

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF AUGUST 21-27, 2023. Report #14
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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

Yakutat Susan Oehlers, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, (907)784-3359; susan.oehlers@usda.gov

· No Report

Juneau

Jake Musslewhite, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, (907)789-6256, Jacob.g.musslewhite@usda.gov

· Salmon fisheries - Sockeye fisheries in most areas have wound down, and escapements through the region are favorable. The Pink Salmon return is coming in well above the weak preseason expectations – the forecast was for a commercial harvest of 19 million fish, and now looks like it may exceed 50 million fish, limited mainly by processor capacity. Coho have begun moving into inside waters, and anecdotal reports are favorable.

· Neva Lake – The Neva Lake weir was installed on June 21, and is a cooperative project between the Hoonah Indian Association and the Forest Service. The weir is used to monitor Sockeye Salmon returns to Neva Lake. Harvesters are reminded that only Federally qualified subsistence users may harvest Sockeye from fresh water in the Neva/South Creek system. The harvest limit at Neva was increased from 10 to 20 Sockeye per household this year, and increased effort and harvest has been reported.



Figure 1. Video capture of an otter swimming through the Neva Lake weir.

Sheet'ká and Xunaa (Sitka and Hoonah) Area Ashley Bolwerk, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, (907)747-4299; ashley.bolwerk@usda.gov

- Chaas' Geeyí (Klag Bay) - The Sitka Tribe of Alaska operates the Sockeye Salmon monitoring weir at Klag Bay which counts Sockeye entering Klag Lake and conducts on-site creel surveys of harvesters. The weir was operational as of June 25. As of August 27, 6,653 Sockeye have entered the lake, and 1,523 have been harvested. August 05, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game closed the state subsistence and sport Sockeye Salmon fishery at Klag Bay. In 2022,

approximately 2,029 Sockeye migrated past the weir while an estimated 1,960 were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fishery. Subsistence harvest accounted for approximately 99% of terminal area harvest.

- Kunáa Shak.áayi (Redoubt Lake) - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which was operational beginning June 12. As of August 26, 148,046 Sockeye Salmon had entered the lake. This year has already surpassed the annual escapement for all other years on record (40+ seasons). On June 28, the Alaska Department of Fish and game announced a liberalization of the state personal use and subsistence fishery at Redoubt which took affect on July 1. This emergency order changed the Sockeye Salmon limit, in the state subsistence fisheries, to 25 Sockeye Salmon per household with an annual limit of 100 Sockeye Salmon per household. On July 7, an Emergency Special Action was authorized through the Federal Subsistence Program, which increased the daily limit for qualified federal subsistence users to 50 Sockeye per household with no annual limit. A separate Federal Subsistence fishing

permit, which can be acquired at the Forest Service office in Sitka, is required to participate in this opportunity.

In 2022, an estimated 90,005 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. Preliminary personal use/subsistence harvest records indicate that 5,850 Sockeye Salmon were harvested from the Redoubt system under 246 subsistence/personal use permits. Approximately 5,549 Sockeye Salmon were harvested in Sitka Sound commercial fishery openings throughout the season. Most of these Sockeye are probably of Redoubt origin.



Figure 2. Weir technicians pass fish on a gorgeous sunny day at the Redoubt Lake weir.

Admiralty

Jake Musslewhite, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, (907)789-6256,
Jacob.g.musslewhite@usda.gov

· Sitkoh Lake - The Sitkoh Lake weir is a cooperative project between the USFS and the Angoon Community Association (ACA). The weir was installed

on July 12. The swim-through video weir records Sockeye and other fish as they enter the lake. A Forest Service crew recently began testing a Starlink system to connect the weir to the internet for remote monitoring (Figure 3).



Figure 3. SCA intern Chaney Haavik (left) and USFS fisheries technician Juliet Harrison in front of the newly installed Starlink system at the Sitkoh Lake weir.

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kevin.kocarek@usda.gov

No report

Prince of Wales

- Hetta Lake – The Hydaburg Cooperative Association staff have passed 8,894 Sockeye Salmon so far. Recent rain and increased flow have likely contributed to the increased number of Sockeye Salmon passing the weir.
- Eek Lake – The Hydaburg Cooperative Association staff have passed 463 Sockeye Salmon so far.

