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

No report submitted for week.

Yukon-Kuskokwim-Interior Alaska Web Links

Federal Subsistence Management Fisheries News Releases:

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

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Yukon–Northern Area

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

NEW = Kuskokwim River Updates Hosted on OSM Website

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

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kuskokwim Area

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Norton Sound District.

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(907) 443-6104 ken_adkisson@nps.gov Eastern Norton Sound Subsistence Fishing: A surge of king salmon at the escapement counting projects this past weekend has allowed the department to project that the king salmon escapement goal will be reached. This has allowed for an expansion of fishing opportunity in the eastern Norton Sound subdistricts as noted below.

Norton Sound District

Commercial Fishing: The department forecast was for a well above average chum salmon run in 2019, but catches so far of been weaker than expected. Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts' first fishing period began on July 1, but weather has slowed fishing effort. In Northern Norton Sound stormier weather has affected the fleet keeping most from fishing for nearly a week.

Sport Fishing: The Division of sport Fish opened all waters of the Unalakleet River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon effective Wednesday, July 3, 2019. Daily escapement counts of king salmon at the North River Tower on the Unalakleet River have increased recently and the midpoint of the Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) of 1,900 fish is projected to be exceeded. According to the subdistricts 5 and 6 of the Norton Sound District and the Unalakleet River King Salmon Management Plan, when the subsistence fishery in the Unalakleet drainage is open to at least two 36-hour periods per week, and the subsistence fishery in the marine waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6 are open to at least two 48-hour per week periods hour per week periods, the sport fishery may be open. The department does not have reliable inseason stock assessment information for the Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Ungalik, Inglutalik, and Golsovia River drainages, and therefore the closure of sport fishing for king salmon and the prohibition of bait in these areas will remain in effect. The prohibition of bait while sport fishing should minimize catch and release mortality for king salmon incidentally caught while sport fishing for other species.

Counting Projects:

High water is continuing to hamper northern Norton Sound escapement counting projects from beginning operations, although the Kwiniuk River tower crew in the Elim Subdistrict was able to get the tower operational on July 2. Both the Eldorado and Bonanza River weirs in the Nome Subdistrict had short-lived operational periods before being knocked out by high water. A combination of a large lingering snowpack and rainy weather is expected to keep most northern Norton Sound projects from being operational for at least another week. The Department will continue using harvest-based management until the escapement counting projects are operational.

Other Coastal Waters (Stebbins and St. Michael)

Subsistence Fishing: The coastal waters are open to subsistence fishing 7 days a week.

Subdistricts 6 (Unalakleet)

Federal Closure: Effective July 1, 2019, the Federal public waters of the Unalakleet River upstream from the Chirosky River were closed by Federal regulation to the taking of Chinook salmon by all users from July 1 to July 31. The BLM field manager is authorized to open the closed area to federally qualified subsistence users or to all users when run strength warrants.

Subsistence Fishing: The regular subsistence fishing schedule in the marine waters is now in effect with no mesh size restrictions and salmon may be taken for two 48-hour fishing periods from 6 PM Mondays until 6 PM Wednesdays and from 6 PM Thursdays until 6 PM Saturdays, Gillnets are restricted to 50 fathoms in aggregate length.

In the Unalakleet River drainage the regular subsistence fishing schedule is now in effect with no mesh size restrictions and salmon may be taken for two 36-hour fishing periods a week from 8 AM Mondays until 8 PM Tuesdays and from 8 AM Fridays until 8 PM Saturdays. Gill nets restricted to 25 fathoms in aggregate length and cannot block more than one half of any channel. All gill nets must be anchored; no drift gillnetting is allowed. King salmon may be kept when beach seining. Beach seine mesh size is restricted to 4 1/2 inches or smaller.

Commercial Fishing: Commercial fishing reopened for 48 hours from 6 PM Monday, July 1 until 6 PM Wednesday, July 3. A second commercial fishing period for the week opened for 48 hours from 6 PM Thursday, July 4 until 6 PM Saturday, July 6. Permit holders were limited to 100 fathoms of net in aggregate length and gill nets a mesh size of 6 inches or smaller.

Unalakleet River Floating Weir — A cooperative project of Fish and Game, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC), Native Village of the Unalakleet and BLM, with major funding provided by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management. Escapement goals for the weir have not yet been established.

The cumulative counts to July 3 are 3,900 kings, 7,000 chums, 11 sockeyes and 43,000 pinks.*

*Picket spacing at the Unalakleet weir allows most pinks to pass through without being counted.

North River Tower — Camp J. B. — A Cooperative Project of NSEDC with assistance from ADF&G. The project 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 counts to July 3 are 1,000 kings, 1,000 chums and 57,000 pinks.

Subdistrict 5 (Shaktoolik)

Subsistence Fishing: The regular subsistence fishing schedule in the marine waters is now in effect with no mesh restrictions for gill nets and salmon may be taken for two 48-hour fishing periods a week from 6 PM Mondays until 6 PM Wednesdays and from 6 PM Thursdays until 6 PM Saturdays.

Subsistence fishing in the fresh waters is open 7 days a week. Gill nets are restricted to 50 fathoms in aggregate length and cannot block more than one-half of any channel. King salmon may be kept when beach seining. Beach seine mesh size is restricted to 4 ½ inches or smaller.

