



**KUSKOKWIM RIVER CHUM SALMON STOCK STATUS AND
DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT/ACTION PLAN OPTIONS**

A Report to the Alaska Board of Fisheries

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SECTION I

KUSKOKWIM RIVER CHUM SALMON STOCK STATUS

Synopsis

In response to the guidelines established in the Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Policy, the Board of Fisheries classified the Kuskokwim River chum salmon stock as a yield concern during their September 2000 work session. A yield concern is the least severe of the three levels described in the policy. The Kuskokwim River chum salmon stock meets the definition of a yield concern based on low harvest levels since 1997 and the anticipated low harvest level in 2001. The anticipated poor run, and associated low harvest expected for 2001, will be produced from poor (1997) to good (1996) spawning escapement.

Escapement

Chum salmon spawning escapements were generally poor in 1997, 1999 and 2000 (Table 1). Established escapement goals only exist for the Aniak and KogrukluK Rivers, but results from recently developed enumeration projects on the Takotna, Tatlawiksuk, George and Kwethluk Rivers support the assessment of poor escapements in these three years (Figures 1 – 3).

The Aniak River escapement goal has the caveat that it is based on sonar passage estimates not apportioned to species. Chum salmon are believed to dominate the total annual sonar count, but the proportion of the annual count attributable to other species is unknown and the annual variability of that proportion is unknown. Consequently, the sonar count is actually used as an index of chum salmon abundance rather than as a population estimate (Figure 2).

The chum salmon escapement goal for KogrukluK River is expressed in terms of chum salmon; however, the weir accounts for only a small portion of the Kuskokwim River escapement (Figure 3). Additional weirs have been established on the Takotna, Tatlawiksuk, George and Kwethluk Rivers, but the short time series for these projects limits their usefulness in assessing the adequacy of annual escapements (Figure 4).

Under these limitations, in 1995 and 1996 the chum salmon escapement in the Kuskokwim River was considered to have been adequate to the needs of sustainable fisheries management. Aniak River sonar was not operational in 1995, but the escapement goal was achieved in the KogrukluK River (Figures 2 and 3, Table 1). In 1996, the escapement goals were achieved in the Aniak and KogrukluK Rivers, plus the passage observed at other locations appeared adequate (Figure 4). In 1997, the escapement goal was achieved in the Aniak River, but it was not achieved in the KogrukluK River and passage at other projects was low. In 1998, the escapement goal

was again achieved in the Aniak River, and it was probably also achieved in the Kogrukluk River. Our ability to assess escapements in 1998 at the weirs was severely hampered by high water during the first half of the season (Table 2). In 1999 and 2000, escapement goals were definitely not achieved at the Aniak or Kogrukluk Rivers, even with very low commercial harvest levels. Passage at the other weir projects was also low in 1999 and 2000.

1995

- Aniak River sonar was not operational.
- Kogrukluk River escapement goal was achieved.
- Passage at Takotna River weir appeared to be good.
- Parent-year escapements were good to fair.

1996

- Aniak River escapement goal was achieved.
- Kogrukluk River escapement goal was achieved.
- Escapements at Takotna, George and Kwethluk Rivers appeared to be good.
- Parent-year escapements were good to fair, except for 1992 when escapements to the Aniak River were extremely poor.

1997

- Aniak River escapement goal was achieved.
- Kogrukluk River escapement goal was not achieved.
- Escapements at Takotna, George and Kwethluk Rivers appeared to be low.
- Specific management actions were taken to reduce commercial harvests.
- State, Native and local organizations issued a joint appeal for subsistence fishers to conserve chum salmon.
- Parent-year escapements (especially 1993) were generally very poor.

1998

- Aniak River escapement goal was achieved.
- Kogrukluk River escapement goal was probably achieved (minimal data).
- Data available from other projects is inadequate to make an assessment.
- Parent-year escapements were good for age-4 chum (1994), but generally poor for age-5 chum (1993).

1999

- Aniak River escapement goal was not achieved.
- Kogrukluk River escapement goal was not achieved.
- Escapements at George and Tatlawiksuk Rivers appeared to be low.
- Specific management actions were taken to reduce commercial harvests.
- Parent-year escapements appeared good.

2000

- Aniak River escapement goal was not achieved.
- Kogrukluk River escapement goal was not achieved.
- Escapements at Takotna, Tatlawiksuk, George and Kwethluk Rivers all appeared to be low.
- Specific management actions were taken to reduce commercial harvests.
- Parent-year escapements appeared good.

Harvest

From 1960 to 1999, the total harvest of chum salmon in the Kuskokwim River has ranged from 58,000 to 1,540,000 fish (Table 3). The ten-year average harvest is 340,000 chum salmon. For the last five consecutive years, the chum salmon harvests have been below 300,000 fish. The harvest levels witnessed in 1997 and 1999 of 58,000 and 68,000 are the two lowest harvests on record. The Department anticipates that the 2000 total harvest will be under 70,000 chum salmon again. Except for 1997, these poor runs were unexpected given the generally adequate parent-year escapements.

In 1997, subsistence chum salmon fishing was rated as “poor” by 50 percent of the households that responded to the household harvest surveys. The 1997 and 1999 seasons had the two lowest subsistence chum salmon harvests on record (Table 3). In 1997, local Native organizations, the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group, and ADF&G issued a cooperative appeal for subsistence fishers to voluntarily reduce their harvest of chum salmon (Table 2). The average annual subsistence harvest has fallen from 78,000 fish for the years 1991 to 1995, to 59,000 fish for the years 1996 to 1999. The 2000 subsistence salmon harvest data is not yet available.

The average annual commercial harvest of chum salmon has declined from 339,000 fish during the period 1991 to 1995, to an average of 93,000 fish from 1996 to 2000 (Table 3). The low harvest in 1996 was due at least in part to limited market interest in chum salmon; however, the low harvest levels in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 were a result of low to critically low chum salmon runs (Table 2). Harvest restrictions used in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 were specifically designed to allow more chum salmon to reach the spawning grounds. Kuskokwim River commercial fishers were limited to one half-district period each year in 1997, 1999, and 2000 (Table 4); however, the resulting escapements were still generally poor. In 1998, commercial fishers were limited to about one period per week and escapement appeared to be adequate. The 2000 commercial harvest of 11,570 chum salmon was the lowest since 1970. Because of poor commercial harvests of chum salmon, the Kuskokwim River was declared an economic disaster area in 1997, 1998, and 2000.

Chum salmon harvest by sport fishers in the Kuskokwim River drainage is very low. Based on the Sport Fish Statewide Harvest Survey, the estimated annual sport harvest rarely exceeds 2,000 chum salmon and the average estimated harvest is less than 600 chum salmon a year. Angler participation in the Kuskokwim River is approximately 5,000 angler days a year, across all fish species. The Aniak River supports the largest sport fishery in the drainage with an average of 3,500 angler days of effort per year. This sport fishery is characterized as having a high catch rate, but low harvest rate. On average Aniak River anglers catch 3 to 4 thousand chum salmon, but rarely harvest more than 150 chum salmon. Recently, a no retention restriction was enacted on the Aniak River to protect the chum salmon.

1995

- Subsistence harvest of 67,862 chum salmon was near average.
- Commercial harvest of 605,918 fish was above average.

1996

- Subsistence harvest of 88,965 chum salmon was above average.
- Commercial harvest of 207,877 fish was below average due at least in part to limited processing capacity.

1997

- Subsistence harvest of 39,970 chum salmon was a record low.
- Commercial harvest of 17,026 fish was the second lowest since 1970.

1998

- Subsistence harvest of 63,537 chum salmon was fourth lowest on record.
- Commercial harvest of 207,809 fish was below average.

1999

- Subsistence harvest of 43,601 chum salmon was the second lowest on record.
- Commercial harvest of 23,006 fish was the third lowest since 1970.

2000

- Some subsistence fishers were unable to achieve harvest goals despite increased effort.
- Commercial harvest of 11,570 chum salmon was the lowest harvest since 1970.
- Sport fishers were restricted to catch-and-release for chum salmon in the Aniak River.