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

Copper River, 8/28/2023 Update – Dave Sarafin, Copper River Federal Fisheries Management Biologist, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), (907) 822-7281, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

With funding through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP), WRST is operating the Tanada Creek salmon weir located at Batzulnetas. On Saturday August 26, the project and crew were pleased to host a visit by National Park Service Director Chuck Sams, Regional Director Sarah Creachbaum, and staff. During the visit, the weir crew delivered a presentation that described the project and its importance to management, the park, and local stakeholders.



NPS Director Sams and Regional Director Creachbaum visit Tanada Creek Salmon Weir and Crew, August 26, 2023

As of August 25, preliminary count estimates are of 5,878 Sockeye Salmon and 8 Chinook Salmon passing the weir. Through this date of the season, the count of salmon passing the weir is well below average.

The ADFG sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) estimated the passage of 991,740 salmon migrating upstream for the season (note: revised preliminary estimate from ADFG website), with the seasonal operation ending on July 28. The cumulative

passage is 71% above the management objective of 581,172 salmon for this date of the season.

In-river assessments indicate that the sustainable escapement goal for Copper River Sockeye Salmon should be achieved. Salmon harvest has been reported throughout the river.

Assessments by ADFG of in-river Chinook Salmon project an abundance that could exceed the sustainable escapement goal range of 21,000 to 31,000 fish.

No Federal Special Actions have been issued by the in-season manager this season.

The State subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened June 1 and is scheduled to remain open through September 30. The State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict is scheduled to remain open for the remainder of the season.

The Federal subsistence fisheries in the Chitina Subdistrict, the Glennallen Subdistrict, and the Batzulnetas vicinity are open May 15 through September 30. Records of the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Federal subsistence permit website indicate that 201 Chitina Subdistrict, 290 Glennallen Subdistrict, and 2 Batzulnetas permits have been issued to date.

The Federal subsistence salmon fishery in the Lower Copper River near Cordova is open from June 1 through September 30. To date, there have been 70 permits issued through the OSM database. A total of 176 Sockeye Salmon and 4 Chinook Salmon have been reported in harvest, with no harvest reported since July 29.

Links:

ADFG Miles Lake daily sonar estimates

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

ADFG Copper River Inseason Commercial Harvest Estimates

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

ADFG Sport Fish Emergency Orders and News Releases

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=main.home>

PWS, Copper River Delta, Chugach – Dr. Andrew Sanders, Chugach National Forest, Cordova. July 7, 2023 Contact – (907) 250-0439 or Andrew.sanders@usda.gov

OSM fisheries update August 28th, 2023

Chugach NF PWZ

Prince William Sound / Copper River Delta: The lower Copper River dipnet fishery opened on June 1st. As of Friday morning August 28th, 70 permits had been issued, and users reported a cumulative harvest of 176 Sockeye Salmon and 4 Chinook Salmon. The Copper River Highway is accessible to 36 Mile. For more information about conditions in the Copper River and the commercial drift gillnet fishery, please see the Prince William Sound – Copper River weekly update which can also be found in this report.

Water levels in areas streams have been high and flashy over the last week as storm systems have moved through. Coho Salmon are running and anglers have been successful in multiple Eastern Prince William Sound streams including Ibeck Creek and the Eyak River, when water levels have been low enough to fish. Angler pressure is moderate, with vehicles consistently seen parked at the Ibeck Creek bridge. As of August 21st, 83 permits have been issued for the subsistence fishery consisting of the freshwaters outside of the Copper River Drainage within the Chugach National Forest.

The Forest Service began safety patrols at Ibeck Creek last week to monitor conditions and to provide information on Federal subsistence regulations and bear safety. Anglers are asked to pack out their fish whole and process them at the cleaning stations in town (located at the city harbor and out Orca Road). Anglers are also asked to keep their stringers immediately next to them, and to utilize bear spray to defend their fish if approached by a bear.

