

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 1-6, 2021. Report #2
Compiled by George Pappas - (907) 317-2165, George_Pappas@fws.gov Office of
Subsistence Management, USFWS.

The purpose of the weekly fisheries update is to provide the reader with an overall summary of the status of subsistence related fisheries throughout the state of Alaska. The target audience is the Federal Subsistence Board and its Staff Committee. The report was compiled with the assistance of the Federal in-season managers and OSM staff that provided weekly updated information by the close of business on Friday of the reporting week. My goal is to have the report sent by the close of business the following Monday. Web links have been included to provide additional information. You may obtain additional information on a fishery of particular interest by contacting the in-season manager, provided contacts, follow the provided web links, or contact me.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA

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

First weekly report will be in mid-June.

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

First weekly report will be in mid-June.

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

First weekly report will be in mid-June.

Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area – TBA, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest. (907) 826-1649

First weekly report will be in mid-June.

Southeast Alaska Web Links

Tongass National Forest News Room <http://www.fs.usda.gov/news/tongass/news-events>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Southeastern Alaska Area
http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Southeast.pdf

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order Link
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=region.R1>

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

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Southeast Alaska
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R1.home>

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

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND – COPPER RIVER

Copper River, 6/7/2021 Update – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), (907) 822-7281, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

In January of 2021, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) provided preseason forecasts of 37,000 Copper River Chinook Salmon and 1,296,000 wild stock Copper River Sockeye Salmon. Relative to recent 10-year averages, these forecasts are 22% below average for Chinook Salmon and 37% below average for Sockeye Salmon. In early May, Federal and State fisheries managers met to discuss this forecast, anticipated early season management strategies, and plans for maintaining communications with local stakeholders regarding the run strength assessments and management actions throughout the season.

The commercial fishery in the Copper River District has been limited in response to low numbers of returning salmon. Three 12-hour open commercial fishing periods occurred during the month of May and has remained closed since May 24. The ADFG has reported the cumulative commercial harvest to be the 3rd lowest harvest to date in the last 50 years. Commercial total season harvest for the Copper River District is 52,752 Sockeye Salmon and 5,259 Chinook Salmon.

The ADFG sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) began limited operation of only the North Bank sonar on May 12. Salmon passage was first recorded on May 19. Due to risk of damage to equipment associated with prolonged ice conditions in the lower Copper River, the South Bank sonar was not in operation until May 26. After a relatively slow start, sonar passage rates have improved substantially over the last few days. As of June 6, 155,847 salmon have been estimated migrating upstream for the season. This estimate is 71% of the cumulative management objective of 219,580 for this date. A daily estimate of 21,200 salmon migrated by the sonar on June 6.

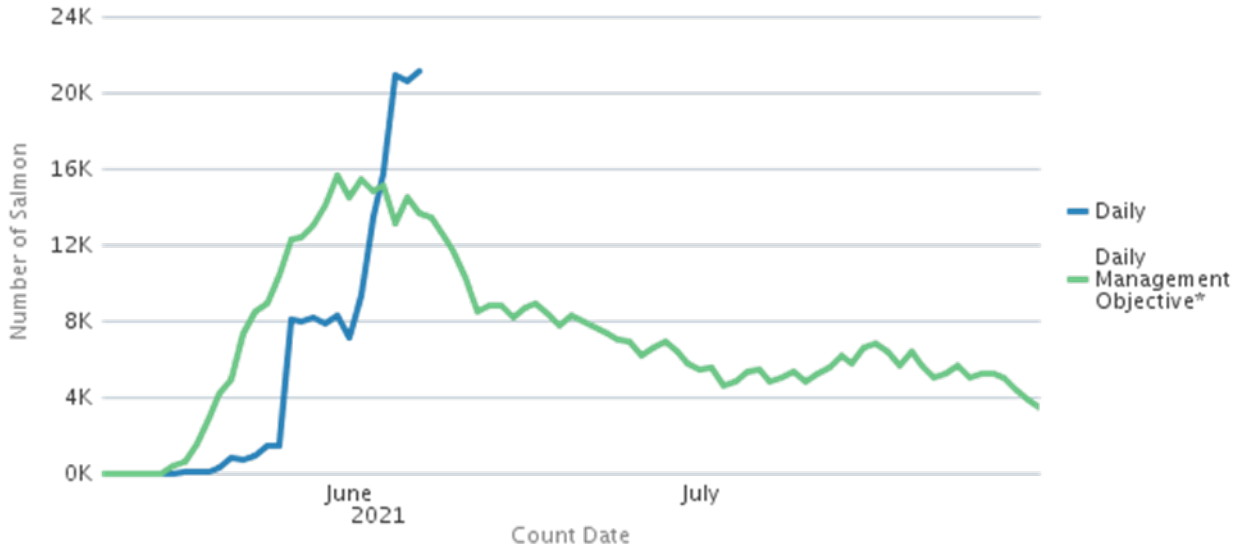
Performance in the commercial fishery and in river sonar salmon passage estimates are the primary early season assessments of the Sockeye Salmon return to the Copper River. Based on long-term average run timing and harvests, both indicators are well below the expected levels for this date of the season. The overall return could be very weak or also delayed in run timing. Federal managers will continue to monitor run strength indices to

evaluate the need for appropriate fisheries management actions in the Copper River Drainage. No Federal Special Actions have been issued by the in-season manager this season.

