

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JULY5-11, 2021. Report #7
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 justin.koller@usda.gov

Herring – A commercial herring fishery occurred in Sitka Sound in 2021. Please see this [summary of Sitka Sound herring 2021](#). Also, [summary of southeast Alaska herring 2021](#).

Falls Lake - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake operate the Falls Lake trap and video net weir which was operational as of June 25. Two sockeye have been counted in the trap, which is normal because the run is usually just commencing around this date. However, people have been fishing in the bay without much success. The final escapement estimate in 2020 was 800 Sockeye Salmon while the final subsistence and sport harvest in the marine terminal area was estimated to be 253. Subsistence harvest accounted for 96% of terminal area harvest.

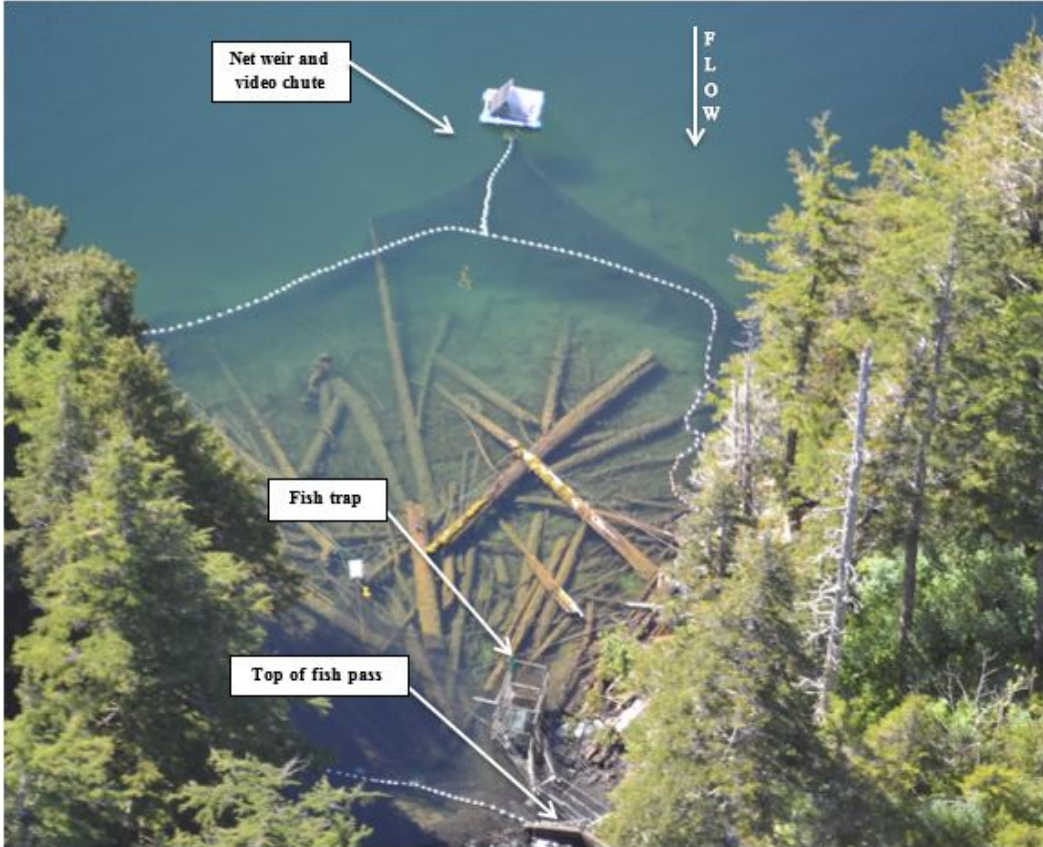


Figure 1. Aerial photo of the Falls Lake outlet illustrating the typical location of weir equipment.