Commercial Fishing: Commercial fishing reopened for 48 hours from 6 PM Monday, July 1 until 6 PM Wednesday, July 3. A second commercial fishing period for the week opened for 48 hours from 6 PM Thursday, July 4 until 6 PM Saturday, July 6. Permit holders were limited to 100 fathoms of net in aggregate length and gill nets a mesh size of 6 inches or smaller.

Shaktoolik Sonar/Tower – A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from Fish & Game has no escapement goals established. The sonar crew has begun operations. The cumulative counts to July 3 are 1,900 kings, 2,900 chums and 69,000 pinks.

Subdistrict 4 (Norton Bay)

Subsistence Fishing: Subsistence fishing is open 7 days a week. There are no gillnet mesh size restrictions, and king salmon may be kept when beach seining. Gillnets are restricted to 50 fathoms in aggregate length and cannot block more than one-half of any channel.

Commercial Fishing: Commercial fishing reopened for 48 hours from 6 PM Monday, July 1 until 6 PM Wednesday, July 3. A second commercial fishing period for the week opened for 48 hours from 6 PM Thursday, July 4 until 6 PM Saturday, July 6. Permit holders were limited to 100 fathoms of net in aggregate length and gill nets a mesh size of 6 inches or smaller.

Inglutalik River Tower – A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from ADF&G. No escapement goals have been established. The cumulative counts to July 3 are 100 kings, 1,200 chums and 300 pinks.

Subdistrict 3 (Elim)

Subsistence Fishing: A subsistence salmon fishing permit is required for fishing in State managed waters. Catch limits are listed on the back of the permit for the rivers that have catch limits. Other than the possibility of inseason king salmon restrictions, no other restrictions are expected,

Commercial Fishing: Commercial fishing reopened for 48 hours from 6 PM Monday, July 1 until 6 PM Wednesday, July 3. A second commercial fishing period for the week opened for 48 hours from 6 PM Thursday, July 4 until 6 PM Saturday, July 6. Permit holders were limited to 100 fathoms of net in aggregate length and gill nets a mesh size of 6 inches or smaller.

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). The cumulative count to July 3 is 100 chums.

Subdistrict 2 (Golovin)

Subsistence Fishing: A subsistence salmon fishing permit is required in State managed waters. Catch limits are listed on the back of the permit for the rivers that have catch limits. No other restrictions in subsistence fishing are expected.

Commercial Fishing: The recent 24-hour fishing period (June 28-29) had a catch of 2,781 chums, 277 pinks and 8 sockeyes by 13 permit holders. The chum catch was above average. Commercial fishing reopened for 48 hours from 6 PM Monday, July 1 until 6 PM Wednesday, July 3. A second commercial fishing period for the week opened for 48 hours from 6 PM Thursday, July 4 until 6 PM Saturday, July 6. Permit holders were limited to 100 fathoms of net in aggregate length and gill nets a mesh size of 6 inches or smaller.

Subdistrict 1 (Nome)

Subsistence Fishing: Subsistence salmon fishing permits are required, and stream specific harvest limits are listed on the permit. These include: Cripple River - no chum catch allowed; Penny River - no chum catch allowed; Nome River - 100 coho per household; Salmon River - 40 chum per household and 20 coho per household. There are no catch limits in the marine waters.

Effective June 15, the Nome Subdistrict was placed on a subsistence salmon fishing schedule of from 6 PM Wednesday until 6 PM Monday for the marine and fresh waters, except that the marine waters east off Cape Nome will remain open 7 days a week.

Commercial Fishing: A commercial salmon fishing period opened for 72 hours from 9 PM Thursday, July 4 until 9 PM Sunday, July 7.

Bonanza River Weir – A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from Fish & Game. No escapement goals have yet been established. The department did get the weir operational this past Saturday, but with continuing high water and more rain, it too was short lived.

Eldorado River Weir – A cooperative project of NSEDC with assistance from Fish & Game has an escapement goal of 6,000 – 9,200 chum salmon. The weir was operational for less than a day before high water required it to be pulled.

Port Clarence District

Subsistence Fishing: Gillnet and beach seining are open seven days a week. Subsistence salmon fishing permits are required for the Port Clarence District, Pilgrim River drainage and Salmon Lake. Catch limits are listed on the subsistence permits. These are: Pilgrim River - 3 king salmon per household and 25 sockeye salmon per household; Salmon Lake - open by emergency order only - 200 sockeye salmon per household.

Commercial Fishing: 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 in the Pilgrim River being expected to be reached.

Kotzebue District

ADF&G issued a reminder to all subsistence and commercial fishers that the area offshore or the Kotzebue airport's main runway to one mile out in the ocean is closed to all commercial and subsistence fishing. Fishing boats and other marine vessels may still transit through the closed fishing area, but no fishing gear can be in the water within the closed area. The reason for the closure is that fishing often attracts birds that can create a hazardous situation for aircraft arriving at or departing from Kotzebue. The closure will remain in effect until mid-October.

Subsistence Fishing: No other subsistence fishing restrictions are expected in 2019.

Commercial Fishing: Commercial fishing is scheduled to begin July 10 and both major buyers from last year have notified the department that they will return this season.

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