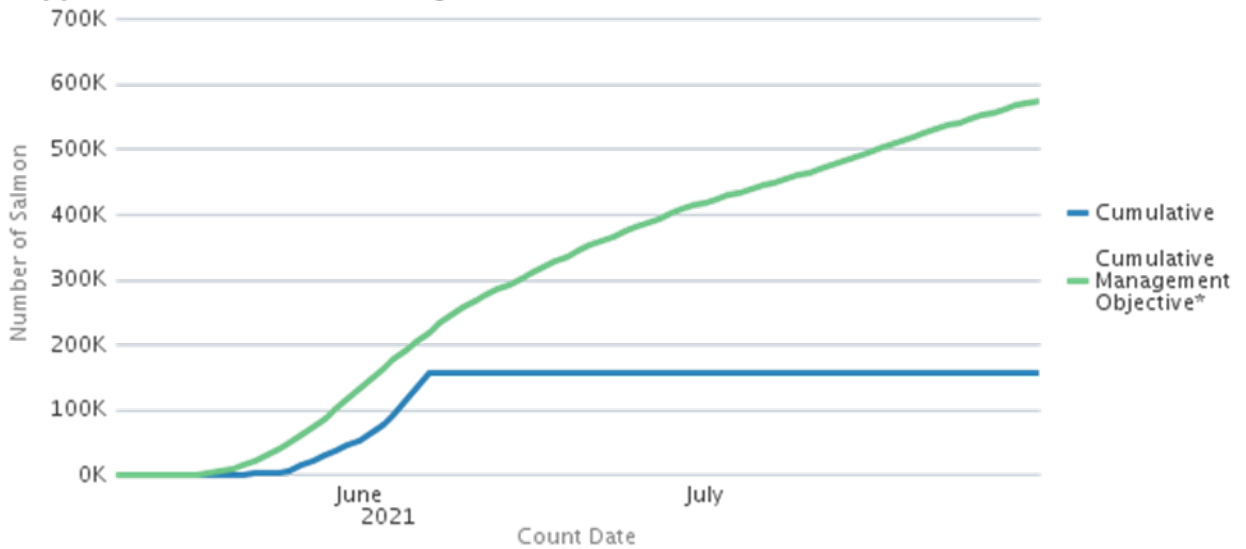
The State subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened on June 1. The State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict is scheduled to open for a 96-hour fishing period on June 10.

2021 Upper Copper River Salmon Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through June 6

Copper River Daily Passage



Copper River Cumulative Passage



Source:

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

The Federal subsistence fisheries in the Chitina Subdistrict, the Glennallen Subdistrict, and the Batzulnetas area opened on May 15 and are expected to remain open through September 30. Through the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Federal subsistence permit website, one hundred and eleven (111) Chitina Subdistrict permits, one hundred and seventy-nine (179) Glennallen Subdistrict permits, and zero (0) Batzulnetas area permits have been issued to date.

With funding through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP), WRST was again planning to operate the Tanada Creek salmon weir located at Batzulnetas. However, we were not able to recruit a full crew to operate the project this season. Several recruitment announcements were posted to recruit both locally and outside of the Copper Basin, but we did not receive enough qualified applicants for the positions announced. We were able to recruit one fisheries technician who will assist with repairs of structural components of the weir in preparation for future project operation.

Links:

ADFG 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>

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

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

Reporting will not commence for a few more weeks. Cordova Federal subsistence fisheries normally are a late season focus.

COOK INLET AREA – Kenneth Gates, Senior Fish Biologist, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (907) 260-0132 Kenneth_Gates@FWS.GOV

The 2021 subsistence dip net fisheries for salmon will begin on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers June 15 and June 16, respectively. Regulatory dates for the Kasilof River community gillnet fishery are from June 16 through August 15. Regulatory periods for the Kenai River community gillnet fishery are from July 1 through August 15 and from September 10 – 30.

Seasons for subsistence fishing with rod and reel are the same as for the taking of fish under Alaska sport fishing regulations. Most of the initial rod and reel subsistence effort will be focused at Sockeye Salmon in the Upper Kenai and Russian Rivers which opens on June 11.

A total of 358 permits have been issued to date to residents of Cooper Landing, Hope, and Ninilchik. Permit types include a general fishing permit and household permit. All permits were issued through the U.S. Postal Service.

No special actions have been issued to date. However, early-run Chinook Salmon returning to the Kenai River are being monitored and are tracking similar to 2018 which realized an escapement of 3,000 fish which is below the minimum OEG of 3,900 early-run Chinook Salmon.

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

No Reports Submitted This Week.

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

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF June 7, 2021.

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

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 2021 Bristol Bay Sockeye Salmon run is forecast to be approximately 50 million fish for the nine river systems: Kvichak, Alagnak, Naknek, Egegik, Ugashik, Wood, Igushik, Nushagak, and Togiak. Based on the forecast 36 million fish are available for commercial

inshore harvest. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has strategies in place for all mixed stock districts to address differential run strength should that occur. Gillnets are the primary gear used for most subsistence fishing for salmon. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opens June 1 by regulation and commercial fishing openings have been announced. Fishing in eastside districts and Togiak will be allowed using a weekly schedule that will vary by district. The schedules are in place to balance fishing opportunity with escapement in the early part of the season, particularly for Chinook 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 in the early part of the season, followed by directed Sockeye Salmon management as abundance dictates.