Outlook

The majority of chum salmon returning to the Kuskokwim River are age-4 and age-5 fish. The 1996 and 1997 parent-year escapements, that will produce the majority of the 2001 run, ranged from good to poor. The 2001 chum salmon run, however, is anticipated to be critically low to below average in abundance, based on the anticipation of continued poor productivity that was displayed in 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000. Since 1998, the poor chum salmon runs have been produced from parent-year escapements that were considered average or above average in abundance. Causes for the observed drop in productivity are still largely unknown. Given the uncertainties associated with recent declines, it is unknown whether the 2001 chum salmon run will support any commercial harvest, but staff are not optimistic. Furthermore, it is possible that the run will be so weak as to require reductions in subsistence harvest opportunity.

Table 1. Historical salmon escapement data from selected Kuskokwim Area projects, 1976-2000.

Year	Operating Period	Chinook	Sockeye	Chum	Pink ^a	Coho
Kogrukuk River Weir						
BEG		10,000		30,000		25,000
1976	06/29 to 07/31	5,579	2,326	8,117	0 ^b	
1977	07/14 to 07/27	1,945 ^b	1,637 ^b	19,444	2	
1978	06/28 to 07/31	13,667	1,670	48,125	2	
1979	07/01 to 07/24	11,338	2,628	18,599	1	
1980	07/01 to 07/11	6,572 ^b	3,200 ^b	41,777	1	
1981	06/27 to 10/05	16,655	18,066	57,365	6	11,455
1982	07/09 to 09/14	10,993 ^b	17,297 ^b	64,077	19	37,796
1983	06/23 to 09/27	2,992 ^f	1,176 ^f	9,407 ^f	0	8,538
1984	06/19 to 09/15	4,928	4,133	41,484	0	27,595
1985	07/06 to 09/24	4,619	4,359	15,005	0	16,441
1986	06/29 to 09/07	5,038 ^b	4,244 ^b	14,693	0	22,506
1987	07/15 to 09/24	4,063 ^f	973 ^f	17,422 ^f	0	22,821
1988	07/05 to 09/17	8,505	4,397	39,540	0	13,512
1989	07/07 to 08/24	11,940 ^f	5,811 ^f	39,548	0	1272 ^b
1990	06/28 to 09/07	10,218	8,406	26,765	1	6,132 ^b
1991	07/04 to 09/15	7,850	16,455	24,188	4	9,933
1992	07/01 to 08/21	6,755	7,540	34,105	17	26,057 ^b
1993	07/02 to 09/06	12,332	29,358	31,899	0	20,517 ^b
1994	07/02 to 09/14	15,227	14,192 ^f	46,192 ^f	23	34,695
1995	07/02 to 09/06	20,630	10,996	31,265	2	27,861
1996	06/29 to 09/15	14,199	15,385	48,494	6	50,555
1997	06/28 to 09/21	13,286	13,078	7,937	0	12,237
1998	07/18 to 09/19	11,869 ^f	16,773 ^f	36,424 ^f	1	24,344
1999	07/01 to 09/20	5,570	5,864	13,810	0	12,609 ^f
2000	07/05 to 09/18	3,310	2,867	11,491	2	33,135
Aniak River Sonar						
BEG				250,000 ^c		
<i>Non user-configurable, one-bank expanded estimates 1980 - 1995</i>						
1980	06/22 to 07/30	56,469		1,169,470		
	08/16 to 09/12					81,556
1981	06/16 to 08/06	42,060		589,286		
1982	06/21 to 08/01	33,864		442,461		
1983	06/18 to 07/28	4,911		129,367		
1984	06/16 to 07/30			266,976		
1985	06/22 to 07/28			253,051		
1986	06/26 to 07/24			209,080		
1987	06/22 to 07/31			193,013		
1988	06/22 to 07/31			401,511		
1989	06/21 to 07/24			243,922		
1990	06/23 to 08/06			232,260		
1991	06/29 to 07/29			314,166		
1992	06/22 to 07/29			84,269		
1993	06/24 to 07/28			13,870		
1994	06/28 to 07/28			388,163		
1995	06/23 to 07/23					
<i>User-configurable, two-bank estimates, 1996-1999</i>						
BEG				250,000 ^c		
1996	06/21 to 07/28			302,106		
1997	06/16 to 08/03			262,522		
1998	06/24 to 07/31			279,430		
1999	07/01 to 08/03			177,771		
2000	06/25 to 07/31			144,157		

- continued -

Table 1. (2 of 2)

Year	Operating Period	Chinook	Sockeye	Chum	Pink	Coho
<u>Kwethluk River</u>						
<i>Weir</i>						
1992	06/18 to 09/12	9,675	1,316	30,596	45,952	45,605
<i>Tower</i>						
1996	06/22 to 07/27	7,415	1,801 ^b	26,049	2,899 ^b	180 ^b
1997	06/22 to 08/12	10,395	1,374	10,659	1,009 ^b	1,110 ^b
1998	07/24 to 08/18	120 ^b	120 ^b	720 ^b	4,398 ^b	2,367 ^b
1999	07/15 to 08/18	^b	^b	^b	^b	^b
<i>Weir Reinstalled</i>						
2000	6/15 to 9/15	3,547	358	12,382	1,407	25,610
<u>Tuluksak River Weir</u>						
1991	06/12 to 09/18	697	34	7,675	391	4,651
1992	06/24 to 09/10	1,083	129	11,183	2,458	7,501
1993	06/17 to 09/10	2,218	88	13,804	210	8,328
1994	06/29 to 09/11	2,922	94	15,707	3,450	8,213
<u>George River Weir</u>						
1996	06/21 to 07/26	7,487	98	17,570	644 ^b	^b
1997	06/09 to 09/15	7,820	445	5,941	17	8,937
1998	06/22 to 07/07	^b	^b	^b	^b	^b
1999	07/14 to 09/25	3,548	39	11,682	97	8,930
2000	06/17 to 09/16	2,959	23	3,488	61	11,256
<u>Takotna River Tower</u>						
<i>Tower</i>						
1995	07/07 to 07/31	^b	0	1,685 ^b	0	0 ^b
1996	06/15 to 07/26	401	0	2,794	0	0 ^b
1997	06/15 to 07/26	1,176	0	1,794		
1998	06/20 to 07/07	^b	^b	^b	^b	^b
1999	Not Operational					
<i>Weir</i>						
2000	06/24 to 09/20	345	4	1,254	0	3,937
<u>Tatlawiktuk River Weir</u>						
1998	06/18 to 07/07	^b	^b	^b	^b	^b
1999	06/15 to 09/20	1,494	5	9,656	1	3,464
2000	06/15 to 08/13	810	0	6,965	0	24,000 ^f

^a Pink salmon can pass freely through the Kogrukluk River weir.

^b No counts or incomplete count as project was not operated during a significant portion of the species' migration.

^c Aniak River sonar counts after 1983 represent multiple species, however, chum salmon are assumed to be the dominant species during the operational period.

^d Reliable escapement estimates are not available from Aniak River sonar for 1995.

^e The original Aniak River sonar BEG of 250,000 fish counts has been carried forward to the user configurable project, but the BEG will be reassessed as more information is gathered.

^f Field operations were incomplete; full season fish passage was estimated.

^g Weir picket spacing allows pink salmon to pass uncounted.

Table 2. Historic events, which have potential or actual, influence on the commercial salmon fisheries of the Kuskokwim Area.

