

**FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 27-JUNE 2 , 2018. Report #1**

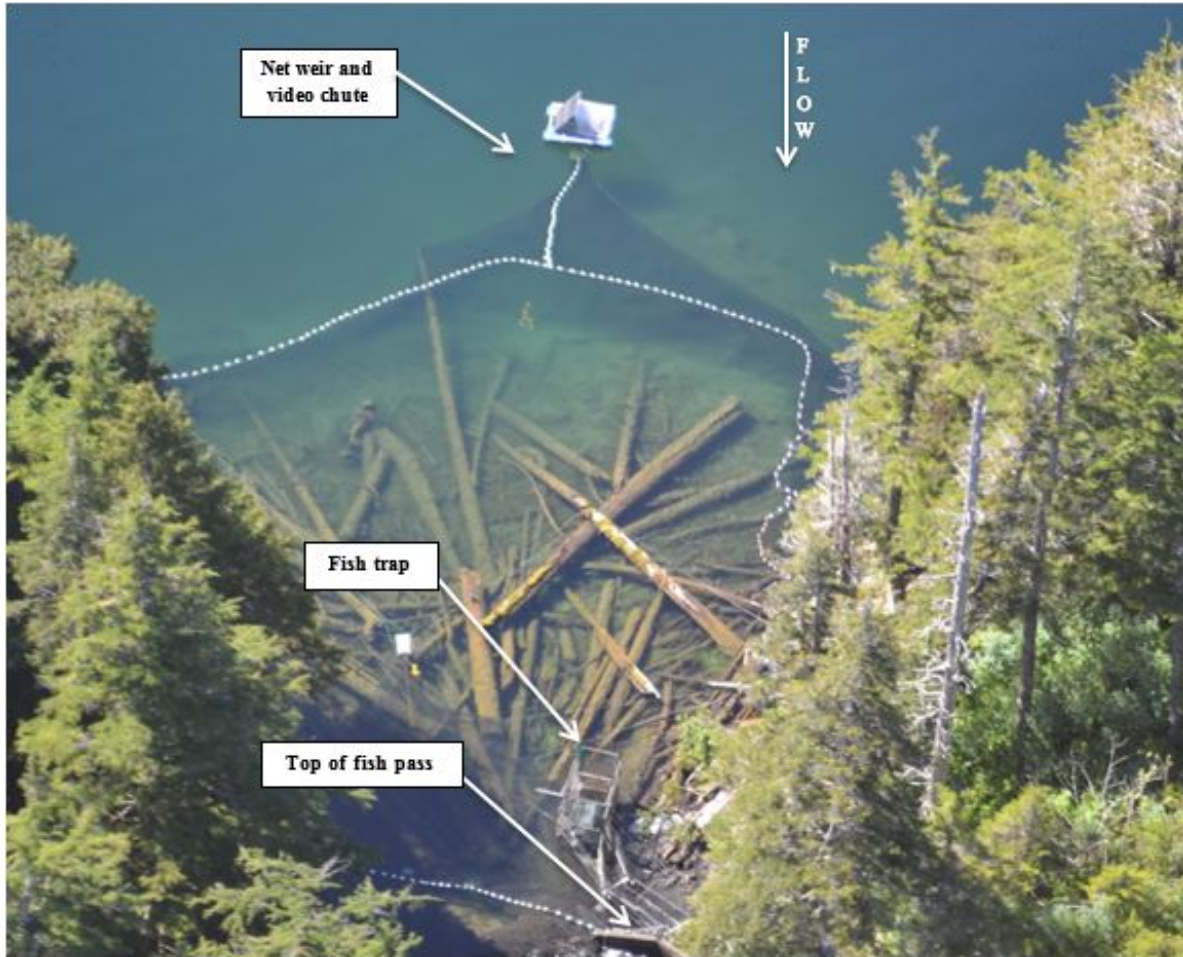
Compiled by George Pappas - (907) 786-3822, [George\\_Pappas@fws.gov](mailto:George_Pappas@fws.gov) Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS.

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.

