

**Fishery Management Report No. 05-34**

---

---

# **Yakutat Set Gillnet Fishery 2005 Management Plan**

by

**Gordon F. Woods**

---

---

May 2005

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Divisions of Sport Fish and Commercial Fisheries





***FISHERY MANAGEMENT REPORT NO. 05-34***

**YAKUTAT SET GILLNET FISHERY  
2005 MANAGEMENT PLAN**

by

Gordon F. Woods  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries  
Yakutat, Alaska

Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Division of Sport Fish, Research and Technical Services  
333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, Alaska, 99518-1599

May 2005

The Division of Sport Fish Fishery Management Reports series was established in 1989 for the publication of an overview of Division of Sport Fish management activities and goals in a specific geographic area. Since 2004, the Division of Commercial Fisheries has also used the Fishery Management Report series. Fishery Management Reports are intended for fishery and other technical professionals, as well as lay persons. Fishery Management Reports are available through the Alaska State Library and on the Internet: <http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/divreports/html/intersearch.cfm>. This publication has undergone regional peer review.

*Gordon F. Woods,  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries  
P.O. Box 49  
Yakutat, Alaska 99689 U.S.A*

*this document should be cited as:*

*Woods, G. F. 2005 Yakutat set gillnet fishery 2005 Management Plan. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Management Report No. 05-34, Anchorage.*

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game administers all programs and activities free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. The department administers all programs and activities in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire further information please write to ADF&G, P.O. Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 300 Webb, Arlington, VA 22203 or O.E.O., U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240.

For information on alternative formats for this and other department publications, please contact the department ADA Coordinator at (voice) 907-465-4120, (TDD) 907-465-3646, or (FAX) 907-465-2440.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
ABSTRACT .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Anticipated Salmon Return.....	2
Fishery Management .....	2
2005 SUMMER MANAGEMENT PLAN .....	3
Alsek River.....	3
Dangerous River .....	4
Yakutat Bay .....	4
Yakutat Bay and Manby Shore Ocean Fisheries .....	4
Situk-Ahrnklin and Lost River .....	4
East River .....	6
Akwe River.....	6
Manby Shore Inland Fishery .....	7
Humpback Creek Fishery .....	7
Italio River.....	7
Yakataga District .....	8
2005 FALL MANAGEMENT PLAN .....	8
Yakutat District .....	8
Yakataga District .....	9
YAKUTAT AREA-2005 SALMON RUN PROJECTIONS.....	9
Sockeye Salmon .....	9
Alsek River.....	9
East River .....	9
Akwe River.....	9
Italio River.....	9
Situk River.....	9
Coho Salmon .....	10
Tsiu/Kaliakh River.....	10
Area-wide .....	10
FISHERY CONTACTS .....	10



## ABSTRACT

The 2005 Yakutat set gillnet fishing seasons and fishing periods will open by emergency order on the Sunday prior to the Monday openings as specified in 5 AAC 30.310 and 5 AAC 30.320. The Alsek River will open on Sunday, June 5, Yakutat Bay will open on Sunday, June 12, the Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet and Manby Shore Outside Waters will open on Sunday, June 19. All Yakutat District fisheries will be open by Sunday, June 26. Set gillnet fisheries are managed by adjusting fishing times and areas in response to inseason assessments of run strength. Management strategies will concentrate on sockeye and Chinook salmon in June and July. Following the first Sunday in August, fall fishing periods will go into effect and the emphasis for management strategies will switch to coho salmon. The East Alsek River is the sole exception due to the late timing of the sockeye salmon run, and the river will be managed for sockeye salmon into September. No formal preseason forecast program exists for the Yakutat salmon runs. Returns are expected to be average for sockeye salmon, and average to above average for coho salmon.

Key words: Yakutat, Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet, Manby Shore, Management Plan, Fishing seasons, fishing periods, Chinook, sockeye, coho, pink, chum salmon

## INTRODUCTION

The Yakutat area encompasses the waters of Alaska between Cape Suckling and Cape Fairweather. The area is divided into two fishing districts: the Yakataga District between Cape Suckling and Icy Cape, and the Yakutat District between Icy Cape and Cape Fairweather. All five salmon species are harvested in the Yakutat area, with coho *Oncorhynchus kisutch*, sockeye *O. nerka*, Chinook *O. tshawytscha*, and pink *O. gorbuscha* salmon comprising the majority of the catch in order of commercial value.