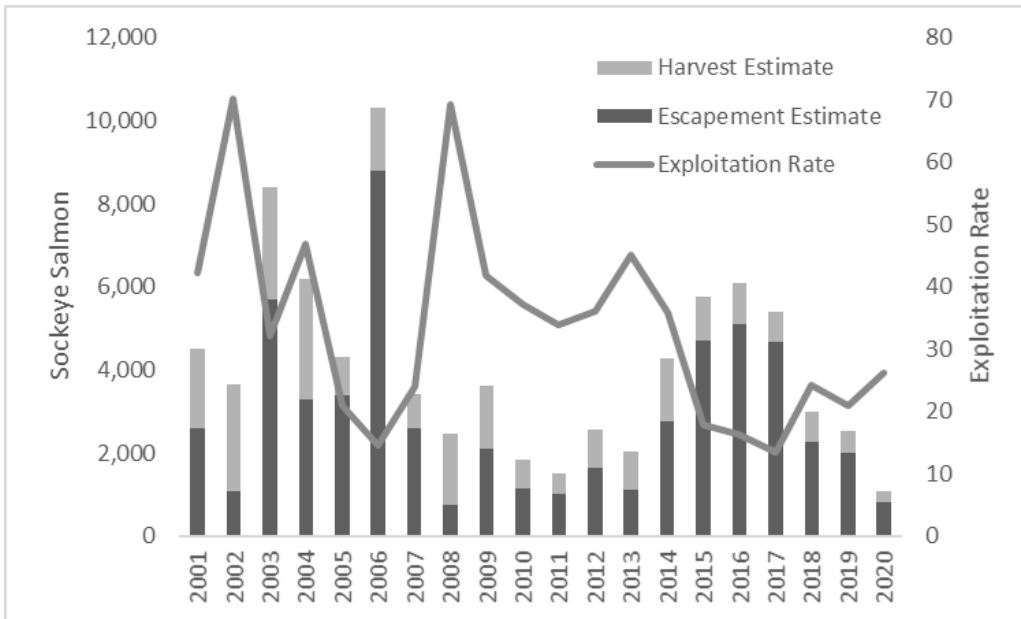


Figure 2. Escapement plus harvest equals total terminal run of Sockeye Salmon at Falls Lake, 2001-2020.

Klag Bay - The Sitka Tribe of Alaska operates the Sockeye Salmon monitoring weir at Klag Bay which was installed June 30. As of July 10, 230 sockeye have been counted at the weir. In 2020, approximately 4,122 sockeye migrated past the weir while an estimated 1,599 were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fishery. Subsistence harvest accounted for over 99% of terminal area harvest.

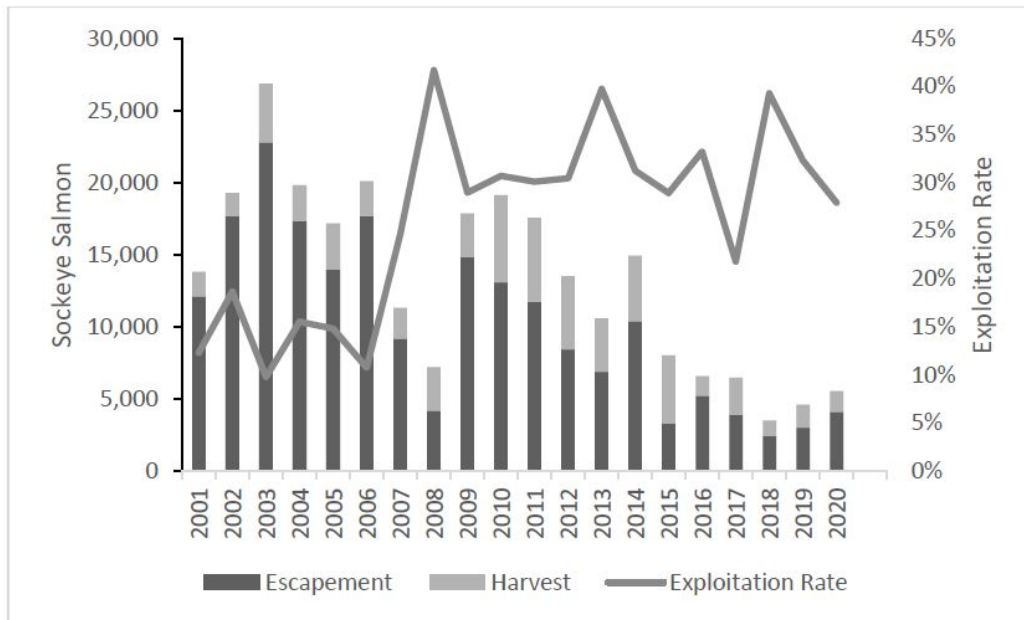


Figure 3. Creel survey harvest and escapement for Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon, 2001-2020.

Redoubt Lake - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which was operational as of June 15. As of July 10, 7,905 sockeye have entered the lake. We are predicting that over 40,000 sockeye will pass through the weir this year. On July 10, in accordance with the Redoubt Lake Management Plan, the individual/household subsistence sockeye possession limit was set at 25 and the individual/household annual limit was set at 100. In 2020, an estimated 41,279 Sockeye Salmon passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake. Over 40,000 sockeye were harvested in Sitka Sound commercial fishery openings throughout the 2020 season. Most of these sockeye are probably of Redoubt origin.

[News release, sockeye limits 2021](#)