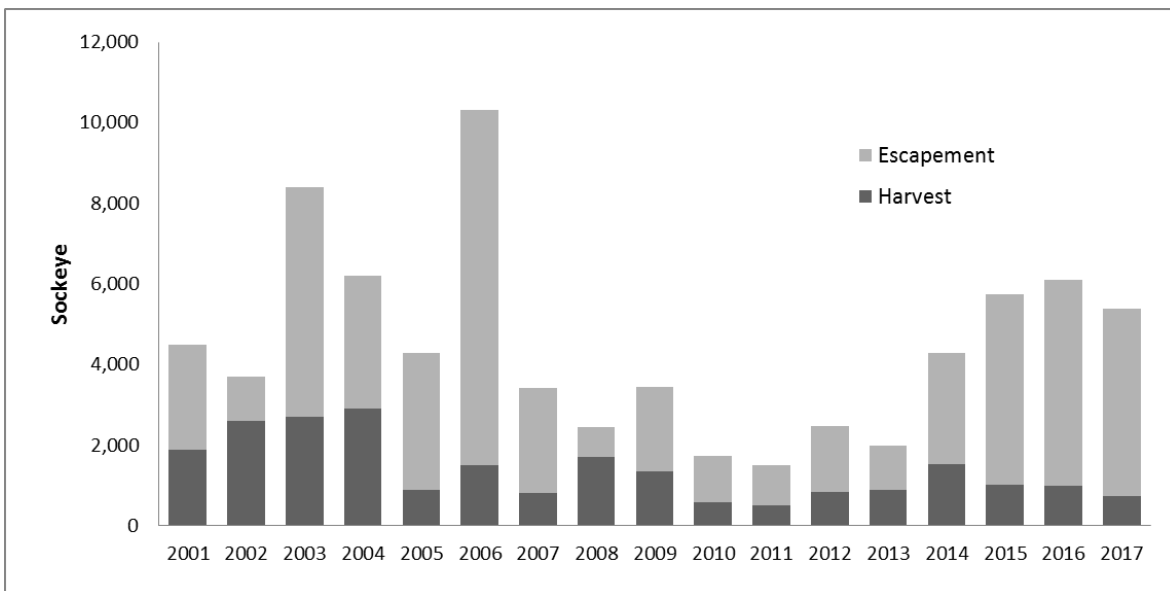
**SOUTHEAST ALASKA****Sitka and Hoonah Area – Justin Koller, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest**

Justin Koller, (907)747-4297 [jpkoller@fs.fed.us](mailto:jpkoller@fs.fed.us)

**Falls Lake** - The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake operate the Falls Lake trap and video net weir which will be operational the first week of July. The final escapement estimate in 2017 was 4,662 Sockeye Salmon while the final subsistence and sport harvest in the marine terminal area was 732. Subsistence harvest accounted for 89% of terminal area harvest.