Set gillnet gear is the only net gear permitted in the Yakutat area. About 180 commercial setnet entry permits are renewed annually. Setnet permit holders in the Yakutat area do not have registered sites and may fish in any open fishing area. They may also move between fishing areas during the season as long as not more than one area is fished concurrently.

There are 25 unique setnet fisheries in the Yakutat area. Most of these fisheries target sockeye salmon from mid-June through July and coho salmon in August and September. The only targeted pink salmon fishery occurs in the southeast portion of Yakutat Bay on fish returning to Humpback Creek. Set gillnet fisheries in the Yakataga District primarily harvest coho salmon.

Yakutat Area set gillnet fisheries open by regulation on Monday of each week, with the following initial opening dates for 2005: the first Monday in June for the Alsek River, the second Monday in June for Yakutat Bay, and the third Monday in June for the Situk –Ahrnklin Inlet. By the fourth Monday in June all fisheries in the Yakutat District may be open if expected returns are surplus to escapement needs. In 2004 Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) responded to a request by industry to change the weekly opening date from Monday to Sunday to meet industry needs. The Yakutat Advisory Committee and the City and Borough of Yakutat supported this change. The issues considered included quality of the product and timeliness of product arrival on the market in order to ensure fishermen get the best price for their product. As this date change was not a conservation issue and did not change management strategies, the department opened each fishery on Sunday in 2004 by Emergency Order. The Yakutat Advisory Committee submitted two proposals to the Board of Fish to be addressed during the current regulatory cycle to permanently change the weekly fishing periods and seasons to reflect the Sunday openings. During the 2005 season, ADF&G will again open the fishing periods and seasons on Sunday by emergency.

ADF&G will continue to conduct stock assessment projects in many of the waters of the Yakutat Area in 2005. This will be the third and last year of this project. The Southeast Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Fund is funding this project, and the project will consist of both traditional external marking and radio tagging, recovery, and tracking of sockeye in the East Alsek River and of coho in the Lost, Ahrnklin, and Situk systems. The goal of this project is to increase understanding of total run size and escapements of sockeye and coho to the Yakutat Area. A separate coded wire smolt tagging project will concentrate on Lost, Situk, and Ahrnklin Rivers coho in the spring of 2005. This will be the second year of a two-year study, and CWT recovery efforts will commence this fall.

**ANTICIPATED SALMON RETURN**

No formal preseason forecast program exists for the Yakutat salmon runs. Preseason expectations are based on parent-year spawning escapements, commercial catch trends, local observations of rearing conditions, and information on year-class strength. The 2005 Yakutat area salmon runs are expected to be average for sockeye salmon and average to above average for coho salmon. More detailed projections by specific drainage area are presented on page 10.

**FISHERY MANAGEMENT**

Set gillnet fisheries in the Yakutat area are managed by adjusting fishing times and areas in response to inseason assessments of run strength. These actions are taken to provide adequate spawning escapements and to allow harvests of salmon that are surplus to escapement goals. Inseason assessment methods include both fishery performance and spawning escapement information. In the glacial systems, fishery performance data is utilized for management because poor visibility prevents the accurate observation of spawning escapements.

During 2005, the Yakutat District major fishing areas can be expected to open on the following dates:

**Yakutat District**

Area	Opening Date
Alsek River	5 June
Dangerous River	12 June
Yakutat Bay (south of 59°40' N.lat.)	12 June
Manby Shore Ocean	19 June
Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet	19 June
Lost River	by Emergency Order
East River	by Emergency Order
Akwe River	26 June
Remainder of the Yakutat District	26 June
Italio River	by Emergency Order

During 2005, the Yakataga District major fishing areas can be expected to open on the following dates:

**Yakataga District**

---

Season	Opening Date
Sockeye Season	by Emergency Order
Coho Season	by Emergency Order (around August 22)

---

**2005 SUMMER MANAGEMENT PLAN**

This management plan concentrates on the major fisheries in the Yakutat area. Information on areas that are fished only occasionally is available from the Yakutat area management biologist listed at the end of the plan. Most Yakutat gillnet openings for sockeye will generally run from 6:00 a.m. Sunday through 6:00 p.m. Tuesday.