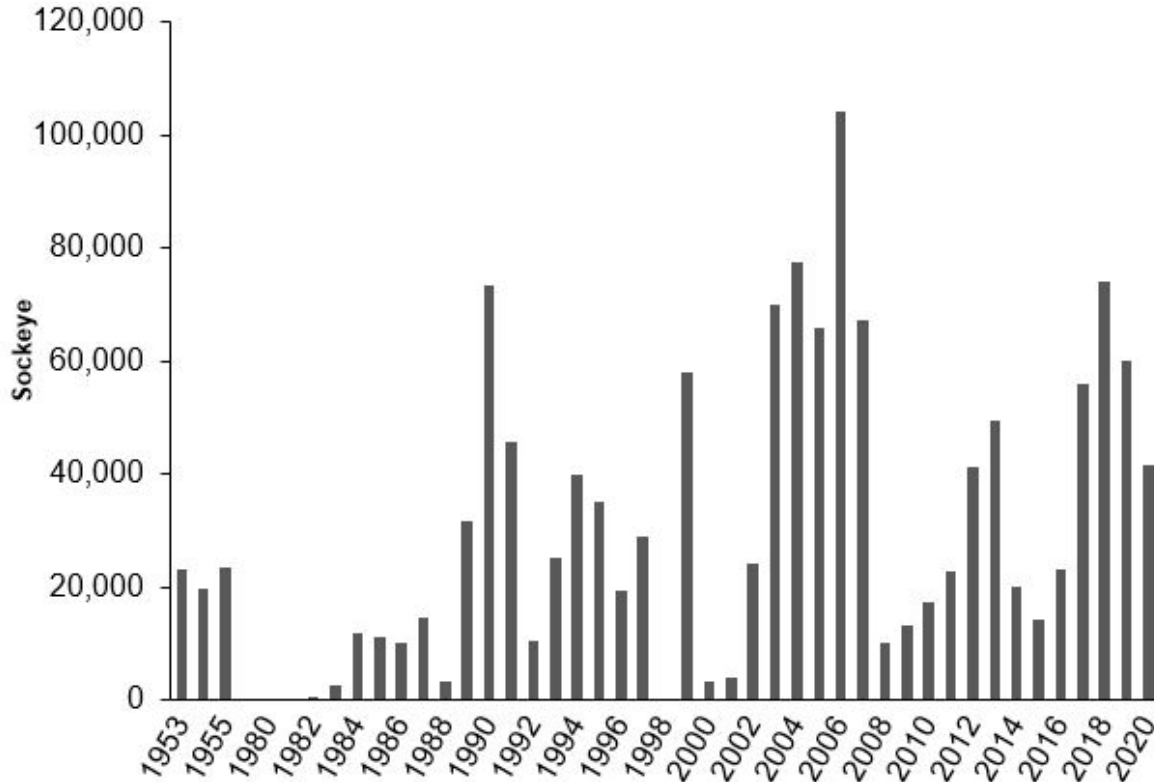


Figure 4. Annual Sockeye Salmon expanded escapement into Redoubt Lake for years with data: 1953 to 1955, 1982 to 1997, and 1999 to 2019. The weir was not operated in 1998.

Gut Bay - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake monitor escapement and harvest of Gut Bay Sockeye Salmon. Gut Bay is located south of Falls Lake on Baranof Island and an important source of sockeye for the village of Kake. Very little is known about the magnitude of this sockeye run. In 2019, 881 sockeye were counted at the weir and about 200 were harvested in the state subsistence fishery. The Gut Bay project has been postponed until 2022 due to staffing shortages. Word is harvesters are catching a good amount of sockeye this year at Gut Bay.

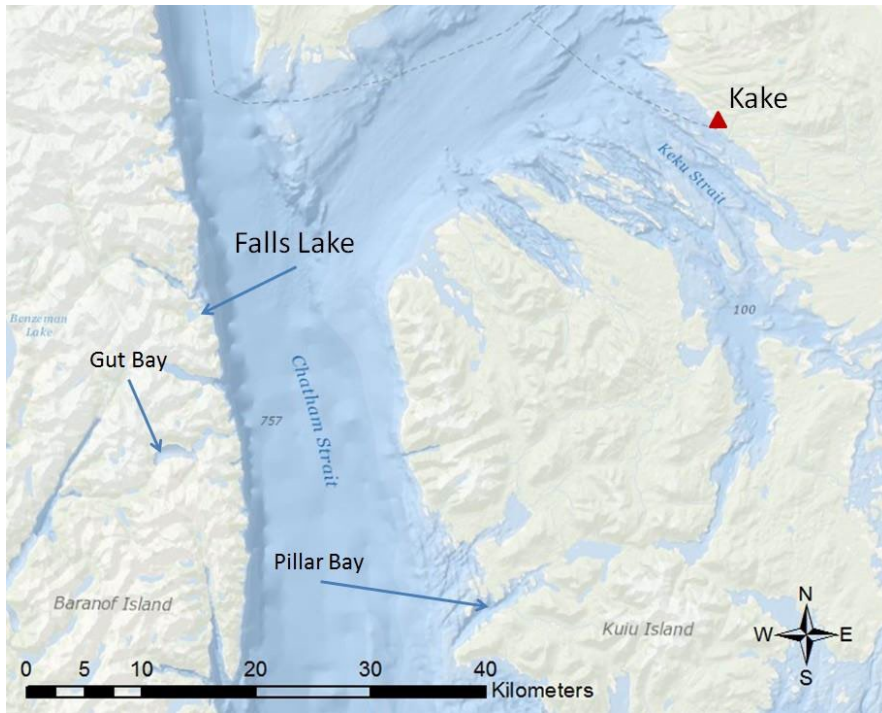


Figure 5. Location of Gut Bay in relation to Falls Lake and the village of Kake

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

The pre-season terminal run forecast for large Chinook Salmon in the Stikine River is 9,900 fish. This forecast is below the bottom range of the 14,000 to 28,000 fish goal. Directed commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries in the area have been closed to protect this return. Currently, all drift gillnet, purse seine and non-terminal harvest area troll fisheries are closed in district 8.

