



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

## Federal Subsistence Board

1101 E Tudor Rd, MS 121  
 Anchorage Alaska 99503



Forest Service

# SUBSISTENCE FISHING

## SPECIAL ACTION

**Under Authority of** 50 CFR Part 100.10 and .19  
 36 CFR Part 242.10 and .19

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Special Action No.:	3-KS-03-18	Issued at:	Bethel, Alaska June 7, 2018
Effective Date:	June 12, 2018 12:01 a.m.		
Expiration Date:	July 15, 2018 11:59 p.m., unless superseded by subsequent Special Action		

### EXPLANATION:

Waters under Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction of the Kuskokwim River main stem, the non-salmon tributaries within 100 yards of their confluence with the main stem Kuskokwim River, and salmon tributaries including the:

- Eek River;
- Kwethluk River drainage including its confluence with Kuskokuak Slough and downstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located at the downstream mouth of the slough;
- Kasigluk and Kisaralik river drainages including Old Kuskokuak Slough to ADF&G regulatory markers at the confluence of Old Kuskokuak Slough with Kuskokuak Slough;
- Tuluksak River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately 1-mile to ADF&G regulatory markers; and
- The Aniak River drainage to ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River;

will be closed to the harvest of Chinook Salmon by all Federally qualified subsistence users. Fishing openings and closings for Federally qualified subsistence users identified under an ANILCA Section 804 analysis, which includes residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefornek, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Kongiganak will be announced by subsequent special action after consultation and coordination with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). Fishing for species other than Chinook Salmon remains legal under permanent and emergency regulation by the ADF&G and the Federal Subsistence Management Program.

REGULATION

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

***Unless re-opened by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River main stem, including the following salmon bearing tributaries within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge:***

- ***The Eek River;***
- ***The Kwethluk River drainage including its confluence with Kuskokuak Slough and downstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located at the downstream mouth of the slough;***
- ***The Kasigluk and Kisaralik river drainages including Old Kuskokuak Slough to ADF&G regulatory markers at the confluence of Old Kuskokuak Slough with Kuskokuak Slough;***
- ***The Tuluksak River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately 1-mile to ADF&G regulatory markers; and***
- ***The Aniak River drainage to ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River;***

***are closed to the harvest of Chinook Salmon by Federally qualified subsistence users. Based on observed run strength and in consideration of conservation concerns and escapement goals, the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager may open Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River to the harvest of Chinook Salmon by Federally qualified subsistence users identified under a ANILCA Section 804 analysis, which includes residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Cheforanak, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Kongiganak.***

JUSTIFICATION

The closure to the harvest of Chinook Salmon to Federally qualified subsistence users on the Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River mainstem was issued to assure the continued viability of populations of Chinook Salmon within the Kuskokwim River drainage. This action is also necessary to ensure the continued viability of Chinook Salmon populations returning to salmon spawning tributaries within refuge waters. The Federal in-season manager will assess the run of Chinook Salmon and provide harvest opportunity with subsequent special actions. The decision to reopen Federal public waters to Federally qualified subsistence users identified under a ANILCA Section 804 analysis, which includes residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Cheforanak, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Kongiganak, will be made in consultation with the KRITFC and the ADF&G. This action is necessary to assure the continued viability of Chinook Salmon.


Since 2010, the Kuskokwim River has experienced poor runs of Chinook Salmon, and 2012 was the lowest run on record. Recently the ADF&G released revised Chinook Salmon run sizes which lowered previously published run sizes by an average of 11%. Additionally, the ADF&G release a revised pre-season forecast based on the changes to the Chinook Salmon run reconstruction model. This lowered the original 2018 pre-season forecast to 116,000 – 150,000 Chinook Salmon. Revised model results indicate that in 2016, the total run was estimated at 128,855 Chinook Salmon with an estimated subsistence harvest of 31,000 Chinook Salmon. The 2017 total run was estimated at 133,267 Chinook Salmon with an estimated subsistence harvest of 16,700. If the 2018 return is within the forecast of 116,000 to 150,000, there will be enough fish to meet escapement goals and provide for an even more limited Chinook Salmon subsistence

harvest than originally thought. A subsistence harvest at the level of the long-term average of 87,000 Chinook Salmon would not be sustained for a majority of the projected run. Thus, some harvest restrictions are warranted during 2018 to meet biological requirements while providing limited subsistence harvest opportunity once the run has been assessed.

The mid-point of the 2018 revised forecast range, 133,000 Chinook, is only slightly larger than the total run sizes observed during the 2015-2017 runs (125,058-133,267), therefore it would appear that a similar conservative management approach as what occurred during those years is appropriate.

The closure of salmon-bearing tributaries is due to the low Chinook Salmon returns to Kuskokwim River tributaries over the last several years. While escapement goals were met or exceeded for the majority of weir projects in 2016 and 2017, conservation measures are warranted in the 2018 season to aid in the recovery of these stocks. Chinook Salmon returns in the Kwethluk River have fallen below the lower bound of the escapement goal in six of the last nine years, and escapement in the Aniak, Kisaralik and Tuluksak rivers has been below average. The Eek River is closed to the harvest of Chinook Salmon as a salmon spawning stream to conserve salmon going upstream to spawn. Even a very limited subsistence harvest could impact the likelihood of achieving sufficient escapement; therefore, the tributary-specific restrictions are necessary for the continued viability of Chinook Salmon.

#### FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD

By delegation to:   
 Ken Stahlnecker, Refuge Manager  
 Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

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