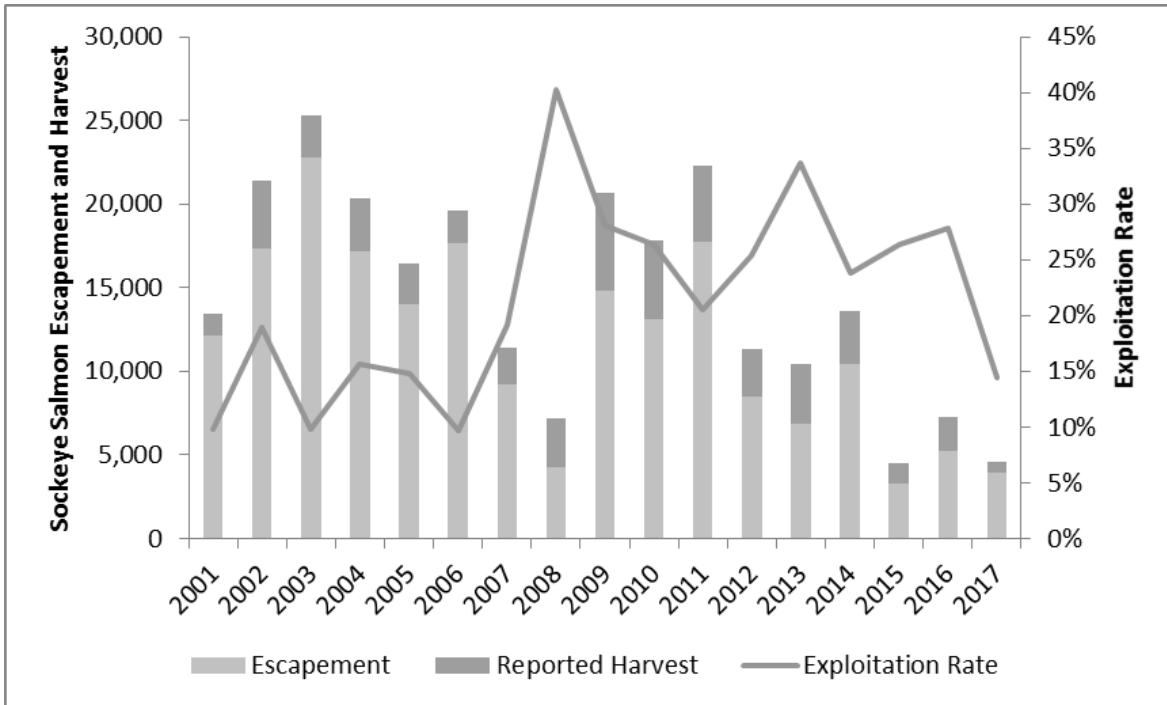


**Figure 1.** Aerial photo of the Falls Lake outlet illustrating the typical location of weir equipment.



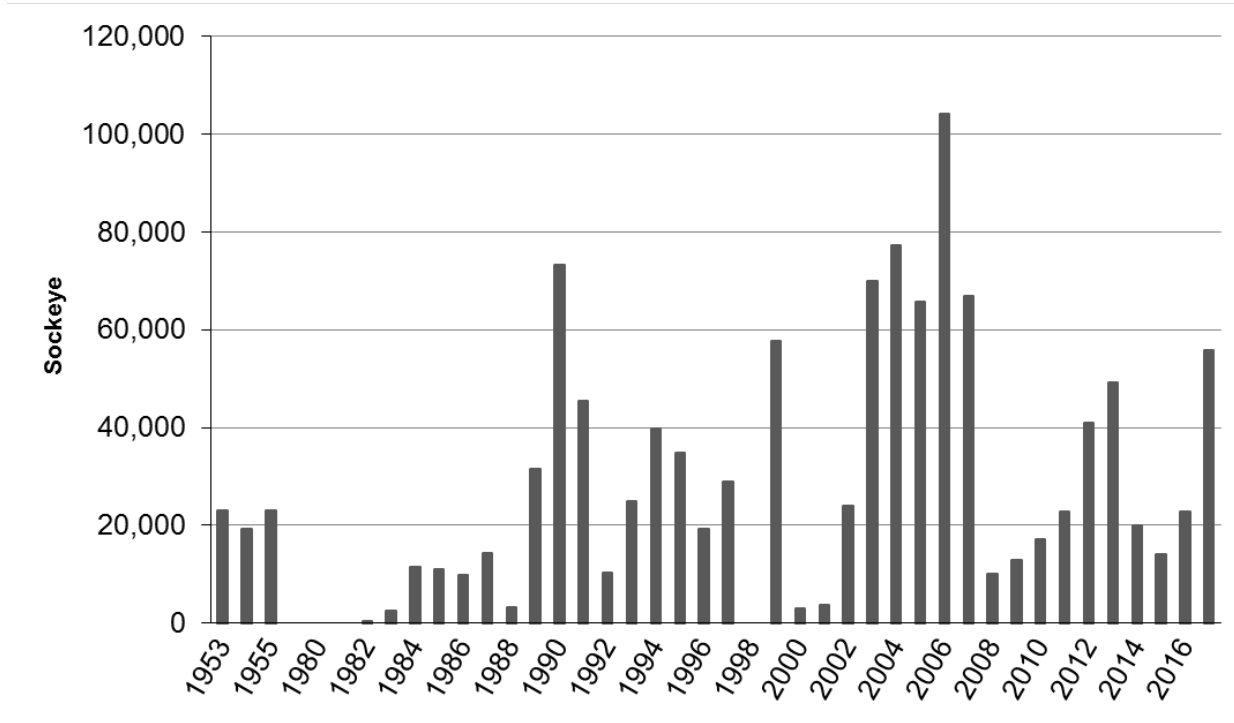
**Figure 2.** Escapement plus harvest equals total terminal run of Sockeye Salmon at Falls Lake, 2001-2017.

**Klag Bay** - The Sitka Tribe of Alaska operates the Sockeye Salmon monitoring weir at Klag Bay which is scheduled to be operational the last week in June. In 2017, approximately 3,898 Sockeye migrated past the weir while an estimated 1,087 Sockeye were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fishery. Subsistence harvest accounted for over 99% of terminal area harvest.



**Figure 3.** Reported harvest, escapement, and exploitation rate for Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon, 2001-2017.

**Redoubt Lake** - The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir which is scheduled to be operational in mid-June. In 2017, an estimated 55,397 Sockeye Salmon passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake. On July 11, in accordance with the Redoubt Lake Management Plan, the individual/household subsistence Sockeye possession limit was set at 25 and the individual/household subsistence Sockeye annual limit was set at 100. These limits were based on an in-season model prediction of about 55,000 Sockeye returning.



**Figure 4.** Annual Sockeye Salmon expanded escapement into Redoubt Lake for years with data: 1953 to 1955, 1982 to 1997, and 1999 to 2017. The weir was not operated in 1998.

**Wrangell/Petersburg Area Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, Contact to be announced.**

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

The Sockeye Salmon runs and subsistence fisheries have not started yet in the Admiralty and Juneau areas. Project personnel with the Forest Service and the Angoon Community Association are preparing for the Sockeye Salmon monitoring project at Sitkoh Lake, which is scheduled to begin in early July. The Kook Lake project will not operate this year, and the Neva Lake project is still tentative.

The Sitkoh Lake project will use a pair of remotely-monitored swim-through video weirs to get validated counts of salmon entering the lake. Live video from the site will be digitally transmitted to Angoon, where project personnel will record motion-triggered clips from the underwater video chute cameras. The feed from the underwater and site surveillance cameras can be viewed at any time over the internet.



Figure 1. Video weirs at the outlet of Sitkoh Lake, 2017

In the Yakutat area, counts of steelhead kelts through the ADF&G Situk weir are considerably below normal, with only 599 counted as of May 27<sup>th</sup>. This compares to counts of 3,123, 4,574, and 5,555 on the same date in 2017, 2016, and 2015 respectively. The weir was installed later than normal due to heavy spring rains, complicating the estimate of the steelhead return in 2018. ADF&G forecasts a run of 730 Chinook Salmon to the Situk River in 2018, and has closed the sport, subsistence and commercial fisheries in order to meet the biological escapement goal of 450-1,050 large Chinook Salmon. The Forest Service also will not issue permits for the subsistence take of Chinook Salmon in the Situk until further notice. The Sockeye Salmon runs in the Yakutat area begin in mid-June.

**Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area – Jeff Reeves, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest. (907) 826-1649 [jreeves@fs.fed.us](mailto:jreeves@fs.fed.us)**

The 2017 subsistence salmon fishery for Southeast Alaska and Yakutat areas had 293 permits issued for the fishery. To date, 81% of the permits have been returned reporting a harvest of 3 Chinook, 9 Chum, 389 Coho, 305 Pink, and 687 Sockeye Salmon. Also reported were 4 Steelhead Trout, 3 Rainbow Trout, 39 Cutthroat Trout and 31 Dolly Varden

The 2017 Prince of Wales/Kosciusko winter subsistence steelhead fishery ended on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Access was far more limited during this fishery than the previous year. A total of 12 permits were issued during the fishery. All permits were received back and a total of 1 Steelhead and 2 Cutthroat Trout were reported harvested.

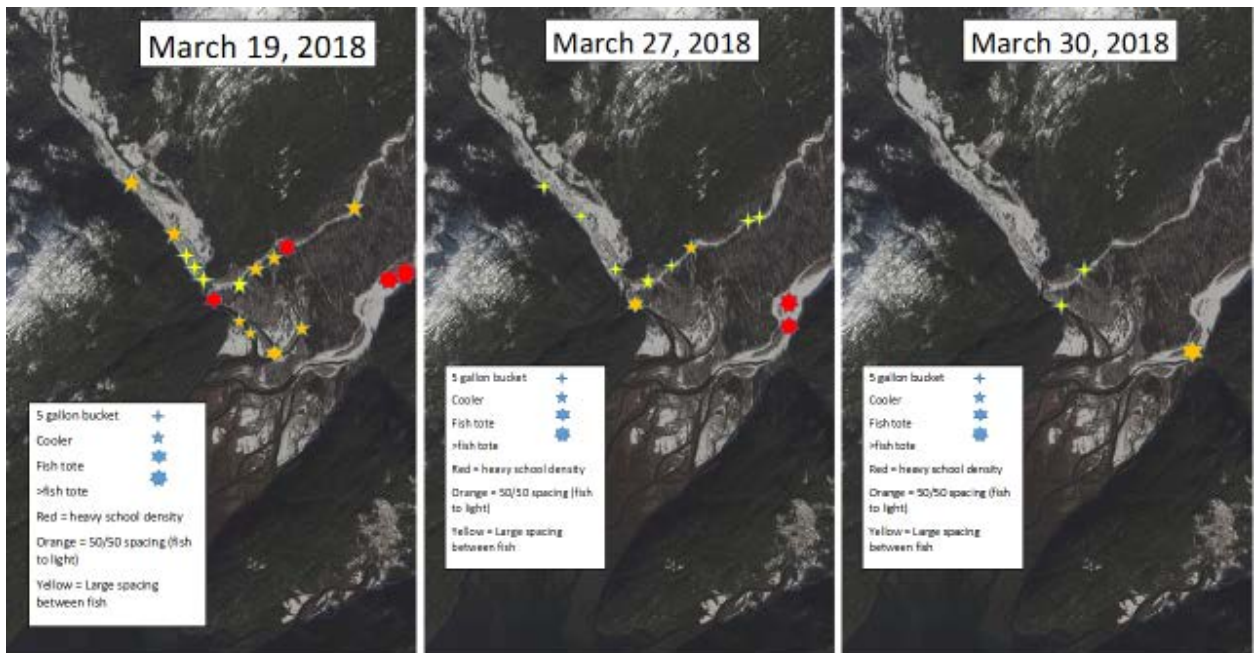
The 2018 Prince of Wales/Kosciusko spring subsistence steelhead fishery ended on May 31<sup>st</sup>. A total of 42 permits were issued to Prince of Wales Island residents during this fishery. Permits from this fishery being are starting to be returned and are not due back until June 15. The total reported harvest to date is 9 Steelhead Trout.

Although Chinook Salmon abundance has been determined to be very low this year, hatchery return Chinook Salmon are present in the local Craig and Klawock area resulting in many subsistence users actively fishing under sport fishing regulations at this time. Although a couple of Prince of Wales Island streams have June returns of Sockeye, most subsistence users are in preparation for subsistence harvest in July.

There are currently some commercial Chinook troll fisheries occurring in terminal harvest areas within the Ketchikan and Craig areas. Harvest to date is 835 Chinook. The Kendrick Bay terminal seine fishery for Chum Salmon will be beginning soon.