YEAR	EVENT ^a
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSFA operates a chum salmon radio telemetry project on the Kuskokwim River. • Takotna Community School operates a salmon counting tower on the Takotna River (1995-1998). • AVCP and BSFA operate the Lower Kuskokwim test fishery in cooperation with the department; the project is a modification of the Eek test fishery.
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADF&G genetic sampling for late spawning chum salmon and one mixed stock sample from District 1. • Near record low water levels on the Kuskokwim River during June and early August coupled with record high water temperatures. • Irregular fishing schedule in District 1 during June and July due to limited market interest for chum salmon. • Record early coho run coupled with record high harvest and escapement at Kogrukluk River. • AVCP operates a salmon counting tower on the Kwethluk River (1996-1999). • KNA operates a salmon weir on the George River (1996-present). • Aniak River sonar is relocated to allow for full channel ensonification and configurable sonar technology is employed (1996-present).
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuskokwim River declared an economic disaster area due to very low chum and coho salmon returns, harvests and exvessel prices. Northern boundary of District 4 moved 3 miles south from July 14 to July 28. Record low chum salmon escapement at Kogrukluk River weir. • Aniak chum salmon return vastly exceeded expectations based on 1992-1993 spawning abundance estimates. • Due to an extremely low return of chum salmon, ADF&G, AVCP, KNA, KRSMWG, ONC, TCC and McGrath Native Council issue a joint appeal for subsistence users to conserve chum salmon. Record low subsistence harvest of chum salmon in the Kuskokwim Area. • Aniak processor does not operate due to depressed salmon market (1997-present) • Sale of salmon roe is prohibited in Districts 1 and 2 (effective beginning December 1997).
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuskokwim River declared an economic disaster area for second straight year due to low chum and coho salmon returns, harvests and exvessel prices. • KNA operates a salmon weir on the Tatlawiksuk River (1998-present). • High water levels severely restrict operational period of many Kuskokwim Area escapement projects
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuskokwim River experiences extremely low chum and coho salmon returns, harvests and exvessel prices for third consecutive year. Chinook salmon returns are also low and all species have very late run timing. Kuskokwim Bay coho returns and harvests extremely low. • Federal government assumes control of subsistence fishery management in federal waters on October 1. • KNA-operated salmon weirs on the Tatlawiksuk and George Rivers converted to resistance board (floating) weirs and operations extended through coho run. • Kuskokwim River sonar project begins redevelopment using split-beam sonar and is relocated to a new site one mile above upstream end of Church Slough.
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuskokwim River declared an economic disaster area due to extremely low chum salmon return, harvest and exvessel price. Chinook salmon returns are very low for second consecutive year. Many subsistence fishers report that they were unable to meet their chinook and chum salmon harvest goals. • Due to an extremely low return of chinook salmon, ADF&G, AVCP, KNA, KRSMWG, Kwethluk IRA, TCC, McGrath Native Council and USF&WS issue a joint appeal for subsistence users to conserve chinook salmon. • Takotna Community Schools operates a resistance board weir on the Takotna River • Kwethluk IRA and USF&WS operates a resistance board weir on the Kwethluk River • District W-1 divided into Subdistricts W-1A (above Bethel) and W-1B (below Bethel) and fishers are required to register to fish in only one subdistrict. Only one subdistrict is opened at a time to reduce harvest due to limited processing capacity.

^a For additional information on specific topics refer to the Region III Report Catalog or historical Area Management Reports for the Kuskokwim Area.

Table 3. Utilization of chum salmon in the Kuskokwim River, 1960-2000.

Year	Commercial Harvest ^a	Subsistence Harvest ^b	Sport Harvest ^g	Test Fishery Harvest	Total Utilization	Running 10-Year Average
1960	0	301,753 ^c			301,753	
1961	0	179,529 ^c			179,529	
1962	0	161,849 ^c			161,849	
1963	0	137,649 ^c			137,649	
1964	0	190,191 ^c			190,191	
1965	0	250,878 ^c			250,878	
1966	0	175,735 ^c		502 ^d	176,237	
1967	148	208,445 ^c		338	208,931	
1968	187	275,008 ^c		562	275,757	
1969	7,165	204,105 ^c		384	211,654	209,443
1970	1,664	246,810 ^c		1,139 ^d	249,613	204,229
1971	68,914	116,391 ^c		254	185,559	204,832
1972	78,619	120,316 ^c		486	199,421	208,589
1973	148,746	179,259 ^c		675	328,680	227,092
1974	171,887	277,170 ^c		2,021	451,078	253,781
1975	184,171	176,389 ^c		1,062	361,622	264,855
1976	177,864	223,792 ^c		2,101	403,757	287,607
1977	248,721	198,355 ^c	129	576	447,781	311,492
1978	248,656	118,809 ^c	555	2,153	370,173	320,934
1979	261,874	161,239 ^c	259	412	423,784	342,147
1980	483,751	165,172 ^c	324	2,058	651,305	382,316
1981	418,677	157,306 ^c	598	1,793	578,374	421,598
1982	278,306	190,011 ^c	1,125	504	469,946	448,650
1983	276,698	146,876 ^c	922	1,069	425,565	458,339
1984	423,718	142,542 ^c	520	1,186	567,966	470,027
1985	199,478	94,750	150	616	294,994	463,365
1986	309,213	141,931 ^c	245	1,693	453,082	468,297
1987	574,336	70,709	566	2,302	647,913	488,310
1988	1,381,674	151,967 ^e	764	4,379	1,538,784	605,171
1989	749,182	139,687	2,023	2,082	892,974	652,090
1990	461,624	126,508	533	2,107	590,772	646,037
1991	431,802	93,075	378	931	526,186	640,818
1992	344,603	96,491	608	15,330	457,032	639,527
1993	43,337	59,396	359	8,451	111,543	608,125
1994	271,115	72,025	1,280	11,998	356,418	586,970
1995	605,918	67,862	226	17,473	691,479	626,618
1996	207,877	88,965	280	2,864	299,986	611,309
1997	17,026	39,970	147	790	57,933	552,311
1998	207,809	63,537	291	1,140	272,777	425,710
1999	23,006	43,601	860	562	68,029	343,216
2000	11,570	^f		1,038		
10-Yr. Ave. (1990-1999)	261,412	75,143	496	6,165	343,216	

^a Districts 1 and 2 only; no chum harvests were reported in District 3.

^b Estimated subsistence harvest expanded from villages surveyed.

^c Includes small numbers of small chinook, sockeye and coho salmon.

^d Includes small numbers of sockeye.

^e Beginning in 1988, estimates are based on a new formula so data since 1988 is not comparable with previous years.

^f 2000 subsistence harvest data not available

^g Sport Fish Statewide Harvest Survey 1977-1999.

Table 4. Historical commercial salmon catches by fishing period in Kuskokwim Area District 1, 1994-2000.