The Sockeye Salmon sustainable escapement goals (SEG) for Bristol Bay systems are:

Escapement Goals:

Kvichak	SEG = 2,000,000 – 10,000,000
Alagnak	SEG = 320,000 minimum
Naknek	SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000
Egegik	SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000
Ugashik	SEG = 500,000 – 1,400,000
Wood River	SEG = 700,000 – 1,800,000
Igushik	SEG = 150,000 – 400,000
Nushagak	SEG = 370,000 – 900,000
Nushagak	SEG = 55,000 – 270,000 Chinook Salmon
Togiak	SEG = 150,000 – 270,000

Chignik:

The Chignik River weir was fish tight on June 1, and the cumulative weir count as of June 6 is 996 Sockeye Salmon. The interim escapement objective for June 5 is 12,000 to 17,000; however, it is still early in the run timing for early run Chignik bound Sockeye Salmon. The 2021 Sockeye Salmon forecasted total-run size for the Chignik River Management Area (CMA) is 875,000 fish with a harvest estimate of 165,000 Sockeye Salmon. The CMA is composed of five fishing districts: Eastern, Central, Chignik Bay, Western, and Perryville. In June, the first commercial fishing period in the Chignik Bay, Central, and Eastern districts and the Inner Castle Cape Subsection of the Western District may occur after approximately 20,000 Sockeye Salmon have escaped or are expected to escape into the Chignik River. The Chignik River Chinook Salmon harvest is dependent upon the amount of commercial fishing time for Sockeye Salmon in July. The commercial harvest 10-year average is approximately 7,000 fish. The ADF&G will host a commercial fishing stakeholder meeting the week of May 31. The Federal inseason manager and OSM will not host in person stakeholder meetings due to the

restrictions in place for COVID-19. Meetings will occur via teleconference throughout the fishing season. The first teleconference with Chignik area stakeholders occurred on May 19, 2021 hosted by the Chignik Intertribal Fishing Coalition.

Escapement Goals:

Early Run Sockeye Salmon/ Black Lake	BEG = 350,000 – 450,000
Late Run Sockeye Salmon/ Chignik Lake	SEG = 200,000 – 400,000
-In-river Goal	-10,000 in August and 10,000 in September in addition to minimum escapement objectives
Chinook Salmon	BEG = 1,300 – 2,700
Pink Salmon – Even year	SEG = 170,000 – 280,000
Chum Salmon	SEG = 45,000 – 110,000

Alaska Peninsula:

There are numerous salmon stocks and fisheries throughout the Alaska Peninsula, as well as the Aleutian Islands. The largest fisheries are managed under management plans. Management objectives vary by district and time. Several Sockeye Salmon escapements (mostly on the north peninsula) are monitored with weirs including Nelson, Bear, Sandy, Ilnik, McLees, and Orzinski systems. Preseason forecasts are made only for the Nelson River and late-run (post July 31) Bear Lake stocks. The 2021 Sockeye Salmon run size projections are 333,000 fish for the Nelson River and 363,000 fish for late-run Bear Lake. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Escapement Goals:

Nelson River	BEG = 97,000 – 219,000
Late-run Bear Lake	BEG = 117,000 – 195,000

Aleutian Islands.

All fisheries are forecast to meet escapement goals and provide harvest opportunity.

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

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

Southcentral Alaska Web Links

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

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

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

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Southcentral Alaska
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R2.Home>

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

Yukon River – Gerald Maschmann, Fish Biologist USFWS Fairbanks Office. May 30 – June 5, 2021

Federal Manager, Holly Carroll (907) 351-3029, holly_carroll@fws.gov, Keith Herron Ivy, (907) 312-3397, keith_ivy@fws.gov, Gerald Maschmann, (907) 456-0406, Gerald_Maschmann@fws.gov

The USFWS Emmonak Field Office will be **closed** for summer management activities due to COVID-19 concerns. Essential services will be provided to fishermen online and over the phone. ADF&G management staff are staffing their Emmonak Field Office this year and USFWS will continue to work closely with their management and research staff daily.

Summer Season Outlook and Management Strategies

The 2021 drainage-wide Chinook salmon outlook is for a run size of 102,000 to 189,000 fish. The 2021 run may be as small as 2012 and 2013; despite very restricted fishing in those years, the Canadian Chinook salmon escapement objective was not met. Because of the poor projected run size, front end closures are required until in-season run strength estimates indicate a harvestable surplus beyond escapement needs. This will likely require closures through the midpoint of the run.

The Summer Chum Salmon outlook is for a below average run size; however, large enough to provide for escapement and subsistence uses with a surplus of up to half a 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.

Assessment Information

The Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) has begun in the lower Yukon. Big Eddy Chinook Salmon drift test fishing began on May 22 and Chum Salmon drift test fishing began on May 25. Project start-up logistics delayed the deployment of the set net at Big Eddy until June 3. Test drift fishing for both Chinook and Chum Salmon at Middle Mouth is tentatively scheduled to begin June 5. The first Chinook and Chum Salmon were caught in the test fishery on May 30 but so far catches have been low. However, seven Chinook Salmon were caught in the first night of the Big Eddy setnet test fishery, confirming fishermen reports that Chinook Salmon were starting to enter the river. The

Pilot Station sonar project began estimating passage on June 1 and through June 3 has an estimated passage of 1,027 Chinook Salmon and zero Chum Salmon.