The District 1/Unuk River Eulachon fishery was closed pre-season in February 2018. Although weather and ice prevented access during the week of March 12<sup>th</sup>, a USFS monitoring crew accompanied by a Ketchikan Indian Community employee deployed to the Unuk River during the week of March 19<sup>th</sup> concurrent with the arrival of fish. A combination of foot, boat, aerial and snorkel surveys were used to document Eulachon presence within the drainage. Levels of abundance were estimated by volume filled (i.e., 5 gallon bucket, ice cooler, fish tote, or greater than fish tote) if harvested. Eulachon were observed in the river until March 30<sup>th</sup> when abundances had dramatically reduced. Inclement weather prohibited monitoring personnel from returning until April 14<sup>th</sup> and no fish were seen at that time. Local managers, as well as those in Canada and Washington are continuing to manage Eulachon extra-conservatively as they do not believe the populations are stable enough to provide for fishing opportunity and are anticipating this trend to continue based on the declines in ocean conditions affecting salmon and other species.





Estimated densities of observed Eulachon in the Unuk River drainage during 2018 monitoring efforts.



Large schools of Eulachon in Main Unuk River during March 27, 2018 aerial survey (Jon Hyde photo).

### **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](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.RI>

*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=RI.home>

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

### **SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA**

#### **Prince William Sound – Copper River**

**Copper River – Dave Sarafin, (907) 822-7281- [Dave Sarafin@NPS.gov](mailto:Dave.Sarafin@NPS.gov), Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve**

Deployed in field, no summary submitted.

#### Links

ADF&G Miles Lake daily sonar estimates

[http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.salmon\\_escapement](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>

ADF&G Copper River Inseason Commercial Harvest Estimates

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

Gulkana River counting tower – ADF&G

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/index.cfm?ADFG=main.LocSelectYearSpecies>

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

(907) 424-4759 [mburcham@fs.fed.us](mailto:mburcham@fs.fed.us)



No report submitted, expect first report next week.

**Cook Inlet Area – Jeff Anderson, Field Supervisor, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office** (907) 260-0132 [Jeffry\\_Anderson@fws.gov](mailto:Jeffry_Anderson@fws.gov)

The 2018 subsistence dip net fisheries for salmon will begin on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers June 15 and June 16, respectively. 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.

Permits are ready to issue for community gillnet fisheries on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. Regulatory dates for the Kasilof River experimental 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.

USFWS and USFS staff will issue permits in Cooper Landing (June 6) and Hope (June 7). USFWS staff will issue permits in Ninilchik on June 13.

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](mailto:michael_brady@fws.gov) or Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230  
[Kevin\\_VanHatten@fws.gov](mailto:Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov)

**Subsistence fisheries update for the period of May 28 – June 1, 2018**

**Kodiak Island Area – Michael Brady, Refuge Manager, Kodiak NWR**

The 2018 Sockeye salmon returns for Kodiak archipelago are within the 10 year average. Many of the systems which monitor Sockeye salmon returns by ADF&G have been installed and are operational at this time.

Subsistence fishing is fairly slow at Litnik (Afognak Lake), Buskin River, and Karluk River the past couple of weeks. Although a report from Karluk villages indicates that the number of fish moving to that system is improving as they had a high catch per unit effort earlier in the week.

Very little effort is occurring at the mouth of the Buskin River but many users are targeting systems on Afognak Island at this time.

Any additional information pertaining to subsistence harvest will be provided in next week report.

***Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kodiak Area***

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

***BRISTOL BAY, CHIGNIK, ALASKA PENINSULA, and ALEUTIAN ISLANDS –  
Jonathon Gerken Fisheries Branch Chief Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office  
(907) 271-2776 Jonathon\_Gerken@fws.gov***

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 2018 Bristol Bay Sockeye Salmon run is forecast to be approximately 41 to 61 million fish for nine river systems: Kvichak, Alagnak, Naknek, Egegik, Ugashik, Wood, Igushik, Nushagak, and Togiak. Based on the forecast 31.2 to 51.7 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 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
Togiak	SEG = 120,000 – 270,000

Chignik:

The 2018 Sockeye Salmon forecasted run size for the Chignik River Management Area (CMA) is 1,749,000 fish with a harvest estimate of 1,011,000 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 7,000 fish.

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	-25,000 in August and 50,000 in September in addition to late run escapement goals
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 Bear Lake stocks. The 2018 Sockeye Salmon run size projections are 428,000 for the Nelson River and 308,000 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](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](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.**

[Gerald\\_Maschmann@fws.gov](mailto:Gerald_Maschmann@fws.gov) or

Fred Bue [Fredrick\\_Bue@fws.gov](mailto:Fredrick_Bue@fws.gov)

Emmonak Summer Office (907) 949-1798

The Emmonak Field Office is open for summer management activities. The office can be contacted by calling (907) 949-1798.