For further information about the federal subsistence fishery in the Lower Copper River, users can contact the US Forest Service Cordova District office by calling 907-424-7661 or Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve staff -- Dave Sarafin at 907-822-7281 or Barbara Cellarius at 907-822-7236.

Updates regarding changes affecting the Federal subsistence fisheries in the Copper River are available by calling the Wrangell-St. Elias Visitor Center at 907-822-7250. More information regarding the federal subsistence fisheries in the remainder of the Copper River Delta area and Prince William Sound can be obtained by contacting the Chugach National Forest Subsistence Staff – Andrew Sanders at 907-424-475

COOK INLET AREA – Kenneth Gates, Senior Fish Biologist, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

No summary submitted this reporting period.

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) 487-2600/0230 michael_brady@fws.gov or
Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230 Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov

Subsistence fishing has been completed for the 2023 season. This will be the final report from the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. The Olga Bay area continues to be utilized by subsistence users during non-commercial fishing openings. It has been reported that villagers from Ahkiok have been traveling to the mouth of Olga Creek (Upper Station) to harvest salmon.

Any additional information that will be received will be forwarded to the subsistence office.

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF August 28, 2023.

BRISTOL BAY, CHIGNIK, ALASKA PENINSULA, and ALEUTIAN ISLANDS – Jonathon Gerken Fisheries Branch Chief Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office

No summary submitted for this reporting period.

Yukon River –USFWS Fairbanks Office. August 21-27, 2023
Federal Manager, Holly Carroll (907) 351-3029, holly_carroll@fws.gov

Assessment and Management Information

The fall season is nearing the three-quarter point of the historical fall chum run in the lower river. The Canadian-origin component of the fall chum run has been poor the last few years, so the run may not be large enough to meet escapement goals for the Canadian stocks of fall chum. At this time, closures to retention of chum salmon are already in place in Districts 1 through 5 and are announced for the Tanana River Drainage (District 6). Closures will be necessary until it is projected that all escapement goals will be met for fall chum salmon. Throughout the drainage, Chinook salmon still need to be released, but, pink, coho and sockeye salmon can be retained from selective gears. Gillnets are still limited to 4-inches maximum mesh size, and 60 feet maximum length. Selective gear salmon fishing opportunities in fall season are limited to federally qualified users in federal public waters by Temporary special action, and fishing closures for fall chum salmon are announced for the Coastal District and Districts 1-3 here: [TSA-02-FC-01-23](#); and for District 4 here: [TSA-02-FC-02-23](#); and for District 5-ABC here: [TSA-02-FC-03-23](#); and for District 6 here: [TSA-02-FC-04-23](#)

Eagle sonar is nearly done counting passage of Chinook. The test fishery will confirm when there are more fall chum than Chinook salmon and that is when the project will officially switch over. Chinook passage is somewhat higher than what escaped over the border last year, but are still well below the previous Interim Management Escapement Goal of 42,500-55,000. **It is imperative that all Chinook be released alive from selective gear.**

The final YRDFA weekly teleconference for the season is Tuesday, August 29 at 1:00 pm at the following number: 1-800-315-6338, Passcode: 98566#.

This week's Advisory Announcements co-authored by ADF&G and USFWS and distributed by ADF&G were:

- **Yukon River Fall Assessment Update #5:**
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1533197732.pdf>

Where to Find Yukon Fishery Information:

To hear the fishing schedule and fish counts please call the toll-free Fishing Schedule and Fish Counts hotline: 866-479-7387.

Recent Fishery special actions are posted here:

<https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/fisheries-special-actions>

For Federal News Releases and Special actions, like www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

For detailed information on management actions and weekly assessment updates, subscribe to ADF&G advisory announcements at

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

For daily counts and State Advisory announcements like the ADF&G Yukon River Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG/

If you'd like to receive emails and notifications on the Federal Subsistence Management Program you may subscribe for regular updates by emailing fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov

In Season Manager – Boyd Blihovde, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Boyd_Blihovde@fws.gov; Contact Spencer Reardon (907)543-1023 or spencer_reardon@fws.gov

Reporting complete for the 2023 season, please contact author if you have questions.