Fishermen reports have been indicating very low catches of salmon in the Yukon delta from the coast up to Emmonak. However, fishermen in the Black River and near the south mouth of the Yukon reported good catches of Chinook Salmon just before the closure on June 2, indicating that Chinook Salmon are beginning to enter the river

The latest up to date escapement and harvest estimates can be found at ADF&G's website at www.adfg.alaska.gov/yukonfishcounts

Management Actions

Until more assessment data becomes available, management decisions will be consistent with the preseason projections and management plan. Subsistence salmon fishing in the southern Coastal District and District 1 closed 8 p.m. Wednesday, June 2. Subsistence salmon fishing in District 2 closed 8 p.m. Friday, June 4. Subsistence salmon fishing in the rest of the Yukon drainage is open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. Subsistence salmon fishing will close in District 3 at 8 p.m. Monday, June 7, and on the Innoko River at 8 p.m. Wednesday, June 9. This was announced in Advisory Announcement #3

(<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/DCFnewsrelease/1266941669.pdf>)

Subsistence salmon fishing will close in Lower Subdistrict 4-A at 8 p.m. Thursday, June 10, Upper Subdistrict 4-A at 8 p.m. Sunday, June 13, and in the Koyukuk River at 8 p.m. Monday, June 14. This was announced in Advisory Announcement #4

(<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/DCFnewsrelease/1267491236.pdf>)

The personal use fishery in Subdistrict 6-C is open on its regulatory schedule of two, 42-hour periods per week restricted to 7.5-inch or less mesh gillnet gear and fish wheels.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, gillnets that have mesh size 4-inches or smaller not exceeding 60 feet in length may be used to target non-Salmon species. The sequential activation of subsistence fishing closures and restrictions will continue in all districts as the Chinook Salmon migrate upstream.

For detailed information on management actions and assessment, subscribe to ADF&G advisory announcements at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.search>

Consultation

Extensive public outreach and consultation was performed during the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021 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, the Yukon River Intertribal Fish Commission, and at the annual Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) Board meeting. On April 29, a pre-season planning teleconference lead by YRDFA was held that brought together representatives from most Alaskan Yukon River communities to discuss the run outlook and management options. Additionally, the delegated Federal Manager sent consultation letters via email to 55 Yukon River tribal entities on May 25.

Management strategies and recommendations were incorporated into a "salmon" colored information sheet that outlined the preseason outlook and management strategies and was

distributed as a cooperative ADF&G and USFWS News Release. Additionally, over 3,000 copies were printed and mailed to Yukon River subsistence and commercial fishing households during the second week of May. Additional press releases and teleconferences will occur throughout the 2021 season.

The first YRDFA teleconference occurred on June 1. Participation was light, but lower Yukon fishermen reported very few salmon in the river at this time. Some were fishing for other species such as whitefish and pike. A few upper Yukon fishermen reported fishing for whitefish and burbot. **Call in to the YRDFA weekly teleconferences each Tuesday at 1:00 pm at the following number: 1-800-315-6338, Passcode: 98566#.**

Get announcements and more by liking the ADF&G Yukon River Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG/

KUSKOKWIM RIVER

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

The Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager determined that Federal management is necessary for the conservation and the continuation of subsistence uses for Chinook salmon within the Kuskokwim River drainage. This action is based on the provisions of Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and delegation of authority letter from the Federal Subsistence Board. Plans to manage the salmon fishery are intended to take an adaptive management approach while coordinating with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and local interest groups.

Regulation: 50 CFR 100.27(e)(4)(ii) is amended to read:

(A) Unless re-opened by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, the following Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge are closed to the harvest of all salmon by the using gillnets by all users effective June 01, 2021:

(1) The Kuskokwim River main stem within the boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

(2) Tributary Details: Additionally, unless re-opened by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, the following Federal public waters within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge are closed to the harvest of Chinook Salmon and the use of all gillnets by all users effective June 01, 2021:

- **The Eek River;**
- **The Kwethluk River drainage beginning at its confluence with Kuskokuak**

Slough

- **The Kasigluk and Kisaralik river drainages including Old Kuskokuak Slough to ADF&G regulatory markers at the confluence of Old Kuskokuak Slough and Kuskokuak Slough;**
- **The Tuluksak River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately 1-mile to ADF&G regulatory markers;**
- **The Aniak River drainage to ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River; and**
- **The Aniak box defined as: The waters of the Kuskokwim River main stem from the Yukon Delta NWR boundary at Aniak downstream to a line formed from the northwest corner of the runway (latitude 61° 35' 16" N, longitude 159° 33' 28" W), due north to a point on the southeast corner of the sandbar (latitude 61° 35' 37" N, longitude 159° 33' 16" W).**

Fishing from tributaries not listed above is restricted to fishing 100 yards upriver from the mouth of the river (confluence with the main stem Kuskokwim River).

(3) Subsistence fishing in the main stem Kuskokwim River for Salmon with live release of Chinook salmon using dip nets, beach seines, fish wheels with live release wells, and rod and reel will remain open throughout the closure.