### **Summer Season Outlook and Management Strategies**

The Summer Chum Salmon run is projected to be above average and to provide for escapement and subsistence uses. A surplus of up to 1.4 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. The Chinook Salmon outlook is projecting a below average run size of 173,000 to 251,000 fish. Managers are optimistic the total Chinook Salmon run abundance could be near the upper end of the outlook based upon the last three seasons which came in near the upper end their projections and thus, possibly indicating an improvement in productivity. The 2018 salmon runs may be large enough to provide for normal subsistence harvests. However, a cautionary approach will be taken early in the season, and inseason management strategies will be based on run assessment information once fish begin entering the river. If assessment indicates the Chinook salmon run size is near the upper end of the outlook range, and goals are projected to be met, subsistence fishing restrictions would likely be relaxed. If that occurs, commercial Chum Salmon fishermen may be given the opportunity to sell Chinook Salmon incidentally-caught in the Chum Salmon fishery. This would likely be at the tail end of the run, when the majority of Chinook Salmon have passed upriver for escapement and subsistence harvest purposes. The following management strategies were formulated after extensive public input:

- Before Chinook salmon enter the river, subsistence fishing will be open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. Fishermen are reminded that whenever gillnets are allowed, they may choose to use smaller mesh gillnets than specified.
- As Chinook salmon enter each district, subsistence salmon fishing will be provided on a reduced regulatory schedule with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets during the early part of the run.
- Commercial fishing for Summer Chum Salmon will begin with selective gear, based on inseason run assessment.
- When confidence is high that the Chinook Salmon run is adequate and escapement goals are likely to be met, the use of 7.5-inch gillnets on a full regulatory schedule will be considered. If inseason assessment indicates a poorer than anticipated run, subsistence fishing time may be reduced or gear may be limited to selective gear types with no retention of Chinook Salmon allowed.
- The sport fishery for Chinook Salmon will begin the season closed (effective May 11) throughout the U.S. portion of the Yukon River drainage, excluding the Tanana River drainage. Chinook Salmon may not be retained or possessed. Management actions for the Tanana River drainage will be announced in early June

### **Assessment Information**

According to ADF&G staff in Emmonak, ice out on the lower Yukon River occurred on May 18, a few days earlier than the historical average of May 21. Additionally, Bering Sea ice retreated off the coast early, leaving the Yukon River mouth ice free with no spring flooding. With ice out earlier than average and climate modeling provided by NOAA, ADF&G, and AOOS, managers are anticipating earlier entry timing for Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon. A few Subsistence fishermen in the lower Yukon River area have been fishing since ice out; however high debris loads are hindering efforts. The first subsistence caught Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon was reported on May 27. Lower Yukon drift test fishing began on May 28 with 8.25 inch and 5.5 inch gear. Fishing was difficult due to very high debris load. Test fishermen are sweeping test fishing sites for snags. Subsistence fishermen in Grayling are also reporting very high debris loads. Test fishing at Middle Mouth is anticipated to begin around June 5 depending on river conditions and debris loads. Chinook and Summer Chum Salmon catches for both subsistence fishermen and the test fishery have been sporadic. Managers anticipate test fishery catches to increase in the coming days. The Pilot Station sonar began full operations on June 1; however, test fishing catches have been too low to generate passage estimates. Efforts are being made to release Chinook Salmon alive that are caught in the test fishery in order to conserve Chinook Salmon. At this time, it is too early to assess the overall strength of either the Chinook or Chum Salmon runs. The average first quarter point in the LYTF for Chinook Salmon is June 15, and June 19 for Summer Chum Salmon.



## **Management Actions**

Until more assessment data become available, management decisions will be consistent with the preseason projections. At this time, subsistence salmon fishing in the southern portion of the Coastal District and Districts 1, 2, and 3 are open 24 hours per day, seven days per week, with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. The northern portion of the Coastal District and District 1 will be managed as one district for 2018. Subsistence salmon fishing in District 1 will be placed on half its regulatory schedule of two, 18-hour periods per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear on June 8. Subsistence salmon fishing in Districts 2 and 3 will be placed on half their regulatory schedules of two, 18-hour periods per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear on June 11. Chinook Salmon caught incidentally may be retained for subsistence purposes. Subsistence fishing in the Innoko River, Koyukuk River, Districts 4 and 5, Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B, Old Minto and Upper Tanana Areas are open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and restricted to 7.5-inch or less mesh gillnet and fish wheel gear. 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 restrictions will continue in all districts as the Chinook Salmon migrate upstream.

## **Consultation**

Extensive public outreach and consultation was performed during the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018 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, at the annual Yukon River Drainage Fishermen's Association Board meeting, and at the Yukon River InterTribal Fish Commission annual meeting. On May 2, a pre-season planning meeting was held in Anchorage that brought together representatives from most Alaskan Yukon River communities to discuss the run outlook and management options.

## **KUSKOKWIM RIVER**

**In Season Manager – Ken Stahlnecker, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Contact [kenneth\\_stahlnecker@fws.gov](mailto:kenneth_stahlnecker@fws.gov); (907) 543-3151 or [Lewis\\_Coggins@fws.gov](mailto:Lewis_Coggins@fws.gov)**

### **Summary:**

Under State of Alaska Emergency Order #3-S-WR-01-18, Subsistence fishing with gillnets in the Kuskokwim River will be closed during the following times and areas, until further notice:

- Sections 1 & 2: Beginning 12:01 a.m. Friday, May 25, 2018, the Kuskokwim River Drainage from the Yukon Delta NWR boundary at the mouth of the

Kuskokwim River to ADF&G markers approximately one-half mile upstream of the Tuluksak River mouth;

- Section 3: Beginning 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, May 30, 2018, from the ADF&G markers approximately one-half mile upstream of the Tuluksak River mouth to the Yukon Delta Refuge boundary near Aniak;
- Section 4: Beginning 12:01 a.m. Monday, June 4, 2018, from the Yukon Delta Refuge boundary near Aniak to the ADF&G regulatory markers near the Holitna River mouth; and
- Section 5: Beginning 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 9, 2018, upstream of the ADF&G regulatory markers located near the Holitna River mouth to the headwaters of the Kuskokwim River.