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

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF AUGUST 20 - AUGUST 26, 2023.
REPORT #14**Norton Sound District**

The focus of fisheries management in the district is shifting to coho salmon.

In the Norton Sound District, Subdistrict 1 (Nome), will open for one 24-hour period from 9:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 23, until 9:00 p.m. Thursday, August 24, with gillnet mesh size restricted to 6 inches or smaller. Commercial salmon fishing will be open for 24 hours in Golovin (Subdistrict 2), Norton Bay (Subdistrict 4), Shaktoolik (Subdistrict 5), and Unalakleet (Subdistrict 6) from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 23, until 6:00 p.m. Thursday, August 24, with gillnet mesh size restricted to 6 inches or smaller. King salmon caught during this opening in Subdistricts 5 and 6 may be retained for personal use but may not be sold. Any king salmon retained must be reported on a fish ticket at the time of delivery. Subdistrict 2, the Elim Subdistrict, will open to commercial fishing for 48 hours from 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 22, through 6:00 p.m. Thursday, August 24, with gillnets restricted to 6 inches or less. Norton Sound district coho salmon escapements are currently 10-40% complete based on their historical run timing and these short openers will be used to gauge if additional commercial fishing periods are warranted.

Shaktoolik (5) and Unalakleet (6) Subdistricts**Subsistence Fishing:**

The Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts are open to subsistence fishing in the marine and fresh waters. to provide opportunity for subsistence fishermen to harvest coho salmon. The department relaxed restrictions after over 90 percent of the king and chum salmon runs were no longer susceptible to harvest. An aerial survey of the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet River drainages indicated that returns in the waters of those systems re poor and well behind historical averages.

Commercial Fishing:

The Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts reopened to commercial fishing for one24-hour period from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 23 to gauge the strength of the coho runs in those districts. The total commercial harvest is 1,000 chum, 1,600 coho, 70 sockeye and 2,730 pink salmon.

Unalakleet River Floating Weir - No escapement goals yet established. A cooperative project of Fish & Game, Native Village of Unalakleet, BLM and NSEDC; major funding provided by USFWS, Office of Subsistence Management. The weir was fish tight on July 1. The cumulative counts passed through are 40 kings, 13,400 chums, 4,600 cohos, 7,200 pinks and 160 sockeyes, Rains the river to rise to such an extent that counting operations

were suspended Monday, July 10 and resumed July 20. The department ceased operations and removed the weir on August 16.

North River Tower Camp J. B. - Escapement goals: king 1,200 to 2,600, chum no goal established, pink 25,000, silver 550-1,100 (aerial survey goal), A NSEDC project. The tower has been operational since June 24 and has remained operational most of the season with the exception with a few days missed due to high, murky water. The tower has passed 480 king, 600 chum, 600 coho and 11,200 pink salmon.

Shaktoolik Tower – No escapement goals yet established, A NSEDC project. The tower began operations on June 26 and has passed an estimated 780 king, 4,100 chum, 21,300 pink and 50 sockeye salmon. The tower was inoperable from July 10 through July 30. High, murky water caused the project to shut down again on August 20.

NORTON Bay Subdistrict (4)

Subsistence Fishing:

There are currently no restrictions to Subsistence fishing.

Commercial Fishing:

The Subdistrict opened to commercial fishing for one 48-hour opening concurrently with Nome, Golovin and Elim in order to assess whether the run strength might warrant additional opening. The harvest is confidential.

Inglutalik River Tower - no escapement goals yet established. A NSEDC project. The project became operational on June 28. Estimated passages are 200 king, 1,800 chum and 200 pink salmon. High water closed operations July 10.

Ungalik River Tower - no escapement goals established yet. A NSEDC project. The tower became operational on June 28. Estimated passage is 70 king, 4,000 chum, 370 coho and 15,400 pink salmon. Tower operations have been sporadic throughout the season and high, murky water halted operations on August 11.

Elim Subdistrict (3)

Kwiniuk River Tower-Camp Joel - escapement goals: king 250, chum 9,100-32,600, pink 8,400, silver 650-1,300 (aerial survey goal). Fish and Game project. The tower became operational July 5. Current escapements for the project are 18 king, 3,600 chum, 18,700 pink, 5,000 coho and 18 sockeye salmon.