(4) Federally Qualified Subsistence Fishing Opportunities

Set gillnet opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users will be open in Federal public waters of the main stem in the Kuskokwim River during the following dates and times:

- **June 2, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM**
- **June 5, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM**
- **June 9, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM**

During these three opportunities, gillnets are restricted to set gillnets with 6-inch or less mesh, 60 feet or less in length, and may not exceed 45 meshes in depth. Additionally, set gillnets must be attached to the bank, oriented perpendicular to the river and may not be operated more than 100 feet from the ordinary high-water mark. Set gillnets need to be spaced 150 feet apart from another set gillnet. The salmon bearing tributaries listed in section (A)(2) will remain closed to the use of all gillnets for all salmon and all methods and means for Chinook salmon to all users during these periods. During a set gillnet opportunity, Federally qualified subsistence users may retain incidentally caught Chinook salmon.

See Section (A)(2) Tributary Details

After each set gillnet opportunity expires, Kuskokwim waters revert to closed under section A.

(5) Gillnet (set or drift) opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users will be open in Federal public waters in the main stem of the Kuskokwim River during the following dates and times:

- **June 12, 2021 06:00 AM to 06:00 PM**
- **June 15, 2021 06:00 AM to 06:00 PM**

Gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or less mesh and may not exceed 45 meshes in depth and 50 fathoms (300-feet) in length below the Johnson River and 25 fathoms (150 feet) in length above the Johnson River. The waters listed in section (A)(2) will remain closed to all gillnets for all salmon and all methods and means for Chinook salmon to all users during these gillnet periods:

See paragraph (A)(2) Tributary Details

(6) After each gillnet opportunity expires, Kuskokwim waters revert to closed under paragraph (A).

Additional opportunities with the use of gillnets by Federally qualified subsistence users may be announced by subsequent special action after assessment of run strength and coordination with the

Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), the ADF&G, and other parties identified in the Delegation of Authority provided to the Federal in-season manager by the Federal Subsistence Board.

Summary of Opportunities and Catch Information for June 2 and 5, 2021

FEDERALLY QUALIFIED SUBSISTENCE FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

From Emergency Special Action No.: 3-K S-0 1-21; Issued May 7th , 2021; Effective

June 1, 2021

Set gillnet opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users will be open in Federal

public waters of the main stem in the Kuskokwim River during the following dates and times:

- June 2, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM – COMPLETE
- June 5, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM – COMPLETE
- June 9, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM – Wednesday

During these three opportunities, gillnets are restricted to set gillnets with 6-inch or less mesh, 60 feet or less in length, and may not exceed 45 meshes in depth.

Gillnet (set or drift) opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users will be open in Federal public waters in the main stem of the Kuskokwim River during the following dates and times:

- June 12, 2021 06:00 AM to 06:00 PM
- June 15, 2021 06:00 AM to 06:00 PM

Gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or less mesh and may not exceed 45 meshes in depth and 50

fathoms (300-feet) in length below the Johnson River and 25 fathoms (150 feet) in length

above the Johnson River.

Effort Estimates from 06/05

- An estimated 91 total set net trips occurred.

Harvest Estimates from 06/05

- An estimated total of 380 (150 – 710) salmon were harvested.
- An estimated total of 310 (110 – 650) Chinook salmon were harvested.
- An estimated total of 20 (0 – 50) chum salmon were harvested.
- An estimated total of 50 (10 – 100) sockeye salmon were harvested.

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

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

Norton Sound

Norton Sound is comprised of two fishing districts, Norton Sound District and Port Clarence District. The Norton Sound District extends from Cape Douglas south to Point Romanof and includes over 500 miles of coastline. The area open to commercial salmon fishing is divided into six subdistricts. Each subdistrict contains at least one major spawning stream with commercial fishing effort located in the ocean near stream mouths. The Port Clarence District encompasses all waters from Cape Douglas north to Cape Prince of Wales and its commercial salmon fishing area is adjacent to the communities of Brevig Mission and Teller.

Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G, department) staffing for salmon management within Norton Sound includes three permanent biologists, a program technician and 18 seasonal employees during the summer months. Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) funds numerous adult salmon counting projects and takes part in cooperative projects with ADF&G, tribal and federal entities. Anticipated department management projects in 2021 include: Kwiniuk River counting tower; Nome River weir; Solomon River weir; periodic aerial surveys of index spawning streams; and catch sampling and monitoring efforts at Nome and Unalakleet. A cooperative project with other agencies is the Unalakleet River weir (BLM, NSEDC and Unalakleet IRA). Department staff will also track the salmon escapement counts reported on NSEDC projects on the following rivers:

North, Snake, Fish, Shaktoolik, Ungalik, Inglutalik, Eldorado, and Pilgrim. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic some project operations may be suspended because of quarantine and staffing issues.

This year there are two expected commercial salmon buyers and there will be an experimental purse seine fishery targeting pink salmon. Commercial purse seine openings are expected in Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts and possibly the northern Norton Sound Subdistricts of Nome, Golovin and Elim. Those interested in participating in the purse seine fishery can contact the department for more information and to obtain a commissioner's permit for the fishery.

2021 Outlook

Salmon outlooks and harvest projections for the 2021 salmon season are based on qualitative assessments of parent-year escapements, sibling relationships, subjective determinations of freshwater overwintering and ocean survival, and in the case of the commercial fishery, the projections of local market conditions.

The department expects better coho and chum salmon runs in 2021 than last year if there is an average return of four-year-old fish. However, the runs are expected to be below the recent 5-year averages that had record coho runs and some of the best chum runs in over 35 years.