The following subsistence fishing restrictions and tributary gillnet fishing closures go into effect beginning 12:01 a.m. Friday, May 25, 2017 until further notice:

- 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.
- The Aniak River drainage to ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River

Alternative types of fishing gear such as subsistence hook and line, subsistence fishing with fish wheels with live wells, and subsistence fishing with beach seines or dip nets are currently allowed until further notice for other salmon species. All Chinook Salmon caught must be released back into the river.

### **Test Fisheries:**

As of June 4, 2018 the CPUE for Chinook at the Bethel test fish is at 5. 2016 and 2017 Chinook CPUE for this day were at 31 and 3 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](http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Yukon.pdf)

**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](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) 443-2522 [Ken\\_Adkisson@nps.gov](mailto:Ken_Adkisson@nps.gov)

A week's time can see a rapid transition from winter to summer in Northwest Alaska. About two weeks ago there was a lot of ice remaining in the Bering Strait area and people were still actively hunting marine mammals. By late last week, the ice was pretty much gone in the region, marine mammal hunting had pretty much wound down, and many residents were beginning to look forward to a good summer of fishing.

### **Norton Sound District**

The Norton Sound District includes six subdistricts: Nome (1), Golovin (2), Elim (3), Norton Bay (4), Shaktoolik (5) and Unalakleet (6).

#### **2017 Season Summary:**

Commercial and Subsistence Fishing:

The Coho salmon harvest was a record. The Chum salmon harvest was the ninth highest on record and the best since 1983. The Sockeye salmon harvest, although a small portion of the overall harvest, was the second highest in history at nearly 3,000 fish. The Pink Salmon run was one of the greatest runs for an odd-numbered year, and escapements surpassed many even-numbered year escapements; however, there was minimal interest from the only buyer in purchasing Pink Salmon. The Chinook salmon run was once again

poor, and no commercial fishing targeting Chinook salmon was allowed. A series of subsistence fishing restrictions was also phased in for the marine and fresh waters of southern Norton Sound in order to try and ensure that escapement goals for Chinook salmon were met for those waters.

Subdistrict 1 (Nome), and Pilgrim River and Salmon Lake in the Port Clarence District are generally the only places where limits are placed on subsistence harvest. Salmon limits have been in place in the Nome Subdistrict since 1985, but have been removed in a number of rivers with the improving Chum salmon runs in recent years.

### 2018 Season Outlook:

Salmon outlooks and harvest projections for the 2018 salmon season are based on qualitative assessments of parent-year escapements, sibling relationships, subjective determination of freshwater overwintering and ocean survival, and in the case of the commercial fisheries, the projections of local market conditions.

In last year's commercial fishery there was a record Coho Salmon harvest and the highest Chum salmon harvest since 1983. The department expects similar Coho and Chum salmon run strengths in 2018.

The Coho Salmon run is expected be well above average based on ocean survival conditions in recent years, and the commercial harvest commercial harvest is expected to be 170, 000 to 220,000 fish.

Chum Salmon runs are expected to be above average and the harvest is expected to be 150,000 to 200,000 fish.

The department expects the Pink Salmon run to be above average for an even-numbered year, but harvest will depend on buyer interest and could range from 25,000 to 75,000 fish. No Pink Salmon directed fishing periods would be expected because of buyer interest in more valuable salmon species, and the Pink Salmon harvest likely would be an incidental harvest only. However, the department does have the authority to increase fishing net aggregate length from 100 hundred fathoms to 200 fathoms if there were a Pink Salmon directed fishery. Also, in June a seine fishery targeting Pink and Chum Salmon in subdistricts 5 (Shaktoolik) and 6 (Unalakleet) would occur with the requirement that Chinook salmon be returned to the water unharmed, and in that case the Pink Salmon harvest may exceed 200,000 Pink Salmon.

However, the Chinook Salmon run will likely be weak again, and no commercial fishing targeting Chinook Salmon is expected in Norton Sound. Additional subsistence restrictions for Chinook Salmon are expected in the southern Norton Sound. Sales of incidentally harvested Chinook Salmon will not be allowed in Subdistricts 5 (Shaktoolik) and 6 (Unalakleet) until late July or early August because of subsistence fishing restrictions starting in June. Elsewhere, incidentally caught Chinook Salmon in commercial fisheries will be allowed to be sold.

In the Port Clarence district the department expects the commercial fishery to remain closed because of a lack of buyer interest despite the in-river goal of 30,000 Sockeye Salmon of Pilgrim River expected to be reached. Subsistence fishing closures the Pilgrim River are not expected, but the department will limit Sockeye Salmon subsistence harvest of 25 fish initially, and will re-increase or waive the limit if the run is similar to the last several years.