Subsistence Fishing:

Subsistence fishing is allowed 7 days per week.

Commercial Fishing:

Coho escapement at the Kwiniuk Tower has been robust and has met the escarpment objectives with a surplus available for commercial harvest. A commercial period was opened for 48 hours in the marine waters of the subunit so the department scheduled one 48-hour commercial period at 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 22 to 6:00 p.m. Thursday, August 24 to gauge run strength in the marine waters of Subdistrict 3.

The total commercial harvest in the subdistrict is 1,100 chum, 500 coho, 30 sockeye, and 20 pink salmon.

Golovin Subdistrict (2)

Niukluk River Tower – NSEDC Project. The project became operational July 25 and passage has been 63 king, 6,000 chum, 700 coho, and 5,700 pink salmon. The tower has experienced several missed days of passage due to water conditions since the tower began counting operations and is currently inoperable due to high, murky waters. NSEDC plans on pulling the tower when water levels allow.

The Golovin Subdistrict transitioned to management based on coho.

Subsistence Fishing:

Subsistence fishing is allowed 7 days per week.

Commercial Fishing:

Based on the most recent commercial opening, one 24-hour commercial opening with mesh size restricted to 6 inches or less was provided beginning at 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 23. This opening will be used to gauge run strength in order to determine if additional openings are warranted. The cumulative harvest is 11,300 chum, 160 sockeye, 460 coho and 350 pink salmon.

Nome Subdistrict (1)

The Nome Subdistrict has transitioned to coho management.

Subsistence Fishing:

The Nome Subdistrict remains on a subsistence fishing schedule in the fresh waters on a weekly basis from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays to 6:00 p.m. 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 6:00 p.m. Mondays. Marine waters of the Nome Subdistrict are currently open to subsistence net fishing 7 days per week. Additionally, beach seining closed effective at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, August 15, and beach seines are no longer a legal subsistence gear type in the Nome Subdistrict.

Commercial Fishing:

Subdistrict 1 (Nome) opened for one 24-hour commercial period starting at 9:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 23 with a mesh size of restricted to 6 inches or less. The department is using that opening to gauge the run strength to determine if additional commercial fishing periods are warranted.

Eldorado River Weir -escapement goals-chum 4,400-14,200. A NSEDC project. The weir was fish tight the evening of June 30. Escapement has passed 10 kings, 8,000 chum, 20 sockeye, 5 coho and 500 pink salmon. The project has met and escapement goals for chum salmon and ceased operations on June 26.

Nome River Weir – ADF&G Project. Water conditions finally allowed the installation of the weir on July 28 and current escapements are 1 king, 1,400 chum, 140 coho and 2,700 pink salmon.

Snake River Weir – NSEDC Project. The weir started counting on July 24 and current escapements are 2 king, 1,200 chum, 90 coho and 3,400 pink salmon.

Port Clarence District

Pilgrim River Weir – A NSEDC project. The weir has been fish tight since July 6. Passage has been slow with 12 king, 7,000 chum, 1,600 sockeyes and 670 pink salmon passed the weir. Weir operations concluded for the season on August 16, Sockeye salmon did not reach the escapement goal in 2023,

Subsistence Fishing:

The Pilgrim River will remain closed to subsistence net fishing for the season.

Commercial Fishing:

No commercial fishing periods have been allowed due to lack of market interest and the Pilgrim River weir not reaching its escapement goal.

Kotzebue District

Subsistence Fishing:

No changes to existing subsistence fishing are anticipated.

Commercial Fishing:

Commercial salmon fishing opened for 8 hours daily from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday, August 21, through Friday, August 25, in the Kotzebue Sound District. In Subdistrict 1 of the Kotzebue District, marine waters adjacent to the end of the runway from the Weather Service Dome south of the main runway to the NANA building north of the main runway

and extending one mile offshore into Kotzebue Sound perpendicular to the beach remains closed to both subsistence and commercial fishing in order to avoid birds being attracted to fishing nets near the end of the airport runway and becoming a safety hazard.