The Chinook salmon run is expected like last year or slightly below average. The regular subsistence fishing schedule from mid-June until mid-July in Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts will be in effect for Chinook salmon with no additional subsistence restrictions unless the run comes in poorer than expected. No commercial fishing for Chinook salmon is likely but incidentally caught Chinook salmon in commercial fisheries will be allowed to be sold in the gillnet fishery unless restricted by emergency order. Chinook salmon caught in the commercial purse seine fishery will not be allowed to be sold and the buyer plans to donate Chinook salmon to the villages in the subdistrict where they are harvested.

Chum salmon runs are expected to be below average, and the harvest is expected to be 70,000 to 120,000 fish.

The department expects the pink salmon run to be above average for an odd-numbered year, but harvest will depend on buyer interest and could range from 25,000 to 75,000 fish. If there are pink salmon gillnet directed fishing periods and frequent seine fishing openings this year the harvest could increase as much as ten-fold. The department does have the authority to increase fishing net aggregate length from 100 fathoms to 200 fathoms if there were a pink salmon directed fishery.

The coho salmon run is expected to be below average based on ocean survival conditions in recent years and the commercial harvest is expected to be 50,000 to 100,000 fish. In the Port Clarence District, the department expects the commercial fishery to remain closed because the in-river goal of 30,000 sockeye salmon at Pilgrim River is not expected to be reached. Subsistence fishing closures in the Pilgrim River may occur and the department will limit

sockeye salmon subsistence harvest to 25 fish initially and will increase or waive the limit if the run is better than expected.

Department staff will manage salmon fisheries to ensure escapement goals are achieved. Subsistence fishing may need to be restricted or closed if concerns for escapement arise. Commercial fishing will occur depending on market availability and if there is an adequate surplus above escapement and subsistence needs. Informational updates will be broadcast periodically over Nome public radio stations and Advisory Announcements sent to the Unalakleet radio station for broadcast to inform fishermen of current regulations, catches, escapements, and ADF&G activities. The public may call the Nome office toll-free number at 1-800-560-2271 or the local number of 443-5167 for information.

Because of higher snowfall this past winter river levels are expected to be much higher than normal and delays getting escapement projects operational may occur. If there are cases where subdistricts do not have escapement projects operational the department will compare commercial catch with historical catch values during similar time periods to determine if additional fishing time is warranted.

Subsistence salmon permits are required when net fishing in northern Norton Sound (from Elim Subdistrict to Port Clarence District) and only Alaska residents qualify for a permit. A sport fish license is required when fishing with a rod and reel in southern Norton Sound. However, in northern Norton Sound rod and reel is a legal subsistence gear but when salmon fishing using rod and reel a sport fish license or subsistence salmon permit is required. Household subsistence permits are free and Alaska residents can get their permits online at www.adfg.alaska.gov/store. Permits will also be issued at the Nome Fish & Game office. Village residents can call 1-800-560-2271 if they are unable to get a permit online and a permit will be mailed.

NOME SUBDISTRICT

The Subdistrict 1 (Nome) salmon run in 2021 is expected to be below average, but commercial fishing time targeting chum and coho salmon is expected. Since Tier II chum salmon subsistence fishing was suspended in 2006, the previous subdistrict-wide escapement goal range of 23,000 to 35,000 fish has been reached or exceeded in all years except in 2009. In the last five years the escapement has ranged from 31,000 to 124,000 chum salmon. Three rivers have chum salmon escapement goal ranges: Eldorado (4,400 to 14,200), Nome (1,600 to 5,300) and Snake (2,000 to 4,200). Last year was the first time the range was not met or exceeded in all three rivers in over five years because the Snake River did not reach the lower end of its escapement goal.

In marine waters, subsistence fishing is allowed 7 days a week prior to June 15 and after August 15. Likewise, in fresh waters, subsistence fishing is open 7 days a week prior to June 15 and after August 31. From June 15 through August 15 the marine waters of Nome Subdistrict, west of Cape Nome, will be open to set gillnet fishing from 6 p.m. Wednesday until 6 p.m. Monday. Marine waters east of Cape Nome will remain open 7 days a week throughout the season. Beginning June 15 through August 31, subsistence set gillnet fishing will be open in fresh waters from 6 p.m. Wednesday until 6 p.m. Monday. The fishing schedule listed above will be in effect unless reduced or closed by emergency order because

of weaker than expected salmon runs. Dip nets and cast nets are a legal gear for harvesting salmon in Norton Sound and are allowed during the set gillnet fishing periods. Beach seining is allowed during set gillnet fishing periods from June 15 through August 15. Stream-specific harvest limits are listed on the subsistence salmon fishing permits. There are no catch limits in marine waters.

The department will use the Eldorado weir counts as the primary indicator of chum salmon run strength in Nome Subdistrict east of Cape Nome. If chum salmon escapement begins to lag compared to historical run timing curves and indicates the escapement goal range will not be met, marine and river fishing periods may be reduced or suspended until the department switches to management to other salmon species. However, the Eldorado River chum salmon escapement is expected to be easily met in 2021 and daily escapement counts from the weir will be used to confirm that the run is tracking as expected. Aerial surveys will also be used to index escapement to the Bonanza, Flambeau and Sinuk rivers. The department will use the Nome River and Snake River escapement counts as an indicator of chum salmon run strength in the Nome Subdistrict west of Cape Nome. If the Nome River and Snake River weir counts project that the chum salmon escapement goal range will not be reached, marine and freshwater subsistence fishing periods may be restricted or suspended. However, both rivers are expected to reach the escapement goal ranges. The Cripple and Penny rivers are closed by regulation to subsistence chum salmon fishing. The Sinuk River is expected to reach sockeye salmon escapement goal range at Glacial Lake (800 to 1,600 by aerial survey). Commercial fishing periods are expected in Nome Subdistrict for chum salmon and possibly pink salmon if there is buyer interest. Commercial fishing for coho salmon in August is also expected. Directed fishing periods for chum and coho salmon will have gear restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches and for pink salmon to a maximum mesh size of 4 ½ inches.