Year	Date	Number of Permits	Hours Fished	Permit Hours	Chinook		Sockeye		Chum		Coho	
					Catch	CPUE	Catch	CPUE	Catch	CPUE	Catch	CPUE
1994	Jun 24	576	8	4,608	14,221	3.09	38,958	8.45	87,214	18.93	0	0.00
	Jul 14	496	4	1,984	578	0.29	3,891	1.96	43,585	21.97	820	0.41
	Jul 19	500	6	3,000	441	0.15	4,475	1.49	60,104	20.03	7,027	2.34
	Jul 23	506	6	3,036	313	0.10	1,125	0.37	38,149	12.57	24,213	7.98
	Jul 26	552	6	3,312	225	0.09	471	0.14	22,460	6.78	39,901	12.05
	Jul 29	577	6	3,462	204	0.06	159	0.05	11,252	3.25	52,090	15.05
	Aug 04	606	6	3,636	88	0.06	87	0.02	3,983	1.10	75,514	20.77
	Aug 09	530	6	3,180	29	0.03	70	0.02	1,153	0.36	129,570	40.75
	Aug 12	606	8	4,848	34	0.01	47	0.01	777	0.16	117,753	24.29
	Aug 15	595	8	4,760	22	0.01	33	0.01	321	0.07	47,902	10.06
	Aug 18	598	8	4,784	20	0.00	16	0.00	212	0.04	82,750	17.30
	Aug 22	554	8	4,432	12	0.00	15	0.00	104	0.02	44,054	9.94
	Aug 25	447	8	3,576	9	0.00	7	0.00	63	0.02	37,595	10.51
	Aug 27	445	6	2,670	3	0.00	4	0.00	30	0.01	20,526	7.69
	Aug 30	263	6	1,578	2	0.00	2	0.00	16	0.01	8,192	5.19
Sept 02	157	6	942				2	0.00	3	0.00	2,489	2.64
Total		706	106	53,808	16,201		49,362		269,426		690,396	
1995	Jun 22	569	4	2,276	6,895	3.03	4,420	1.94	49,157	21.60	0	0.00
	Jun 26	568	4	2,272	9,452	4.16	19,449	8.56	93,152	41.00	0	0.00
	Jun 29	565	4	2,260	4,972	2.20	18,188	8.05	83,580	36.98	0	0.00
	Jul 03	475	4	1,900	2,847	1.50	17,078	8.99	89,427	47.07	0	0.00
	Jul 06	481	4	1,924	1,521	0.79	14,765	7.67	81,246	42.23	0	0.00
	Jul 10	494	4	1,976	906	0.46	7,100	3.59	86,368	43.71	21	0.01
	Jul 14	435	4	1,740	546	0.31	4,219	2.42	43,137	24.79	221	0.13
	Jul 18	336	6	2,016	366	0.18	2,482	1.23	37,294	18.50	671	0.33
	Jul 21	368	4	1,472	202	0.14	940	0.64	21,039	14.29	1,272	0.86
	Aug 04	234	6	1,404	64	0.05	123	0.09	1,072	0.76	48,665	34.66
	Aug 08	611	6	3,666	95	0.03	363	0.10	1,229	0.34	98,548	26.88
	Aug 12	617	6	3,702	50	0.01	359	0.10	899	0.24	102,421	27.67
	Aug 16	593	6	3,558	52	0.01	147	0.04	208	0.06	65,713	18.47
	Aug 19	555	6	3,330	28	0.01	87	0.03	133	0.04	41,057	12.33
	Aug 22	497	6	2,982	16	0.01	113	0.04	157	0.05	43,978	14.75
	Aug 26	477	6	2,862	25	0.01	117	0.04	101	0.04	29,129	10.18
	Aug 29	355	6	2,130	15	0.01	45	0.02	39	0.02	17,790	8.35
Sept 01	219	6	1,314	2	0.00	31	0.02	12	0.01	5,783	4.40	
Total		712	92	42,784	28,054		90,026		588,250		455,269	
1996	Jun 17	245	2	490	2,045	4.17	1,850	3.78	11,560	23.59	0	0.00
	Jun 20	283	2	566	2,046	3.61	6,423	11.35	27,442	48.48	0	0.00
	Jun 24	240	1.5	360	666	1.85	4,420	12.28	19,438	53.99	0	0.00
	Jul 02	224	2	448	545	1.22	3,962	8.84	20,915	46.69	0	0.00
	Jul 05	194	2	388	316	0.81	3,481	8.97	17,651	45.49	2	0.01
	Jul 08	211	2	422	178	0.42	6,795	16.10	18,801	44.55	24	0.06
	Jul 12	237	2	474	230	0.49	3,781	7.98	26,468	55.84	1,608	3.39
	Jul 16	197	2	394	87	0.22	602	1.53	15,192	38.56	4,675	11.87
	Jul 19	267	3	801	164	0.20	298	0.37	13,390	16.72	14,746	18.41
	Jul 22	417	6	2,502	183	0.07	639	0.26	14,504	5.80	50,443	20.16
	Jul 25	487	8	3,896	124	0.03	256	0.07	9,024	2.32	113,637	29.17
	Jul 29	526	6	3,156	97	0.03	186	0.06	3,828	1.21	144,773	45.87
	Jul 31	464	6	2,784	52	0.02	92	0.03	1,541	0.55	122,946	44.16
	Aug 03	541	6	3,246	59	0.02	129	0.04	1,097	0.34	132,540	40.83
	Aug 07	514	6	3,084	43	0.01	73	0.02	581	0.19	94,332	30.59
	Aug 10	502	6	3,012	45	0.01	60	0.02	797	0.26	83,653	27.77
	Aug 13	471	6	2,826	25	0.01	82	0.03	296	0.10	70,053	24.79
	Aug 16	459	6	2,754	28	0.01	147	0.05	215	0.08	49,012	17.80
	Aug 20	400	6	2,400	19	0.01	83	0.03	51	0.02	25,870	10.78
Aug 23	293	6	1,758	9	0.01	22	0.01	23	0.01	13,133	7.47	
Aug 26	209	6	1,254	11	0.01	23	0.02	13	0.01	8,684	6.93	
Total		620	92.5	37,015	6,972		33,404		202,827		930,131	

-continued-

Table 4. (page 2 of 2)

Year	Date	Number of Permits	Hours Fished	Permit Hours	Chinook		Sockeye		Chum		Coho	
					Catch	CPUE	Catch	CPUE	Catch	CPUE	Catch	CPUE
1997	Jun 23	353	6	2,118	10,023	4.73	21,218	10.02	13,090	6.18		
	Jul 31	429	6	2,574	141	0.05	352	0.14	2,060	0.80	14,963	5.81
	Aug 06	513	6	3,078	145	0.05	229	0.07	1,387	0.45	37,216	12.09
	Aug 12	509	6	3,042	61	0.02	122	0.04	408	0.13	56,149	18.46
	Aug 18	478	6	2,850	66	0.02	67	0.02	58	0.02	21,273	7.46
Total		607	30.0	13,662	10,436		21,988		17,003		129,601	
1998	Jun 24	338	6	2,028	6,413	3.16	9,043	4.46	32,467	16.01		
	Jun 29	426	6	2,556	6,358	2.49	22,506	8.81	66,789	26.13		
	Jul 03	445	4	1,780	2,277	1.28	15,985	8.98	51,471	28.92	1	0.00
	Jul 11	417	4	1,668	1,127	0.68	10,172	6.10	29,407	17.63	23	0.01
	Jul 22	346	6	2,076	460	0.22	1,538	0.74	15,663	7.54	3,633	1.75
	Jul 27	370	6	2,220	356	0.16	932	0.42	7,500	3.38	18,497	8.33
	Aug 01	425	6	2,550	156	0.06	235	0.09	2,787	1.09	26,791	10.51
	Aug 06	496	6	2,976	88	0.03	295	0.10	1,020	0.34	45,128	15.16
	Aug 11	464	6	2,784	67	0.02	95	0.03	388	0.14	58,426	20.99
	Aug 17	439	6	2,634	34	0.01	45	0.02	122	0.05	34,640	13.15
	Aug 22	382	6	2,292	19	0.01	53	0.02	67	0.03	18,936	8.26
	Aug 29	154	6	924	1	0.00	7	0.01	17	0.02	4,093	4.43
	Total		615	68	26,488	17,356		60,906		207,698		210,168
1999	Jun 30	409	6	2,454	4,668	1.90	16,772	6.83	22,700	9.25		
	Aug 7	389	6	2,334	37	0.02	204	0.09	306	0.13	23,593	10.1
Total		509	12	4,788	4,705		16,976		23,006		23,593	
2000												
	July 5	224	4	896	357	0.40	3,658	4.1	11,026	12.3		
	Aug 1	248	6	1,488	12	0.01	94	0.1	156	0.1	25,642	17.2
	Aug 4	123	6	738	7	0.01	7	0.0	53	0.1	50,260	68.1
	Aug 5	270	6	1,620	8	0.00	73	0.0	43	0.0	32,056	19.8
	Aug 8	186	6	1,116	9	0.01	26	0.0	55	0.0	26,771	24.0
	Aug 9	217	6	1,302	13	0.01	57	0.0	128	0.1	20,905	16.1
	Aug 12	189	6	1,134	12	0.01	17	0.0	23	0.0	37,451	33.0
	Aug 14	224	6	1,344	6	0.00	75	0.1	33	0.0	16,766	12.5
	Aug 14	193	6	1,158	5	0.00	23	0.0	15	0.0	17,916	15.5
	Aug 18	199	6	1,194	6	0.01	58	0.0	16	0.0	14,697	12.3
	Aug 21	158	6	948	4	0.00	3	0.0	10	0.0	8,577	9.0
	Aug 22	143	6	858	1	0.00	32	0.0	4	0.0	4,489	5.2
	Aug 25	106	6	636	4	0.01	7	0.0	8	0.0	4,191	6.6
Total		532	76.0	14,432.0	444.0		4,130.0		11,570.0		259,721.0	