**ALSEK RIVER**

The Alsek River, located 45 miles southeast of Yakutat, is a major transboundary river that drains a large area east of the coastal mountain range. The Alsek extends approximately 130 miles from its mouth upriver into the Yukon Territory of Canada. The U.S./Canada border is approximately 40 miles upstream from the river mouth. The river supports large populations of Chinook, sockeye, and coho salmon, and small populations of pink and chum *O. keta* salmon. Alaskan set gillnet fisheries target sockeye and coho salmon. Canadian subsistence and sport fisheries target sockeye and Chinook salmon.

Commercial salmon landings from the Alaskan portion of the Alsek River averaged approximately 19,600 sockeye, 4,000 coho, and 700 Chinook salmon annually from 2000 through 2004. The Canadian subsistence and sport harvest has averaged approximately 230 Chinook, 1,800 sockeye, and 150 coho salmon during the same period. Subsistence and sport fisheries in the Alaskan portion of the river are relatively minor, harvesting about 200 salmon annually.

Historically, the set gillnet fishery targeted Chinook salmon during May in the Alaskan portion of the river. However, due to what was thought to be depressed runs, the directed Chinook salmon fishery has been closed since 1962 and Chinook salmon have been harvested only incidentally during the sockeye salmon fishery in early June. The Northern Panel of the Pacific Salmon Commission has reached bilateral agreement to reopen the Stikine and Taku River gillnet fisheries, and they also established a test fishery for the Alsek to begin in late May of 2005. The test fishery will be conducted within the common property gillnet fishing area on the Alsek, and harvest shall not exceed 500 Chinook salmon. The 2005 run of Chinook salmon is expected to produce fish surplus to the current Klukshu River escapement goal of 1,200 fish.

Both the early and late run segments of the Alsek sockeye run are expected to be below average in 2005. The total sockeye salmon count at the Klukshu River weir during the parent year (2000)

was slightly over 5,500, with fewer than 300 sockeye through during the early run segment. The escapement goal for 2005 is a total of 7,500 to 15,000 sockeye past the Klukshu weir. The Village Creek electronic counter recorded 2,200 sockeye salmon in 2000. This count was below the recent average of 2,600 sockeye salmon. Escapement counts in U. S. tributaries were also below average in 2000.

The Alsek will open downstream from a marker located three miles below the southern end of Alsek Basin on the first Sunday in June (June 5). Weekly openings will initially be set at 24 hours. The duration of weekly fishing periods will be based on fishery performance and Klukshu weir data. Gillnets will be restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches through July 1 to minimize Chinook salmon harvest. Fishing time will be based on a comparison of current to historical fishery performance data.

The Alsek River surf fishing area is expected to be open during the same periods as the in-river fishery. The surf fishing area includes the shoreline, 0.75 of a mile in each direction, from the river mouth to the outermost bar where the surf breaks.

### **DANGEROUS RIVER**

The Dangerous River will be opened downstream from the Dangerous River Bridge on June 12. Catch and effort from this system has been sporadic. The 2000 parent year harvest of 5,500 sockeye salmon was well above average. The Dangerous is seldom fished for coho salmon.

### **YAKUTAT BAY**

Three separate set gillnet fisheries occur in Yakutat Bay. The Yakutat Bay fishery occurs in the ocean waters of Yakutat Bay south of 59°40' N. latitude and will open on the second Sunday of June (June 12). The Manby Shore Ocean fishery encompasses the ocean waters of Yakutat Bay north of 59°40' N. latitude and will open the third Sunday of June (June 19). The Manby Shore Inside Waters fishery will open on the fourth Sunday of June (June 26) in streams along the northern shore of Yakutat Bay.