GOLOVIN SUBDISTRICT

The chum run is expected to be below average with commercial fishing expected to begin in late June if run strength comes in as expected.

The Niukluk River tower project is no longer operational, but a counting tower project initiated by NSEDC has operated on the Fish River downstream of the confluence of the Niukluk River the last six years. If the Fish River project operates this year the department will use the counts as an index to compare with other salmon run assessments to determine if continued commercial fishing time is warranted.

If the Fish River project is unable to accurately enumerate the salmon run because of high water, then the chum salmon escapement counts in the adjacent Subdistrict 3 will be used as an indicator of the chum salmon run in Subdistrict 2 along with a peak aerial survey count if possible. By comparing Niukluk River tower chum salmon counts (1995-2012) with Kwiniuk River tower chum salmon counts of the same year there has been agreement between both rivers achieving and not achieving their respective escapement goals in 16 of 18 years. The department will also evaluate catch per unit of effort (CPUE), if there is commercial fishing, with historical commercial fishing periods during similar dates to determine if additional fishing time is warranted.

Both the Fish River tower site and the former Niukluk River tower site are much farther upstream than the adjacent Subdistrict 3 counting tower on Kwiniuk River. The department historically has used the counts from Kwiniuk River tower to determine early season chum salmon openings in Subdistrict 2. Further commercial chum salmon fishing opportunity after mid-July will be dependent on chum salmon escapement.

The pink salmon run should allow for commercial fishing periods in July if there is buyer interest and coho salmon commercial fishing periods are expected beginning in late July. Until mid-August coho commercial CPUE will be used to set commercial coho salmon fishing time. By mid-August, if the Fish River counting tower is operational, the department will determine additional fishing time based on coho salmon escapement as estimated by the counting tower. Also, the department plans to survey Niukluk River and Ophir Creek to determine if the aerial survey goal of 750 to 1,600 coho salmon will be reached. Directed fishing periods for chum and coho salmon will have gear restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches and for pink salmon to a maximum mesh size of 4 ½ inches.

ELIM SUBDISTRICT

Except for 2014, when hook and line subsistence fishing for Chinook salmon was closed, there have been no other subsistence restrictions in over 30 years in Subdistrict 3 (Elim). Subsistence permits are required when subsistence salmon fishing in the Elim Subdistrict and other than the possibility of inseason Chinook salmon restrictions no other restrictions are expected.

Commercial fishing for chum salmon is expected, but the catch is expected to be below average. The pink salmon run is expected to be above average for an odd-numbered year, but buyer interest in pink salmon directed fishing periods is unknown. Commercial coho salmon openings are likely beginning the end of July and the run strength is expected to be below average. Directed fishing periods for chum and coho salmon will have gear restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches and if a pink salmon directed fishing period occurs maximum mesh size will be restricted at 4 ½ inches.

NORTON BAY SUBDISTRICT

In the last decade there were record commercial harvests of pink (2012), chum (2013) and coho (2015) salmon in Subdistrict 4 (Norton Bay), but the second half of the last decade had very poor salmon harvests. Commercial salmon fishing harvests are expected to be below average for chum and coho salmon in 2021 based on recent runs. Since 2011 NSEDC has operated a counting tower on the Inglutalik River and the department plans to use salmon escapement counts from the project as an index to compare with other projects in 2020. If the project proves to be an accurate assessment over several generations of salmon escapement the department would be able to set tower-based escapement goals. NSEDC also plans to have a counting tower on Ungalik River for the third consecutive year. No restrictions on subsistence fishing are expected this year.

SHAKTOOLIK AND UNALAKLEET SUBDISTRICTS

Subdistricts 5 (Shaktoolik) and 6 (Unalakleet) have been managed as one fishery because past studies have shown salmon bound for these subdistricts intermingle and that harvests in one subdistrict likely will affect the other. No commercial fishing is expected for Chinook

salmon, but chum and pink salmon will be targeted commercially depending on market interest and gillnet fishing would likely occur beginning in July to allow more time for Chinook salmon to pass through the subdistricts.

Abundance of the Chinook salmon run will be monitored using passage estimates from the Unalakleet River weir and a counting tower on the North River, an important Chinook salmon spawning tributary in the Unalakleet River drainage. The escapement goal range for the North River is 1,200–2,600 Chinook salmon. However, for a Chinook salmon directed commercial fishery to occur, the department must project an escapement of a minimum of 1,900 Chinook salmon past the North River tower.

To protect Chinook salmon the subsistence fishing schedule in regulation will go into effect on June 15 in Subdistricts 5 and 6. The subsistence fishing schedule in the marine waters of Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts is from 6:00 p.m. Monday until 6:00 p.m. Wednesday and from 6:00 p.m. Thursday until 6:00 p.m. Saturday. The schedule in the Unalakleet River is from 8:00 a.m. Monday until 8:00 p.m. Tuesday and from 8:00 a.m. Friday until 8:00 p.m. Saturday. If the Chinook salmon run is falls behind the amount necessary to reach the escapement goal the department may suspend the subsistence fishing schedule.

