



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Federal Subsistence Board News Release



For Immediate Release
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Contact:
Paul Robbins
Public Affairs Officer
Tongass National Forest
530-228-6201
paul.robbins@usda.gov

Under the Authority of:

36 CFR Part 242.10 and .19
50 CFR Part 100.10 and .19

Federal subsistence fishery for Eulachon closed in Federal public waters within District 1, except for the Unuk River.

KETCHIKAN, Alaska – Ketchikan Misty Fjords District Ranger Cathy Tighe, under authority delegated by the Federal Subsistence Board, is closing the Federal public waters that flow into District 1, except the Unuk River drainage, to the taking of Eulachon from 12:01 a.m. on March 1, 2023, until 11:59 p.m. on April 15, 2023. Harvest within waters of the Unuk River drainage shall be limited to one 5-gallon bucket of whole eulachon per household, and gear is restricted to dip net and/or cast nets. All Eulachon incidentally caught outside of the Unuk River must be immediately released into the water unharmed. A Federal Subsistence fishing permit is required, and harvesters must abide by the terms of that permit. Federally qualified subsistence users can obtain federal subsistence permits at the Ketchikan Misty Fjords Ranger District office. Harvesters are encouraged to provide a few fish to the Ketchikan Misty Fjords Ranger District to sample for age and genetic analysis.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) is implementing a full closure of District 1 eulachon for State subsistence, personal use, and commercial fisheries.

Populations of Eulachon in District 1 have been at critically low levels since 2005 and portions of District 1 have been closed since this time. Very few Eulachon were observed between 2005 and 2010. However, starting in 2011 managers have observed Eulachon returning to the Unuk River regularly, though stock sizes within District 1 remain at levels lower than those observed prior to the 2005 population collapse.

However, because monitoring efforts have documented Eulachon returning consistently since 2011, the Federal fishery was opened on the Unuk River in 2021 and again in 2022 to a limited harvest with gear restrictions to federally qualified subsistence users. Based on the observations made by biologists and reports from local subsistence users the 2022 Eulachon run appeared to be low, however because of the low harvest observed in 2022, and the consistent numbers of Ooligan observed in 2022, Managers feel that returns will be sufficient to continue with another limited harvest in 2023 on the Unuk River in District 1, similar to that of the past two years.

A limited harvest in 2023 will aid in managers' efforts to obtain biological data and better assess run sizes, as well as provide Federally qualified subsistence users an opportunity to harvest. Data collected will help managers determine if the Eulachon population can support sustained harvest and if future harvest limits should be changed. The Ketchikan Misty Fjords Ranger District, in cooperation with Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), will continue to monitor returns to District 1 systems, and will provide further updates if a change occurs.

For additional information, please contact Ketchikan District Ranger Cathy Tighe at 907-228-4100, or District Fish, Wildlife, Watershed, Subsistence, and Botany Staff Jon Hyde at 907-228-4137. Federal subsistence fishing permits are available at the Ketchikan Misty Fjords Ranger District Office, 3031 Tongass Avenue, Ketchikan, Alaska, 99901. Maps of District 1 are available at U.S. Forest Service offices. Maps and additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program can be found on the web at www.doi.gov/subsistence or by visiting www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

For interviews and information to be used for publication, contact the Tongass Public Affairs Officer at 907-228-6201.

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