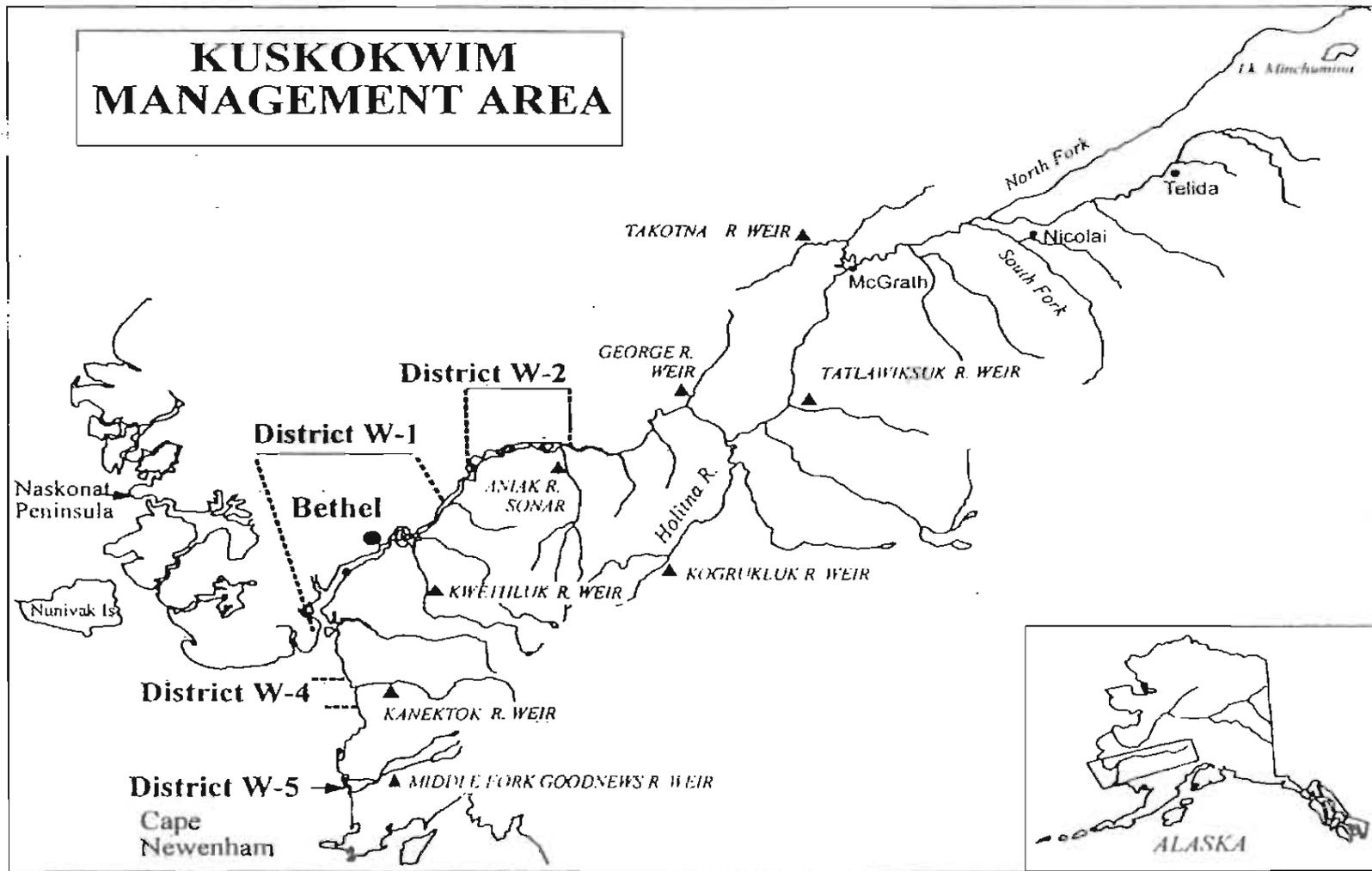


Figure 1. Kuskokwim Salmon Management Area.

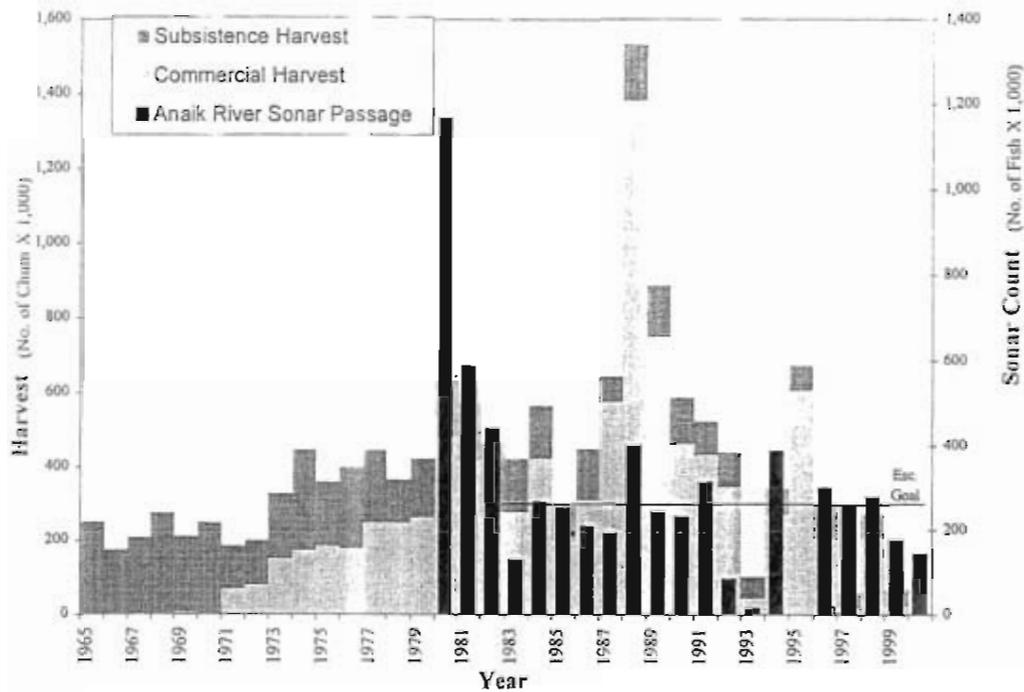


Figure 2. Historic Kuskokwim River chum salmon harvest and Aniak River sonar counts. The annual subsistence and commercial harvests are depicted as stacked bars and measured in thousands of fish. The single bar representing the Aniak River sonar count is measured in thousands of counts. The sonar passage is not apportioned to species, although chum salmon are believed to dominate the annual passage estimates.