The 2021 Stikine River pre-season Sockeye Salmon forecast is 56,000 fish, with 28,000 Tahltan and 28,000 Mainstem fish. The 2020 Sockeye Salmon forecast was 103,400 fish, which included 64,500 Tahltan Lake and 38,900 Mainstem Sockeye. The escapement objective for Tahltan bound Sockeye Salmon is 18,000 and 30,000 for Mainstem fish. The 2021 forecast is below the escapement objective for the mainstem and may result in a season closure.

The 2021 Federal Stikine River Sockeye Salmon subsistence fishery began June 21. High water likely slowed harvest effort during the first two weeks of the fishery. Sockeye harvest has begun to increase as the river level has started receding. An estimated 75 sockeye have been harvested. A total of 75 permits have been issued for the Stikine fishery and no harvest estimate is available at this time.

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

July 12, 2021

Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon: A Forest Service crew installed the Neva Lake weir on June 18, 2021. This swim-through video weir is located near Excursion Inlet, and is maintained by a Hoonah Indian Association crew living onsite. As of July 10, 353 Sockeye have been counted through the weir, along with 248 Dolly Varden, 162 Cutthroat Trout (Figure 2) and more than a few otters. Live video and clips from the weir can be accessed at <http://nevalake.ddns.net:81>.



Figure 1. Live video capture shows a rainy Monday morning at the Neva Lake weir.



Figure 2. A Cutthroat Trout passing through the Neva Lake weir.

Sitkoh Lake Sockeye Salmon: The Sitkoh Lake weir was installed by a Forest Service crew over July 6-8, 2021 (Figure 3). The weir project is a partnership between the USFS and the Angoon Community Association (ACA). Live video from the site is streamed to the ACA office in Angoon, where it is recorded on a computer and returning Sockeye are counted by ACA employees. Live video is currently not available to the public, but will be soon.



Figure 3. Forest Service crew member Shauna Riddensdale (left) and Student Conservation Association intern Sadie Swindall at the newly installed Sitkoh Lake weir, July 7, 2021.

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

USFWS Weekly Summary Author position vacant - TBA.

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, 7/8/2021 Update – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), (907) 822-7281, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

Management actions of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) limited early season commercial fishing opportunities in the Copper River District in response to low numbers of returning salmon. The season total commercial harvest for the Copper River District through July 6 is reported as 268,276 Sockeye Salmon and 6,858 Chinook Salmon.

The ADFG sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) is currently in operation. After a relatively slow start to begin the season, sonar passage improved substantially during the past few weeks. As of July 7, 575,567 salmon have been estimated migrating upstream for the season. This estimate is 26% above the cumulative management objective of 455,469 salmon for this date of the season and exceeds the season objective of 575,297 salmon passing the sonar. A daily estimate of 12,578 salmon migrated past the sonar on July 7.

The Native Village of Eyak (NVE) Baird Canyon fish wheels captured and tagged 1,916 Chinook Salmon through July 6. This total capture number for this date of the season is low, relative to historical levels. The upriver fish wheels at Canyon Creek have captured and examined 1,233 Chinook salmon through July 6, of which, 101 were recaptured fish that had been tagged at the downstream wheels.

Inriver sonar salmon passage estimates provide the primary mid-season assessment of the Sockeye Salmon return to the Copper River. Although fishing opportunities and harvest in the commercial fishery were limited in the early part of the season, the assessment of inriver Sockeye Salmon run strength has now exceeded ADFG management objectives for the season, as estimated by the sonar. These objectives are designed to provide harvest opportunities to both Federal subsistence and other State upriver users, as well as to achieve the sustainable escapement goal for Sockeye Salmon.

As with Sockeye Salmon, fisheries managers also monitor assessments of the Chinook Salmon run strength; primary indicators are commercial harvest rates and data from the Chinook Salmon inriver abundance project operated by NVE. Additional insight is gained from the recent application of updated technology at the Miles Lake sonar site to provide species apportionment data. Inriver assessments are indicative of a weak return and managers believe that the Chinook Salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) will likely not be met.

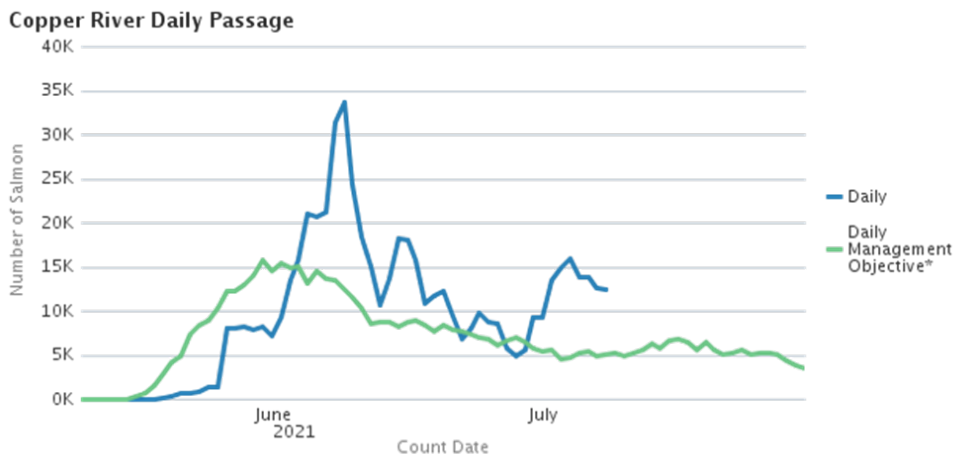
In response to this assessment of a weak Chinook Salmon return, the ADFG has closed all State fisheries of the Upper Copper River drainage to the retention of Chinook Salmon; including the personal use fishery of the Chitina Subdistrict, the sport fisheries, and the subsistence fishery of the Glennallen Subdistrict. Concurrent with these closures, including that of the upper river subsistence fishery, the ADFG has authorized periodic