### **YAKUTAT BAY AND MANBY SHORE OCEAN FISHERIES**

Both the Yakutat Bay and Manby Shore Ocean fisheries harvest mixed stocks of sockeye salmon. Tag recovery data collected in 1987 indicated that a major portion of the Yakutat Bay sockeye harvest was of Situk origin. Because of the high Situk River sockeye contribution to the Yakutat Bay and Manby Shore ocean fisheries, both fisheries will be managed to conserve or harvest Situk River sockeye from the third week in June through the third week of July. The Yakutat Bay fishery will open on Sunday, June 12 for 2.5 days. The weekly fishing period will be limited to a maximum of 4.5 days due to the mixed stock nature of the ocean fisheries and the potentially adverse impact on weaker Yakutat area stocks.

The Manby Shore fishery will open on Sunday, June 19. Weekly fishing periods will depend on Situk River sockeye salmon run strength.

### **SITUK-AHRNKLIN AND LOST RIVER**

The Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet is the site of the oldest and, historically, most productive fishery in the Yakutat area. Located about nine miles by road from Yakutat, the Situk-Ahrnklin fishery normally supports the largest concentration of fishing effort in Yakutat (up to 103 permits). Fishing occurs primarily in the inlet, although some fishing occurs at the river mouth and in the adjoining surf-fishing area. Sockeye salmon make up the major portion of the harvest during the

summer and coho salmon dominate the catch during the fall. Situk-Ahrnklin catches have averaged about 56,000 sockeye, 140,000 coho, 31,000 pink, and 1,400 Chinook salmon (2000-2004).

The 2000 brood year Situk River sockeye salmon escapement was slightly over 41,000 fish. Return per spawner data indicates that the 2005 Situk River sockeye salmon run could exceed 120,000 fish. The sockeye salmon Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) range for the Situk River drainage is 30,000 to 70,000 fish through the weir. A mid-range escapement of 50,000 could leave approximately 70,000 fish available for harvest. Actual harvest can be affected by market conditions, which affect effort levels; effort levels can affect harvest.

The Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet will open initially on Sunday, June 19. Fishing periods will be based on fishery performance and escapements through the Situk River weir. A run-timing model will be used to estimate the total Situk River sockeye salmon run after several weeks of harvest and escapement data are available. A similar model will be used to project Situk Chinook salmon abundance.

Chinook salmon are taken incidentally in the set gillnet fishery, and the Situk commercial catch of Chinook salmon is largely dependent on fishing time allowed for sockeye salmon. If the Chinook salmon return is weak, conservation measures may be necessary to reduce the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon. Conservation and allocation objectives associated with the harvest of Situk River Chinook salmon are described in the Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet and Lost River Chinook Management Plan (5 AAC 30.365). This plan was modified at the February 2003 Board of Fish meeting. It was re-written to provide managers more specific direction on management actions to be taken under different run forecast scenarios. ADF&G has submitted a further proposal to the Board of Fish to be considered at the spring 2006 meeting. The plan currently does not address management actions to be taken when Chinook salmon escapements are projected to be above the BEG range, as happened in 2003. In 2003 the department, by emergency order, increased allowable gear to from one to two nets, one of which had to be "king gear," with mesh size not less than seven and one-half or greater than eight inches. Similar management actions will be taken in 2005 should this scenario arise.

Management options for maximizing harvest of Situk River pink salmon are limited due to the overlap in run timing with sockeye and coho salmon. Escapement goals for pink salmon in the Situk River are 42,000 to 105,000 in even years and 54,000 to 200,000 in odd years. The parent year (2003) escapement past the Situk weir was 375,000 pinks.

Steelhead trout *O. mykiss* in post-spawning condition occasionally accumulate in the Situk River prior to the time they emigrate to the ocean. When the emigration is late, there is a potential for the Situk setnet fishery to harvest a larger than normal number of adults. The rate of emigration of spawned-out steelhead often increases following periods of heavy rainfall. If a major emigration is expected to occur during a scheduled gillnet fishing period, the opening may be delayed for a few days to reduce the incidental harvest of steelhead.

During the winter of 1998/1999 the Lost River changed course and flowed into the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary instead of the Gulf of Alaska. The Lost River continues to flow into the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary. Prior to the 1999 fishing season, ADF&G developed a management plan for the Lost River and Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary with the intent of meeting escapement requirements for the Lost River. This plan closed the Lost River and the North bank of the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary between an ADF&G regulatory marker approximately 100 yards above

the confluence of the Lost River and the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary and a marker located near the mouth of the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary. The plan went into effect at the beginning of the season and the Lost River (Tawah Creek) was surveyed weekly throughout the season to monitor escapement. The lower marker was moved closer to the Lost River as escapement objectives in the Lost River were met. The end result was that sockeye and coho escapement goals for both the Lost River and the Situk/Ahrnklin system were met.