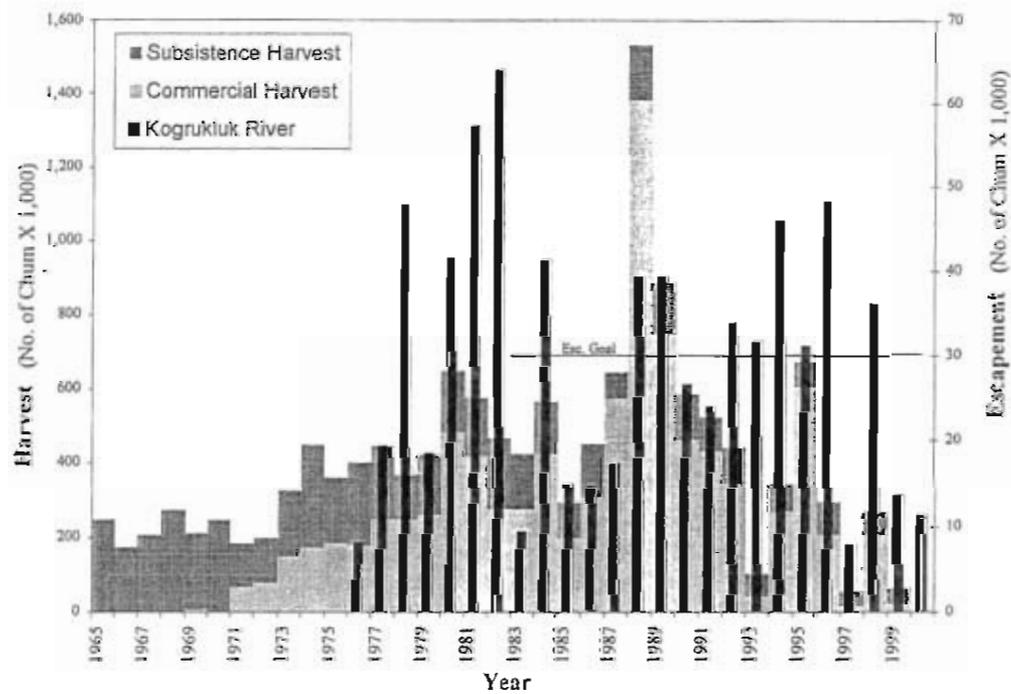


Figure 3. Historic Kuskokwim River chum salmon harvest and Kogrukluk River escapement. The annual subsistence and commercial harvests are depicted as stacked bars and measured in thousands of fish. The single bar representing the Kogrukluk River escapement is based on weir passage.

KUSKOKWIM RIVER

Chum

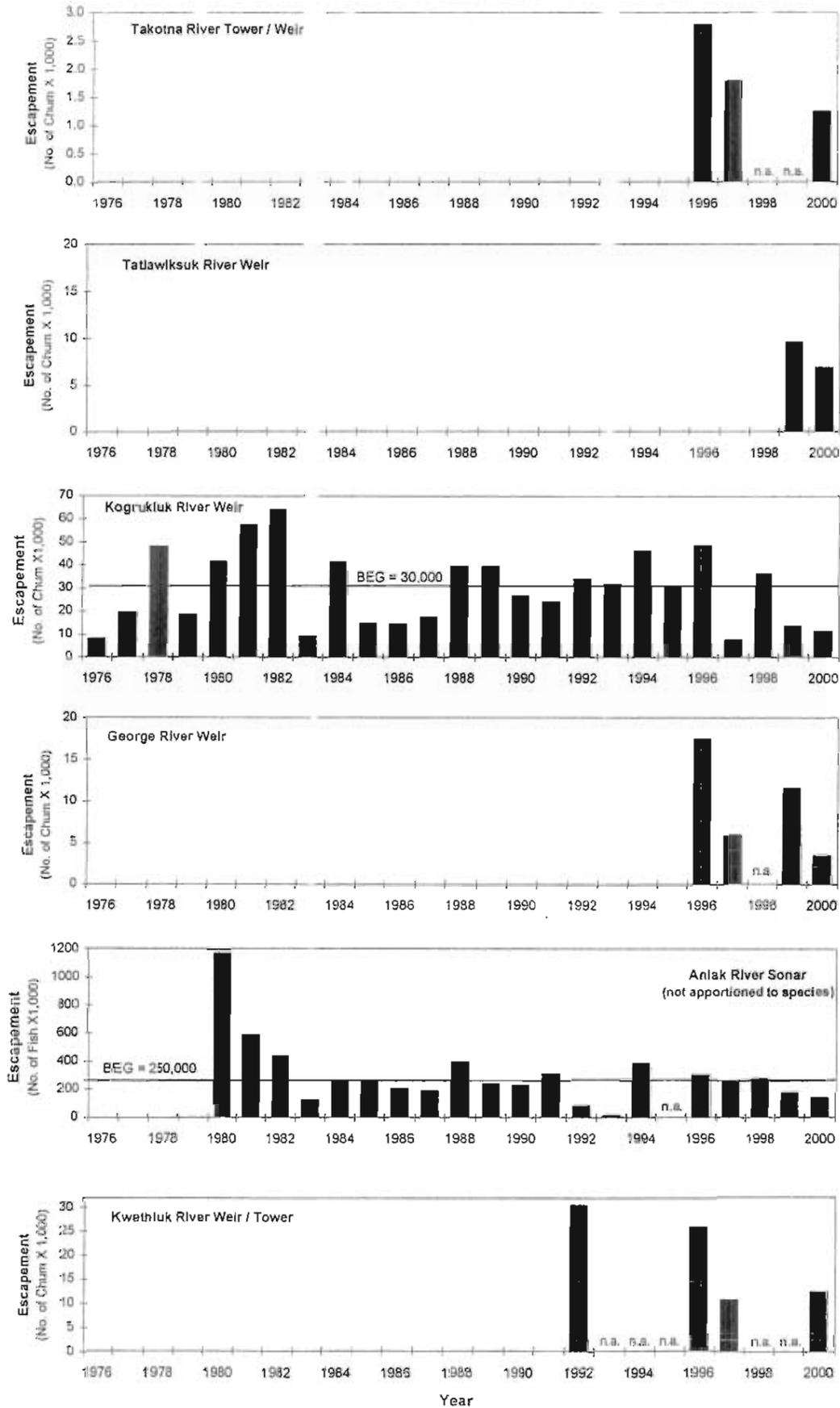


Figure 4. Historic Kuskokwim River chum salmon escapements, by project.

SECTION II

**DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT/ACTION PLAN OPTIONS FOR THE
KUSKOKWIM RIVER CHUM SALMON STOCK OF CONCERN AS
OUTLINED IN THE SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES POLICY**

SECTION II

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SECTION II

KUSKOKWIM RIVER CHUM SALMON MANAGEMENT/ACTION PLAN REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

Current Stock Status

In response to the guidelines established in the Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Policy, the Board of Fisheries classified the Kuskokwim River chum salmon stock as a yield concern during the September 28-29, 2000 work session. This determination was based on the inability, despite the use of specific management measures, to maintain expected yields, or harvestable surpluses, above the stock's escapement needs since 1997 and the anticipated low harvest level in 2001.

C&T Use Finding And The Amount Necessary For Subsistence

The Board of Fisheries made a positive finding for Customary and Traditional Use for all salmon in the entire Kuskokwim Area in 1993. The amounts necessary for subsistence (ANS) has been determined to be 192,000 – 242,000 salmon (all species combined). This ANS finding was based on subsistence salmon harvests from 1982 through 1991.

Revision of Amount Necessary for Subsistence

The department recommends that the Board amend 5 AAC 01.236 to include a revised finding of the ANS for the stock of concern using updated subsistence harvest data. In establishing the ANS range, the Board should use harvest information that represents the pattern of use in the subsistence fishery. One approach that may capture the dynamic pattern of use within the recent decade is to use the low and mean subsistence harvests for the most recent ten years, rounded down to the nearest 500 fish for the low, and rounded up to the nearest 500 fish for the high. The Board may also consider amending 5 AAC 01.236 to include an ANS finding by species, and/or by district or district groups.

Objectives

The objective of this recommendation is to reevaluate the previous Board's ANS finding in the Kuskokwim Area using more complete and accurate data, which better represents the pattern of use in the subsistence fishery.

Options for defining the Amount Necessary for Subsistence range

In amending 5 AAC 01.236 to redefine the ANS range for the stock of concern, the following options may be considered:

ANS Options Decision Matrix

Option	ANS by Combined Species	ANS by Individual Species	ANS by Region	ANS by District or District Groupings
A	x			
B	x		x	
C	x			x
D	x	x	x	
E		x	x	
F		x		x

Option A

Status Quo. The current ANS range (192,000 – 242,000 salmon) is not amended.