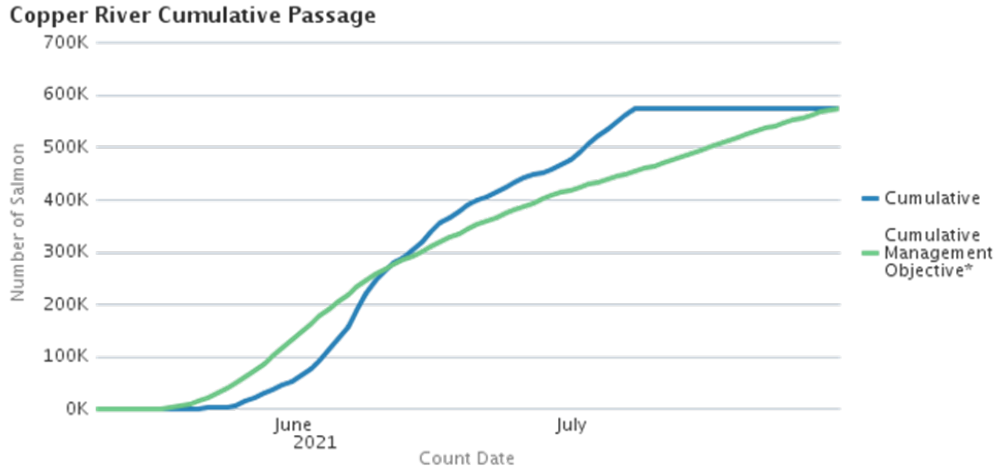
openings of the commercial and subsistence fisheries of the Copper River District to continue since the Chinook Salmon entry to the Copper River is historically nearly complete by early July.

The Chinook Salmon closures do not affect those fishing under Federal subsistence regulations. Harvest by Federal users through the remainder of the season is not expected to be high enough to have a significant impact on the sustainability of the stocks. At this time, no Federal Special Action has been issued by the inseason manager to restrict the harvest of Chinook Salmon, or for any other purpose, in the fisheries of the Upper Copper River. Federal managers will continue to monitor run strength indices to evaluate the need for appropriate fisheries management actions in the Federal waters of the Copper River Drainage.

Although Federal actions have not been taken, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST) prepared and distributed an advisory announcement intended to inform all subsistence users of the present concerns for Copper River Chinook Salmon. This announcement was sent to all Upper Copper River District Federal subsistence fishing permit holders with email addresses on record. In the announcement, WRST requested that users consider voluntarily releasing healthy Chinook Salmon that may be beyond their subsistence needs.

2021 Upper Copper River Salmon Passage at Miles Lake Sonar through July 7





*Management objectives are based on historical run-timing to achieve the in-river goal.

Source:

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

The State subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened on June 1, and closed to Chinook Salmon, effective June 28 through July 31. The State Chinook Salmon sport fisheries closed beginning June 26. With no retention of Chinook Salmon, the State personal use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict is open through Sunday, July 11, and is then scheduled to be open for total of 168 hours from July 12 through July 18.

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 database website, one hundred and eighty-one (181) Chitina Subdistrict permits, three hundred and twenty-five (325) Glennallen Subdistrict permits, and one (1) Batzulnetas area permit have been issued to date.

The ADFG counting tower in the Gulkana River began operation on June 9. The reported cumulative passage estimate through July 7 is 624 Chinook Salmon. This is a relatively very low estimate for this date in the season and is below the 2020 season count of 936 through this date.

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>

ADFG Gulkana River counting tower

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

**PWS and Copper River Delta – Milo Burcham, Chugach National Forest, Cordova.
28 June 2021.**

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

5 July 2021

A total of 24 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 statistics of this year's permit holders will not be known until reports are returned this winter. Most harvest under these permits takes place during the coho fishery in fresh waters of the Copper River Delta in August and September. Ninety permits were issued in 2020

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 is underway on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. Each fishery began on 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 opened on June 11.

A total of 433 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. The early-run escapement of Chinook Salmon returning to the Kenai River was 4,131 large fish which is just above the minimum OEG of 3,900.