ST. MICHAEL AND STEBBINS Subsistence fishing is open 7 days per week in southern Norton Sound from Pt. Romanof to Black Point. Regulation does allow for the restriction of gillnet mesh size in the subsistence fisheries throughout Norton Sound if it is necessary to conserve Chinook salmon. Based on the recent 5-year trend in run performance and sibling relationships, the 2021 Chinook salmon run to southern Norton Sound is expected to be like 2020. If that occurs there is the possibility of reaching Chinook salmon escapement goal without the need for subsistence fishing closures. Regulations allow beach seines with a maximum mesh size of 4 ½ inches to be used from July 1 through August 10 to subsistence harvest salmon other than Chinook salmon seven days a week.

Chum salmon runs are expected to be below average and pink salmon runs are expected to be above average. Chum salmon commercial gillnet fishing periods will have gear restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches and pink salmon directed fishing periods will have gear restricted to a maximum mesh size of 4 ½ inches. Commercial openings for chum and pink salmon will likely begin in July. Both gillnet and seine openings for pink salmon are likely because a new buyer has expressed interest in developing a commercial pink salmon fishery. Coho salmon commercial fishing openings are expected in late July and the run is expected to be below average. Department management for coho salmon season is considered to begin on July 25, or when coho salmon catches exceed chum salmon catches. Coho gear will be restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches and the regular 48-hour periods will be in effect or extended if there are no escapement and buyer capacity concerns.

PORT CLARENCE DISTRICT

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

Subsistence salmon fishing permits are required for the Port Clarence District, Pilgrim River drainage and Salmon Lake. Salmon Lake will only be opened by emergency order and

permits are only available at the Fish and Game office in Nome. Catch limits are listed on the subsistence permit.

The department expects the sockeye salmon run in 2021 to be lower than the 2020 run. The department will compare the 2021 sockeye salmon run with historical escapement counts at the Pilgrim River weir after the first week of July and decide if a closure may be necessary to reach the escapement goal range. If the sockeye salmon run comes in much better than expected, then the department would look to increase the subsistence sockeye salmon catch limit. The Pilgrim River escapement goal range is 6,800 to 36,000 sockeye salmon through the weir. No other subsistence fishing closures are expected in Port Clarence District.

KOTZEBUE DISTRICT

This Kotzebue District salmon fisheries management plan is to inform fishers, processors, and other interested people of the management strategies for the commercial salmon fishery. The Kotzebue District includes all waters from Cape Prince of Wales to Point Hope. The Kotzebue District is divided into three subdistricts. Subdistrict 2, near the mouth of the Noatak River is closed to commercial fishing by regulation. Most fishing occurs in Subdistrict 1, which is subdivided into six statistical areas to help managers determine catch location (Figure 1). Within the Kotzebue District chum salmon *Oncorhynchus keta* are the most abundant anadromous fish. Other salmon species (Chinook *O. tshawytscha*, pink *O. gorbuscha*, coho *O. kisutch*, and sockeye *O. nerka*) occur in lesser numbers, as do Dolly Varden *Salvelinus malma*, and sheefish (inconnu) *Stenodus leucichthy*

2021 Outlook

The outlook for the 2021 season is based on the parent-year escapements and returning age classes observed in the commercial fishery and at the Kobuk River test fishery last year. The 5-year-old component of the run is expected to be well below average based on the 4-year-old return in 2020. The 4-year-old component of the run is expected to be average to above average based on the 3-year-old return last year. The 3-year-old and 6-year-old age classes are much smaller components of the run and are expected to be average. The commercial harvest is expected to fall within the range of 200,000 to 300,000 chum salmon.

Two major buyers are expected in July and a low volume value added buyer has expressed interest in buying fish in August.

The fishery is scheduled to open on July 11 with two buyers expected on the Kotzebue north shore. The fishery closes on August 31 unless extended by emergency order because of a strong unexpected late run.

Primary commercial fishery management objectives are to provide adequate chum salmon passage through the commercial fishery: (1) to ensure sustained runs by allowing adequate escapement, and (2) to meet subsistence harvest uses. Fishery management will be dependent on comparing period and cumulative season catch rates to prior years and test fishing results on the Kobuk River.

Age composition of commercial salmon catches will be monitored to determine the strength of age classes in the run. If there is a low abundance of older salmon, which tend to migrate into freshwater first, catch rates will likely be weak early in the season. A stronger than expected 4-year-old return may cause midseason catches to rise.

During the first week of the fishery there are expected to be daily fishing periods, except Saturday. Because of the expected poor return of 5-year-old fish the department may limit fishing time in the following weeks depending on commercial catches and upriver catch reports and test fish catches at the Kobuk River test fish project.

In late July, if poor run strength necessitates fishing restrictions, the department will establish periodic closures of the fishery. If concern arises about salmon runs the department will notify the fishermen and the buyers about the need to reduce commercial fishing time.

If commercial catches indicate adequate run strength and test fish catches are sufficient the department will allow commercial fishing to continue based on market conditions and escapement indicators. Likewise, in August as the Noatak River chum salmon run passes through the district the department will consider fishing restrictions if commercial catches indicate a weak run.

No subsistence fishing restrictions are expected in 2021.