The Department does not recommend this option. The current ANS finding is for the entire Kuskokwim Management Area, which includes the Kuskokwim River drainage, Kuskokwim Bay, and the Bering Sea coast. The yield concern finding that the Board of Fisheries made at its September 28-29, 2000 work session was specifically for Kuskokwim River chum salmon. Amending the current ANS would be more appropriate since management options are directed primarily at rebuilding Kuskokwim River salmon stocks. In addition, the department revised the subsistence harvest survey methodology starting in 1989. The revised methodology resulted in a more complete reporting of subsistence harvests and a more accurate estimation of the total subsistence salmon harvest for the Kuskokwim Area.

(The following table is used to calculate ANS range for all options)

Kuskokwim Area Subsistence Salmon Harvests, 1990-99.

		District 1	District 2	Upper River	District 2	District 4	District 5	All	All Non	Total
		Lower River	Middle River	Above District 2	And Upper River	Quinhagak	Goodnews/Platinum	Kuskokwim River	Kuskokwim River	Kuskokwim Area
Chinook	Max 1990-99	78,956	12,754	4,750	17,480	6,013	917	96,436	6,699	100,159
Chinook	Min 1990-99	52,795	7,181	3,082	10,263	2,746	374	64,795	3,535	68,686
Chinook	Mean 1990-99	69,207	9,357	4,197	13,554	3,698	666	82,762	4,511	87,272
Sockeye	Max 1990-99	42,883	5,089	7,445	12,534	1,951	1,282	52,984	3,420	56,404
Sockeye	Min 1990-99	21,671	2,183	3,121	5,572	400	253	27,791	823	28,622
Sockeye	Mean 1990-99	30,733	3,315	5,156	8,471	1,173	750	39,204	2,073	41,276
Coho	Max 1990-99	43,362	4,448	7,112	10,295	4,174	1,828	50,370	5,922	55,620
Coho	Min 1990-99	18,979	2,010	2,976	4,986	1,264	305	24,864	1,682	27,239
Coho	Mean 1990-99	26,725	2,926	5,153	8,079	2,427	853	34,803	3,416	38,220
Chum	Max 1990-99	93,743	19,132	13,633	32,765	3,234	1,006	126,508	4,961	131,469
Chum	Min 1990-99	32,790	3,916	2,297	7,001	600	133	39,970	1,006	40,976
Chum	Mean 1990-99	58,001	10,304	6,837	17,142	1,459	325	75,143	3,004	78,147
All species Max 1990-99		233,946	34,691	30,583	65,274	15,372	4,176	293,554	20,968	314,522
All species Min 1990-99		153,722	16,097	15,202	31,299	5,853	1,404	188,476	7,588	198,466
All species Mean 1990-99		184,667	25,902	21,343	47,245	8,757	2,594	231,912	13,003	244,915

Source: Annual harvest surveys and permits, ADF&G

Option B

Establish the ANS range for all species combined for the Kuskokwim River drainage, and for the remainder of the Kuskokwim Area using more recent and complete subsistence harvest data.

- I. Kuskokwim River drainage: 188,000 – 232,000
- II. Remainder of Kuskokwim Area: 7,500 – 13,500

Option C

Establish the ANS range for all species combined by district or district groupings within the Kuskokwim River and Kuskokwim Area.

- I. District 1 (Lower Kuskokwim River): 153,500 – 185,000
- II. District 2, and Upper Kuskokwim River drainage: 31,000 – 47,500
- III. District 4: 5,500 – 9,000
- IV. District 5: 1,000 – 3,000

Option D

Establish the ANS range by species for the Kuskokwim River drainage and establish the ANS for combined species for the remainder of the Kuskokwim Area.

- I. Kuskokwim River drainage
 - Chinook salmon: 64,500 – 83,000
 - Sockeye salmon: 27,500 – 39,500
 - Coho salmon: 24,500 – 35,000
 - Chum salmon: 39,500 – 75,500
- II. Remainder of Kuskokwim Area
 - All salmon: 7,500 – 13,500

Option E

Establish the ANS range by species for the Kuskokwim River drainage, and for the remainder of the Kuskokwim Area using more recent and complete subsistence harvest data.

- I. Kuskokwim River drainage
 - Chinook salmon: 64,500 – 83,000
 - Sockeye salmon: 27,500 – 39,500
 - Coho salmon: 24,500 – 35,000
 - Chum salmon: 39,500 – 75,500
- II. Remainder of Kuskokwim Area
 - Chinook salmon: 3,500 – 5,000
 - Sockeye salmon: 500 – 2,500
 - Coho salmon: 1,500 – 3,500
 - Chum salmon: 1,000 – 3,500

Option F

Establish the ANS range by species and by district or district groupings within the Kuskokwim River and Kuskokwim Area.

- I. District 1 (Lower Kuskokwim River)
 - Chinook salmon: 52,500 – 69,500
 - Sockeye salmon: 21,500 – 31,000
 - Coho salmon: 18,500 – 27,000
 - Chum salmon: 32,500 – 58,500
- II. District 2, and Upper Kuskokwim River drainage
 - Chinook salmon: 10,000 – 14,000
 - Sockeye salmon: 5,500 – 8,500
 - Coho salmon: 4,500 – 8,500
 - Chum salmon: 7,000 – 17,500
- III. District 4
 - Chinook salmon: 2,500 – 4,000
 - Sockeye salmon: 400 – 1,500
 - Coho salmon: 1,000 – 2,500
 - Chum salmon: 500 – 1,500
- IV. District 5
 - Chinook salmon: 374 – 1,000
 - Sockeye salmon: 253 – 1,000
 - Coho salmon: 305 – 1,000
 - Chum salmon: 133 – 500

Benefits

All Options: If the postseason subsistence harvest surveys indicate that subsistence harvests were above the lower end of the ANS range, it is likely that there was a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. In contrast, if subsistence harvests were below the ANS range, this may indicate there might not have been a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. A chronic inability of harvests to meet the ANS range may trigger a Tier II situation. So, in essence, the ANS is a performance measure.

Options B and C: An ANS range for all species combined provides a simple, although gross, measure of the degree that subsistence opportunity for harvesting salmon was provided. Combining species also takes into account the interchangeable nature of certain subsistence resources.

Options D and E: An ANS range by species for only the Kuskokwim River drainage would allow for management actions that are focused on specific Kuskokwim River stocks of concern while not involving other areas without stocks of concern. For example, a Tier II permit system might be established within the Kuskokwim River drainage with chronically depressed harvests, while leaving management in the remainder of the Kuskokwim Area where the Board has not yet found a concern on a Tier I system.

Options C and F: An ANS range limited to a district or district grouping allows for more discrete management actions within that district or district grouping, without involving other areas where there may or may not be management problems. For instance, a Tier II

permit system might be established within one district with chronically depressed harvests, while leaving harvests in other districts without similar problems on a Tier I system. Grouping Districts 2 and the Upriver areas of the Kuskokwim drainage reflects the shared gear and harvest patterns in these districts.

Options D, E and F: An ANS range specific to the stock of concern provides an index for measuring the extent to which reasonable opportunity was provided in the subsistence fishery, using postseason harvest data.

Detriments

All Options: If the ANS range is not set to accurately reflect the normal between-year fluctuations in subsistence uses, a Tier II fishery may be unnecessarily triggered, reducing subsistence opportunity for subsistence users.

Options A, B, C: An ANS finding for all salmon grouped together may not allow for measuring effects on reasonable opportunity of management actions directed toward a specific stock of concern. Reasonable opportunity of subsistence uses would continue to be measured by harvests of a mixed set of species. To a certain extent, increased opportunity for one species can compensate for reduced opportunity for another species. However, they are not fully interchangeable. For example, subsistence fishers may be able to substitute sockeye salmon for reduced catches of chum salmon, because sockeye and chum salmon run timing overlaps, and both species can be harvested during June when favorable drying conditions exist. However, lack of opportunity to harvest chum salmon can not be remedied simply with additional opportunity to take coho salmon. Coho salmon can not be dried and smoked like chum salmon because late July and August are typically too rainy and cool. Freezing and canning are typically used to preserve coho salmon. Most households do not have enough freezer capacity to store sufficient quantities of coho salmon to replace dried and smoked chum salmon.