To date, 1,022 Sockeye Salmon have been reported as being harvested from the Kasilof River in the Community Gillnet Fishery of which only 845 have been reported as being received on a federal subsistence permit. A total of 663 Sockeye Salmon have been reported as being harvested to date in the dip net fishery at the Russian River falls. Ninety Sockeye Salmon have been harvested on the Kasilof River in the Federal dip net 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) 487-2600/0230 michael_brady@fws.gov or

Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230 Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov

The Sockeye Salmon escapements for Afognak (Litnik) system started slow but has increased the past couple of weeks, with over 8,800 fish passing the weir. The lower escapement goal for Litnik was reached on June 23, 2021. Buskin River sockeye salmon escapement has been poor. The escapement counts for Buskin has not reached 1,000 fish, to date. Subsistence restrictions are still in place to protect this stock. Many subsistence users have been going to either Ouzinkie or Port Lions to meet their needs. It has been reported that those individuals who do not have transportation to either of these places have been going to Pasagshak and have been meeting their needs there.

The Karluk and Ayakulik River Sockeye Salmon escapements have been strong the past few weeks, with both systems meeting their lower escapement goals. As of Friday, July 9, 2021, the Karluk River Sockeye Salmon escapement count was 120,836 fish and 249,430 fish for the Ayakulik River Sockeye Salmon. Discussions with villagers from Karluk and Larsen Bay have indicated catch per unit effort for subsistence harvest to be medium to strong.

The Akalura video project was installed and operational on June 13, 2021. Review of photos from June 13 to June 24 does not show any fish movement into the system. It is unknown why no fish have moved into the Akalura system as there were 24,898 fish counted at Upper Station and 38,099 fish counted at Dog Salmon weirs. Kodiak staff will attempt to have photos reviewed to date as soon as possible. Any information collected will be reported in the next weeks subsistence report.

Any additional information pertaining to subsistence harvest will be amended to this report.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kodiak Area

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

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF June 27, 2021.***BRISTOL BAY, CHIGNIK, ALASKA PENINSULA, and ALEUTIAN ISLANDS –
Jonathon Gerken Fisheries Branch Chief Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office***Bristol Bay:

Subsistence fishing is open in all districts but will close around commercial fishing openings.

The Sockeye Salmon sustainable escapement goals (SEG) for Bristol Bay systems are: (The current count as of July 11 are noted).

Escapement Goals:

Alagnak	SEG = 320,000 minimum / current escapement = 2,263,512
Egegik	SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000 / current escapement = 1,527,474
Igushik	SEG = 150,000 – 400,000 / current escapement = 601,980
Kvichak	SEG = 2,000,000 – 10,000,000 / current escapement = 416,982
Naknek	SEG = 800,000 – 2,000,000 / current escapement = 2,318,490
Nushagak	SEG = 370,000 – 900,000 / current escapement = 4,419,570
Nushagak	SEG = 55,000 – 270,000 Chinook Salmon / current escapement = 49,333
Togiak	SEG = 150,000 – 270,000 / Installed July 5 – current escapement = 93,864
Ugashik	SEG = 500,000 – 1,400,000 / current escapement = 191,964
Wood River	SEG = 700,000 – 1,800,000 / current escapement = 3,685,200

The cumulative commercial Sockeye Salmon catch is 28,554,014 fish.

Chignik:

The cumulative weir count as of July 11 is 220,994 early-run and 33,252 late-run Sockeye Salmon resulting in a total of 254,256 fish. The interim escapement objective for July 10 is 330,000 – 410,000 fish. There is concern that the early-run will not make the escapement goal. As such, the Federal Inseason manager issued an Emergency Special Action on July 8, **8-SS-01-21**, restricting harvest of Sockeye Salmon to Federally qualified subsistence users. The Federal Inseason manager has had virtual meetings with residents of Chignik Lake on July 1 and both Chignik Lagoon and Chignik Bay July 9. These villages characterized their subsistence fishing as slow and that the low numbers being caught necessitated longer fishing hours as they piecemealed their harvest together.

The ten-year average (2010 – 2019), genetic proportions of early-run and late-run Sockeye Salmon for the week of July 12 are approximately 50% early-run and 50% late-run. It is typical for the late-run Sockeye Salmon run to be a larger proportion during the week of July 19.

The cumulative weir count as of July 11 for Chinook Salmon is 243 fish. The typical mid-point of the Chinook Salmon run is July 20. It is unlikely, based on the current rate

of escapement, that the lower range (1,300) of the escapement goal for Chignik River Chinook salmon will be achieved. In an effort to conserve the lower than expected Chinook salmon run, both state and Federal fisheries will be closed concurrently to maintain viability of the Chignik River Chinook salmon population on July 14, as stated in Emergency Special Action, **8-KS-01-21**.

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:

Subsistence fishing is open in all districts but will close around commercial fishing openings.

North Peninsula Management Area Escapement Goals and Counts for July 11:

Nelson River	BEG = 97,000 – 219,000, current escapement = 57,403
Bear River	BEG = 117,000 – 195,000, current escapement = 250,045

South Peninsula Management Area Escapement Counts for July 11:

Ilnik River current escapement = 66,585
Orzinski River current escapement = 7,151
Sandy River current escapement = 39,161
McLees River current escapement = 10,169

The cumulative commercial catch is 9,038,597 fish with 4,828,299 Sockeye Salmon and 3,340,412 Pink Salmon being the largest components of harvest.