The weekly escapement surveys on the Lost River over the years have indicated that sockeye salmon run timing is different for Lost River and Situk/Ahrnklin stocks. No fish have been observed in Tawah Creek before July 10. The north bank of the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary from a marker at the mouth of the estuary (500 yards) to a marker 100 yards above the confluence of the Lost River will be closed to commercial set gillnet fishing beginning July 8. Prior to this date the closed area will be confined to 100 yards on each side of the mouth of the Lost River. It is anticipated that the Lost River will remain closed for the entire sockeye season. The intent of these closures is to achieve the escapement goal (peak float count) of between 1,000 and 2,300 sockeye salmon that has been established for the Lost River, and to maximize fishing opportunity in the Situk/Ahrnklin estuary. Regulatory marker placement may change during the course of the season as escapement or river channel movement warrants.

## **EAST RIVER**

The East River is a short, clear river originating from the upwellings and local drainage of the eastern portion of Dry Bay. The area open to inriver commercial fishing extends from the mouth to two miles upstream; the adjacent ocean waters within two miles of the mouth in each direction out to 500 yards from the shore at low tide are also open to commercial fishing. The surf and ocean areas are open during the same periods as the inriver fishery.

Prior to 1994 the East River had been one of the most productive sockeye salmon fisheries in the Yakutat area. Salmon catches have dramatically declined since 1993 and have averaged about 37,000 sockeye, 1,500 chum, and 7,400 coho salmon (1994-1998). The river was closed to commercial fishing for sockeye during the 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002 seasons. The East River was opened during coho season in 2002, and for both sockeye and coho in 2003 and 2004, and minor catches were recorded.

The East River will be managed to achieve the BEG of 13,000 to 26,000 sockeye salmon. Escapement will be closely monitored, and the East will probably not open until the lower end of the escapement goal is attained. In 2004 the East opened during the third week of July. If the fishery does open in 2005, the duration of the weekly fishing periods will be based on escapement observations. Returns to the East River are predominantly age 4 (0.4). The 2001 parent-year escapement was estimated at 17,000 sockeye salmon, within the BEG. Sockeye salmon returns have been less than parent-year returns since 1998.

## **AKWE RIVER**

The Akwe River is a glacial river system located about 35 miles south of Yakutat. The lower seven miles of the river are wide and shallow and flow parallel to the beach before entering the ocean. The commercial fishery occurs in this lower portion of the river. The 2000-2004 average Akwe River harvest was approximately 12,500 sockeye, 2,000 coho, and 200 Chinook salmon. This average reflects the 2000 harvest of 21,000 sockeye salmon, the second highest on record, and the 2001 harvest of 17,000, the sixth highest on record. The previous 10-year average for

sockeye salmon was approximately 3,000 fish. The Akwe has not been fished for coho salmon in three of the recent five years due to market conditions. The long-term average coho harvest is near 4,000 fish.

The sockeye salmon return to the Akwe River is expected to be above average in 2005 based on parent-year fishery performance and effort. Parent-year escapement counts were minimal. The sockeye fishery is scheduled to open on Sunday, June 26 and the season will extend through early August. Inseason management will be based on fishery performance and index escapement counts, and reductions in the normal 2.5-day weekly fishing period may be necessary to insure adequate escapement. An escapement goal (peak aerial count) of 600 to 1,500 sockeye salmon has been established for the Akwe River.

The Akwe River will be open upstream of the markers located about 0.5 miles from the terminus of the Akwe River lagoon at mean low tide to the upper markers located 2.5 miles downstream from the westernmost end of the Sand Dunes, a fishing area of about four miles.

### **MANBY SHORE INLAND FISHERY**

Management of the Manby Shore inland fisheries (waters upstream of the mean high-tide line) will be based on the abundance of local stocks. During the summer, these fisheries harvest salmon primarily from Manby and Sudden Streams. A 2.5-day weekly fishing period can be expected during the initial opening period scheduled for June 26. Additional open periods will depend on fishery performance.