#### Sport Fishing:

Effective Monday, May 14, the ADF&G Division of Sport Fish closed all the fresh waters from Bald Head to Point Romanof to sport fishing for Chinook Salmon. The closure includes, but is not limited to, the Unalakleet, Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Ungalik, Inglutalik, and Golsovia river drainages. In addition, only one unabated single-hook artificial lure may be used in these drainages. The 2018 preseason outlook for the Unalakleet River drainage Chinook Salmon run is expected to be insufficient to provide for a moderate harvestable surplus. According to the Subdistricts 5 and 6 of the Norton Sound District and the Unalakleet River King Salmon Management Plan, when the inriver subsistence fishery is closed to the retention of Chinook Salmon, sport fishing for Chinook Salmon will be closed. The department does not have reliable in season stock assessment information for the Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Ungalik, Inglutalik, and Golsovia River drainages, but these Chinook salmon runs generally cycle in accordance with the Unalakleet River stocks. The closure of sport fishing for Chinook Salmon in these rivers will provide protection for returning fish. The prohibition of bait while sport fishing should minimize catch-and-release mortality for Chinook Salmon incidentally caught while sport fishing for other species. This emergency order will remain in effect through August 15, 2018 or until inseason assessments project that the escapement goal will be met for Chinook salmon on the Unalakleet River.

#### Commercial and Subsistence Fishing:

Because of the expected week Chinook salmon run in Norton Sound this year, effective June 1, the ADF&G closed the Unalakleet River drainage from downstream of the North River and the North River drainage to all subsistence net fishing except for dip nets and cast nets. Any Chinook Salmon caught in a dip net or cast net must be immediately returned to the water. The subsistence net fishing closure will extend out to the marine waters within 500 yards of the Unalakleet River mouth. Set gill nets with a mesh size of 4 inches or less are allowed to be fished in the Unalakleet River drainage upstream of the North River only. Further subsistence fishing restrictions and closures and other marine and fresh waters of subdistricts 4 (Norton Bay), 5 (Shaktoolik) and 6 (Unalakleet) are expected to occur June 9 in order to ensure adequate numbers of Chinook Salmon reach spawning areas.



## **Kotzebue District**

### 2017 Season Summary:

The commercial salmon season opened on July 10 and closed by regulation after August 31. There were three buyers for the Kotzebue Sound District commercial salmon fishery in 2017. However, one of the buyers did not begin buying until August 9. The commercial Chum salmon harvest of 463,749 Chum Salmon was the sixth highest in the 56-year history of the fishery. No Chum Salmon were kept for personal use, but 115 Chinook Salmon, 129 Sockeye Salmon, 1,017 Pink Salmon, 58 Coho Salmon, 523 Dolly Varden, 349 sheefish and 1 whitefish were reported in the catch and kept for personal use. Additional fish were likely kept for personal use but were not reported on fish tickets. This year's test fish Chum Salmon CPUE cumulative index at the department test fish project on the Kobuk River near Kiana was 2,097 which was eighth highest in the 25-year project history. Additional fishing time in August (longer daily fishing periods) was made possible in August because of a floating processor vessel arriving that eliminated restricting fishing time based on airplane cargo capacity to move the fish out of Kotzebue.

Subsistence harvesters reported in late July that they were having trouble getting salmon near Noorvik. The Nazuruk Channel passes by Noorvik, but a second channel, Melvin Channel, passes several miles to the north before both channels of the Kobuk River connect farther up river. The ADF&G examined Kobuk River test fish data and noticed that a higher percentage of Chums were being caught on the north bank than the south bank. Because that has only happened in 2 of the 24 previous years, the Department believed the majority of Chum Salmon were not passing Noorvik and were moving upstream via the Melvin Channel. Two subsistence fishing sites on Melvin Channel were having good catches on Chum Salmon. The Department provided a two day break in the commercial fishery to allow more Chum Salmon to move upstream, and in August the south bank catch began to exceed the north bank catch, and catches also improved in Noorvik. The Chum salmon catch index for the season on the south bank exceeded the north bank by 2 to 1 at the test fish site.

### 2018 Season Outlook:

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. Within the Kotzebue district Chum salmon are the most abundant anadromous fish. Other salmon species (Chinook, Pink, Coho, and Sockeye) occur in lesser numbers as do Dolly Varden and sheefish.

No subsistence fishing restrictions are expected in 2018. 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 depend on comparing period and cumulative season catch rates to prior years, along with test fishing results on the Kobuk River and the Noatak River if test fishing occurs there. 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 strong four-year-old return may cause midseason catches to rise. Overall, the outlook for the 2018 season is based on the parent-year escapements and returning age classes observed in the commercial fishery and in the test fish samples from the Kobuk River last year. The four-year-old component of the run is expected to be well above average based on the three-year-old return in 2017. The five-year-old component of the run is expected to be average based on the four-year-old return last year. The three-year-old and six-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 400,000 to 600,000 Chum salmon. However there is a possibility of record harvests of nearly 700,000 Chum salmon if market conditions can accept that level of harvest.

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