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 – Keith Herron Ivy, Biologist USFWS Fairbanks Office. July 4 – 10, 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

Assessment Information

To date, the Chinook Salmon is about 90% complete at Pilot Station sonar. The Summer Chum Salmon run is past the typical $\frac{3}{4}$ point for late years and passage is the lowest on record. Pilot Station sonar cumulative passage through July 8 for Chinook Salmon is estimated to be 108,938, which is below the historical cumulative average of 169,173 fish. Summer Chum Salmon passage is estimated to be 102,872, which is well below the historical cumulative of 1,315,546 fish based on late run timing years. Chinook Salmon escapement estimates at most operating projects are below average, and all Summer Chum Salmon escapement estimates are below average for this date.

The latest fish passage and escapement estimates can be found at ADF&G's website at www.adfg.alaska.gov/yukonfishcounts

Management Actions

Salmon fishing will remain closed until we can determine if there is any harvestable surplus. Subsistence salmon fishing is closed in the Coastal District, District 1, District 2, District 3, Innoko River, District 4, Koyokuk River, District 5, and District 6.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets are restricted to a maximum length of 60 feet. This gear may be used to target non-salmon species.

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>

Inseason Outreach

The Yukon River Intertribal Fish Commission's Executive Committee shared their management recommendations which align with the current conservative management approach: "the Executive Council believes that any fishing on the runs with these numbers would jeopardize the health of future salmon runs." The sixth YR DFA teleconference occurred on July 6. Some fisherman reported catch of non-salmon species such as whitefish, sheefish and pike. Many fishermen shared how important fishing is for their families and the hardship of not fishing. **Call in to the YR DFA 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 Boyd_Blihovde@fws.gov; (907) 543-3151 or spencer_rearden@fws.gov

Summary:

This seasons' Chinook Salmon run may be late, or weak. However, in attempting to balance conservation with subsistence fishing opportunities, broad support for this announcement has been reached. On June 28th, 2021 Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) reported the historical passage of approximately 73% of the Chinook Salmon run. Additionally, Sockeye Salmon now compose over 60% of the Bethel Test Fish captures giving added protection to Chinook Salmon within the Kuskokwim River. In an abundance of caution, the Federal In-Season Manager at Yukon Delta NWR, Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), and ADF&G agree that these below-mentioned fishing opportunities would be warranted for subsistence users.

Federally Qualified Subsistence Fishing Opportunities:

(1) 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:

- **July 16, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 6:00PM**

During this opportunity, subsistence users will be allowed to use gillnets with 6-inch or less mesh which may not exceed 45 meshes in depth; 25 fathoms (150 feet) in length above the Johnson River; and may not exceed 50 fathoms (300 feet) in length below the Johnson River. Set gillnets need to be spaced 150 feet apart from another set gillnet. The salmon bearing tributaries listed in ESA 3-KS-01-21 will remain closed to the use of all gillnets for all salmon and all methods and means for Chinook salmon to all users during this period.

(2) Set Gillnet Opportunity:

- **July 17, 2021 starting at 12:01AM through July 18, 2021 11:59PM**

Set gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or less mesh, may not exceed 100 feet in length, and 45 meshes in depth. Set gillnets may not be operated more than 100 feet from the ordinary high-water mark.

Unless amended by a subsequent ESA, all regulations, and restrictions to salmon fishing within federal waters of the Kuskokwim River are still in effect through ESA 3-KS-01-21. This includes the continued use of alternative methods of fishing with live release of Chinook Salmon (including use of hook and line, dip net, beach seine, and fish wheels with a live release wells).

Access up-to-date information on fishing opportunities by calling 907-543-3151 or visit the Refuge [Facebook](#) page or www.fws.gov/refuge/yukon_delta/.

Test Fisheries and Harvest Estimate:

As of July 11, 2021 the CPUE for Chinook at the Bethel test fish is at 495. The 2020 and 2019 Chinook CPUE for this day were at 434 and 801, respectively.

Cumulative harvest of Chinook salmon on the Kuskokwim as of 7/05 is currently at 21,320.

As of July 11, 2021 the CPUE for Chum at the Bethel test fish is at 158. The 2020 and 2019 Chinook CPUE for this day were at 818 and 2,422, respectively.

As of July 11, 2021 the CPUE for Sockeye at the Bethel test fish is at 1,399. The 2020 and 2019 Chinook CPUE for this day were at 803 and 1,735, respectively.

Yukon-Kuskokwim-Interior Alaska Web Links***Federal Subsistence Management Fisheries News Releases:***

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

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Yukon–Northern Area

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

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/>

Northwest Alaska – Ken Adkisson, National Park Service, Nome.
 (907) 443-6104 ken_adkisson@nps.gov

Norton Sound District

High water has caused delays in getting the salmon escapement counting projects operational, particularly in northern Norton Sound. Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) crews have been able to count salmon passage for over a week now at the Ungalik, Inglutalik, and Shaktoolik counting towers. King counts are little below average, but chum counts have been very poor. The department thanks NSEDC for operating salmon counting projects for over two decades and aiding with department counting projects in Norton Sound.