### **HUMPBACK CREEK FISHERY**

The Humpback Creek (Humpy Creek) fishery located in the southeastern portion of Yakutat Bay targets pink salmon. A below average run is expected at Humpy Creek for the 2005 season. Humpy Creek was not surveyed during the 2003 parent year. Inseason management of this fishery will be based on observed pink salmon escapement to Humpy Creek and the availability of pink salmon in the Yakutat Bay fishery. Escapement goals (peak aerial count) of 3,300 to 8,000 pink salmon in even years and 7,000 to 18,000 pink salmon in odd years have been established for Humpy Creek. There has not been a directed fishery on Humpy Creek for many years.

### **ITALIO RIVER**

The Italo River is located adjacent to the Akwe River. The Italo supports small runs of sockeye and coho salmon. The course of the Italo River changed and flowed into the lower Akwe River during the winter of 1986/1987 and both rivers now share a common mouth. Both Italo and Akwe salmon stocks are present in this area and for some distance upstream in each river. Determination of Akwe or Italo run strength based on fishing success in the junction area is not possible. Therefore, the junction and a portion of each river above the junction is closed to set gillnet fishing.

The Italo River sockeye salmon fishery has not been open since 1987. When the Italo River changed channel and entered the Akwe River lagoon, the homing ability of Italo River sockeye salmon may have been negatively affected. As a result, it may take several years for the productivity of the Italo River sockeye stock to return to historic levels. The Italo River fishery opens by emergency order when good escapements are observed. The parent-year escapements for this year's sockeye return were below the lower range of the escapement goal of 2,500 to 7,000. Based on an analysis completed in the winter of 2002-2003 the escapement goal for the Italo was rescinded and no formal goal is in place due to changes in productivity of the system.

## **YAKATAGA DISTRICT**

The Yakataga District is not expected to be open during the sockeye season in 2005. It will open by emergency order sometime in August based on coho escapement.

### **2005 FALL MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Fall fishing is directed primarily at harvesting coho salmon, although fall chum salmon can contribute to the catches on the East River. The fall fishing season generally will start on the first Sunday of August. At that time, the regulatory weekly fishing period changes in most areas to a 12:01 p.m. opening, and 12:00 noon, closing time. During the fall, set gillnet fishing occurs in both the Yakutat and Yakataga Districts. In the Yakutat District, the fall coho salmon fishery occurs primarily in the same areas as the summer sockeye salmon fishery. In the Yakataga District, there are areas where only coho salmon fishing takes place.

Overall catches and escapements of coho salmon in the Yakutat area were below average in the parent year (2001). The Situk River escapement counts were in the middle of the escapement goal range, as were the counts for the Tsiu River. Indications are that inclement weather severely limited coho surveys in 2000. The recent 15-year history of coho returns to Yakutat has been excellent, and the 2005 coho salmon run is expected to be average to above average area-wide.

A potential concern regarding Yakutat area coho salmon is based on both climatic and geological effects. Yakutat has been through a four-year period of drought. The land is rising away from the water table due to some of the highest rates of isostatic rebound found in the world. These factors dramatically affect fresh water rearing habitat for coho salmon. Forest Highway 10 crosses many streams, tributaries of the Situk and Ahrnklin Rivers and of Seal Creek. At least five of these streams, although listed in the Anadromous Stream Catalog as important for both spawning and rearing of coho salmon, no longer exist. These streams have not had any water in them at all for almost five years. At some future time it is possible that these events will negatively impact coho salmon production in the Yakutat area.

## **YAKUTAT DISTRICT**

Fall fishing will begin on Sunday, August 7 in the Yakutat District, except in the East River where management will continue to be based on sockeye salmon run strength through most of August. The initial fishing periods can be expected to extend from 12:01 p.m. Sunday through 12:00 noon Wednesday. Inseason management of all Yakutat District fall fisheries will be based on fishery performance data and inseason coho escapement surveys.

The following escapement goals (peak aerial or float counts) have been established for coho salmon in the Yakutat District: East River 2,500 to 8,500; Akwe River 1,800 to 5,000; Italo River 1,400 to 3,600; Situk River 3,300 to 9,800; and Lost River 2,200 to 6,500.

Fishing time and area adjustments will be made for each river as needed for conservation. A closed area can be expected in the Yahtse River to protect schools of milling coho salmon at tributary mouths. The actual closed water area will be based on inseason observations of coho schooling behavior, which is related to river flow conditions. Several small coho streams are located along the forelands west of the Yahtse River to Cape Yakataga. Most of these streams have very small numbers of spawning coho and cannot support in-river set gillnet fisheries. The area from the Yahtse River to Cape Yakataga will remain closed until harvestable surpluses are evident.

## **YAKATAGA DISTRICT**

The major fisheries in the Yakataga District occur for coho salmon on the Kaliakh and Tsiu Rivers, located about 125 miles northwest of Yakutat. The Tsiu River is the more productive of the two rivers; in recent years, catches have averaged about 56,000 coho salmon. The Kaliakh, which had not been fished since 1999, had minor recorded effort in 2004. The Tsiu also recorded minor effort in 2004; prior to that it had not been fished since 2001 due to market conditions. Parent-year (2001) escapement count of 17,000 coho salmon was within the BEG range of 10,000 to 29,000 fish. The Kaliakh was not surveyed in 2001. The 2005 coho salmon return is expected to be average in both the Tsiu and Kaliakh Rivers. The BEG range for the Kaliakh is 4,000 to 14,000 coho salmon.

The Tsiu River opening date and fishing periods will be determined from observed escapements above and below the regulatory markers. The Kaliakh River weekly fall fishing periods will normally open from 9:00 a.m., Sunday through 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, beginning on August 7. Market conditions will determine whether or not the Yakataga District is fished in 2005. The area is remote and fish must be flown to markets. It is possible that it will be economically unfeasible to fish the district.

## **YAKUTAT AREA-2005 SALMON RUN PROJECTIONS**

### **SOCKEYE SALMON**

#### **Alsek River**

The parent-year sockeye salmon escapement was approximately 5,500 through the Klukshu Weir. The Alsek appears to be rebounding from a period of low production. A total catch of around 13,000 – 18,000 sockeye is expected.

#### **East River**

The parent year escapement was approximately 17,000 sockeye salmon. An equivalent return this year could lead to a catch of approximately 2,000–5,000 fish. If the East River opens, effort will probably be limited to a few Alsek River fishermen.

#### **Akwe River**

No parent-year escapement counts are available. Based on catch the runs in both parent years, 2000 and 2001, were very strong, and the Akwe has shown above average sockeye salmon production in the recent past. A catch of 7,000 to 12,000 sockeye is expected for 2005 based on parent-year fishery performance and effort.

#### **Italio River**

Parent-year escapement was below the recommended escapement goal range (as noted above, we now do not have an official escapement goal for the Italio), and it is unlikely there will be a directed sockeye salmon fishery in the Italio River in 2005.

#### **Situk River**

The parent-year escapement was slightly above 41,00 sockeye salmon. A catch of around 40,000 to 60,000 sockeye, with an escapement of about 50,000 sockeye, is expected.

## **COHO SALMON**

### **Tsiu/Kaliakh River**

If there is any effort, a catch of over 40,000 coho may be possible in the Tsiu River in 2005. In the Kaliakh River, a harvest of 1,000 to 3,000 coho is possible.

### **Area-wide**

Parent-year escapements were below average in most areas. Based on recent trends in the fishery, the run is expected to be average to above average. The area wide set gillnet catch is expected to be about 180,000 to 200,000 coho, but effort, and how it is distributed throughout the area, will largely determine how many coho are harvested.

## **FISHERY CONTACTS**

The following Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries staff may be contacted regarding this management plan:

---

Scott Kelley  
Region I Supervisor

P.O. Box 240020  
Douglas, Alaska 99824  
(907) 465-4250

Bill Davidson  
Region I Management Coordinator

304 Lake St. Room 104  
Sitka, Alaska 99835  
(907) 747-6688

Gordie Woods  
Area Management Biologist

P.O. Box 49  
Yakutat, Alaska 99689  
(907) 784-3255

---