Counting Projects and Escapement:

High water has resulted in the Fish River counting tower in Golovin Subdistrict not being operational and the commercial fishing period will help to determine chum salmon run strength in the subdistrict. The department has received reports of chum salmon jumpers in Golovnin Bay. The department will compare the harvest from upcoming fishing period with historical catches from previous years to determine if there is the possibility for additional fishing openings. Elsewhere in Norton Sound there is at least one escapement counting project operational in each subdistrict and chum salmon escapement counts are well below average through the first week of July

The escapement counts through July 6, 2021 are :

Unalakleet River: 46 kings, 445 chums, 22 pinks, 11 sockeyes.

Shaktoolik River: 387 kings, 711 chums, 648 pinks, 3 sockeyes.

Ungalik River: 141 kings, 381 chums, 882 pinks.

Inglutalik River: 108 kings, 333 chums, 6 sockeyes.

Kwiniuk River: 216 chums, 18 pinks.

Eldorado River: 91 chums, 88 pinks, 6 sockeyes.

Pilgrim River and Solomon River weirs are now fish-tight, but no salmon have been counted yet.

Commercial Fishing:

Subdistrict 2 (Golovin)

Commercial salmon fishing will be open for 24 hours in Norton Sound Subdistrict 2, Golovin Subdistrict, from 6 p.m. Thursday, July 8 until 6 p.m. Friday, July 9. Permit holders are limited to 100 fathoms of net in aggregate length and gillnets must have a mesh size of 6 inches or smaller.

High water has resulted in the Fish River counting tower in Golovin Subdistrict not being operational and the commercial fishing period will help to determine chum salmon run strength in the subdistrict. The department has received reports of chum salmon jumpers in Golovnin Bay. The department will compare the harvest from upcoming fishing period with historical catches from previous years to determine if there is the possibility for additional fishing openings.

No commercial fishing is expected in the other subdistricts until chum salmon escapement counts improve or there is a surge of pink salmon moving into the subdistricts to allow for a pink salmon directed commercial fishing period.

Elsewhere in Norton Sound there is at least one escapement counting project operational in each subdistrict and chum salmon escapement counts are well below average through the first week of July and no commercial fishing is expected in the other subdistricts until chum salmon escapement counts improve or there is a surge of pink salmon moving into the subdistricts to allow for a pink salmon directed commercial fishing period.

Subsistence Fishing: By Board of Fisheries regulation, the King Salmon Management Plan for Subdistricts 5 and 6, the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts, and the Unalakleet River is in effect. From July 1 through August 10 beach seining is allowed 7 days a week unless changed by emergency order. Beginning July 1, in all waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6, salmon other than king salmon may be kept when beach seining. All king salmon caught when beach seining must be returned immediately to water unharmed. Beach seines must have a mesh size of 4 ½ inches or smaller.

The subsistence gillnet fishing schedule remains the same through July 15 unless changed by emergency order. The marine water subsistence fishing schedule for Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts is from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Thursdays until 6:00 p.m. Saturdays. There are no gillnet mesh size restrictions. The southern boundary of the Unalakleet Subdistrict is Black Point and south of Black Point to Point Romanof subsistence fishing remains open 7 days a week with no mesh size restrictions. In the Unalakleet River the subsistence gillnet fishing schedule is from 8 a.m. Mondays until 8 p.m. Tuesdays and from 8 a.m. Fridays until 8 p.m. Saturdays. There are no gillnet mesh size restrictions.

Subdistrict 1 (Nome)

Subsistence Fishing:

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

The first-time nets must be removed from all fresh-water Nome Subdistrict subsistence areas was at midnight on Monday evening, June 14. Likewise, all nets had to be removed from Nome Subdistrict marine waters west of Cape Nome on Monday evening, June 14, at midnight.

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

The first-time that nets must be removed from all fresh-water Nome Subdistrict subsistence areas was at midnight on Monday evening, June 14. Likewise, all nets had to be removed from Nome Subdistrict marine waters west of Cape Nome on Monday evening, June 14, at midnight.

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

Kotzebue District

Commercial Fishing:

Commercial salmon fishing will be open for 8 hours daily from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Sunday, July 11 through Friday, July 16 in the Kotzebue Sound District. Three buyers plan to purchase Kotzebue chum salmon this season and two of the three buyers have notified the department they plan to buy starting on Sunday. The 2021 Kotzebue commercial harvest forecast is 200,000 to 300,000 chum salmon, but throughout western Alaska chum salmon runs have been much lower than expected this season. Permit holders are reminded to check with their buyers before fishing to make sure there is a market for their catch.

MARINE WATER FISHING CLOSURE

ADF&G reminded all commercial and subsistence fishers that the area offshore of the Kotzebue airport's main runway to one nautical 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 in the closed area. The reason for the closure is that fishing often attracts birds that can create a hazardous situation for aircraft. This fishing closure is in effect for both commercial and subsistence fishing and will remain in effect until mid-October. The closed area is a rectangular area defined from the Weather Service Dome, south of the main runway at the Kotzebue airport, to the NANA building north of the same runway and extending westerly one nautical mile out into the ocean approximately perpendicular to the beach

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