Options B, D and E: The remainder of the Kuskokwim Management Area outside of the Kuskokwim River drainage is large and includes salmon stocks bound for specific drainages such as the Kanektok River, Goodnews River, and spawning areas outside of the Kuskokwim Area. Combining all of these stocks into one ANS may not be desirable. However, there does not appear to be a specific need to more discreetly define the ANS finding for this area at this time.

Options C and F: Although the ranges are not designed for inseason management, establishing ANS by district or district groupings may create unrealistic management goals because the subsistence harvest is unknown inseason. The department cannot manage for a specific level by district inseason. Measurement of success of meeting management objectives within a district can only be accomplished using postseason harvest assessments.

Preferred Option

Option D: The department prefers that the Board establish an ANS range by species for the entire Kuskokwim River drainage and an ANS range by combined species for the

remainder of the Kuskokwim Area using the low and the mean subsistence harvests for the most recent ten years.

Establishing an ANS range for the entire river is less complicated than the other options. The lack of complete and timely inseason reporting of subsistence harvests makes it difficult for the department to manage for an ANS range by district as the fishery is prosecuted. In the absence of commercial fishing, the Kuskokwim River district boundaries that were established for commercial fishing have little application for subsistence guidelines. Establishing the ANS range for combined species for the remainder of the Kuskokwim Area provides a measure of subsistence opportunity for stocks outside of the Kuskokwim River drainage.

Habitat Factors Adversely Affecting The Stock

Mining:

Based on Habitat and Restoration Division's experience in the Kuskokwim River drainage over the last 20 years there has been fisheries habitat damage in the drainage, primarily from gold mining activities occurring over the last century (Lance Trasky and Wayne Dolezal, ADF&G, Anchorage, personal communication). This activity probably has reduced the ability of the drainage to produce salmon. The division's evaluation is based on review of individual projects and on an extensive stream survey of south side tributaries between Stony River and the Aniak River in the 1980's. Depending upon the drainage the relative level of damage ranges from severe to low to unknown. Affected drainages include:

Kwethluk River: Supports spawning populations of chinook, chum, coho, pink, and sockeye salmon. Impacts from gold mining have occurred in some upper tributaries. Effect on salmon spawning and rearing habitat unknown.

Kisaralik River: Supports spawning populations of chinook, coho, sockeye, and chum salmon. Impacts from gold mining have occurred in some upper tributaries. Level of effect on salmon spawning and rearing habitat unknown.

Tuluksak River: Supports spawning populations of chinook, coho, and chum salmon. This was a very productive system prior to mining. The upper main stem and major tributaries have been heavily impacted by gold mining from early the 1900's through the 1980's. Twenty miles, or more, of salmon spawning and rearing habitat was severely damaged. It is reasonable to estimate that at least half of the salmon production of this river has been destroyed. Productivity of salmon in this area is reduced by inadequate stream flow in the main channel as water dissipates through tailings. The Tuluksak River would benefit greatly from restoration.

Aniak River: Supports spawning populations of chinook salmon, chum salmon, and coho salmon. Tributaries to the Aniak River have been placer mined since the early 1900's. The effect of this mining on salmon habitat is unknown.

Holitna River: Supports spawning chinook, chum, coho, pink and sockeye salmon. Tributaries to the Holitna have been mined since the early 1900's. The effect on salmon spawning and rearing has not been assessed.

Owhat River: Supports spawning chum salmon. Mining probably occurred in this drainage. The extent and effect is unknown.

Crooked Creek: Supports spawning populations of chinook, coho, and chum salmon. Tributaries to Crooked Creek were placer mined from the early 1920's to the present. The extent and effect of mining on Crooked Creek fish habitat has not been evaluated. The Crooked Creek drainage also contains major mineral deposits that are being evaluated for a potential open pit gold mine.

George River: Supports spawning populations of chinook, coho, chum, pink, and sockeye salmon. Tributaries to the George River have been placer mined from the early 1900's to the 1980's. Salmon producing habitat was damaged and some tributaries would benefit from restoration.

Takotna River: Supports spawning populations of chinook, coho and chum salmon. Tributaries to the Takotna River have been placer mined from the early 1900's to the present. Salmon producing habitat was damaged and some tributaries would probably benefit from restoration.

There are several highly mineralized areas in the Kuskokwim drainage, including the Taylor Mountain area, Crooked Creek Area, and much of the upper drainage. There has been a lot of historic placer mining throughout the drainage. Gold concentrations at Donlin Creek and several other areas are several times the levels currently being mined in the Fairbanks area, but development has been hampered by the lack of a cheap energy source and transportation infrastructure.

There has also been mercury mining near Red Devil and placer mining on some tributaries upstream from McGrath such as the Takotna and the Nixon Fork. There is some indication that some streams in highly mineralized areas in the Kuskokwim drainage may contain naturally high levels of metals, such as mercury, which could limit fish production in some systems. This phenomenon has been investigated because of the human health ramifications, but the potential effect on fish production has probably not been evaluated.

Logging:

Rights to all of the timber on village corporation lands in the middle and upper Kuskokwim drainage were sold to a large timber corporation, which was considering

logging the timber and rafting it down the Kuskokwim to log ships at the mouth. Most of this timber is located in the riparian areas along the major rivers and rafting it is expected to scour the bottom in some areas as well as damage additional riparian habitat. Low timber prices may have caused those plans to fall through, but this may be a fisheries issue in the future.

Projects Needed:

1. A comprehensive survey of anadromous fish habitat and problems using the advanced fish habitat identification program developed by the Habitat and Restoration Division.
2. Development of a fish information database for the Kuskokwim drainage using the ARC/INFO SEA/SIMS program that will be developed for S.E. Alaska.
3. Restoration of the Tuluksak River system which has been heavily impacted by mining.

Do New Or Expanding Fisheries On This Stock Exist?

There are no new or expanding fisheries on this stock. Ten proposals are before the Board (#'s 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142 and 143) which could affect the harvest or management of this stock of concern.

Existing Management Plan And Proposed Modifications

In response to the guidelines established in the Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Policy, the Board requested that the department provide recommended changes to the existing Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan regarding the management of mixed species during the November 4-6, 2000 work session. Proposed regulatory language is as follows:

5 AAC 07.365. KUSKOKIWM RIVER SALMON MANAGEMENT PLAN. (a) The objective of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan is to provide guidelines for the management of the Kuskokwim River commercial salmon fishery which will result in sustained yields of the salmon stocks large enough to provide for subsistence needs and an economically viable commercial fishery.

(b) It is the intent of the Board of Fisheries that the Kuskokwim River king salmon stocks be managed in a conservative manner consistent with sustained yield principles and the subsistence priority and, consistent with this intent, that the available surpluses of other salmon be taken. To accomplish these objectives, the department shall manage the Kuskokwim River commercial salmon fishery as follows:

- (1) there may not be a directed commercial king salmon fishery;
- (2) repealed 6/14/90;

(3) only those waters of District 1 downstream of ADF&G regulatory markers located at Bethel may be open during the first fishing period;

(4) ~~there must be at least three eight-hour fishing periods in June;~~

(5) although no directed fishery on king salmon is allowed, the incidental catch guideline harvest level for king salmon taken during fisheries directed on other species is ~~±5,000~~ to 50,000 fish;

(6) to the extent possible, the department shall provide at least 24 hours' advance notice of the opening of District 1 and District 2 fishing periods;

(7) District 1 and District 2 fishing periods are from 1:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.; when longer periods are allowed, the extra time is to be divided before 1:00 p.m. and after 7:00 p.m.

(8) In June and until coho salmon abundance exceeds chum salmon abundance, the department shall manage, to the extent possible, the commercial salmon fishery based on the strength of the chum salmon run.

(9) The harvest of sockeye salmon will be considered incidental to the chum salmon directed fishery.

(10) When coho salmon abundance exceeds chum salmon abundance, the department shall manage, to the extent possible, the commercial salmon fishery based on the strength of the coho salmon run.

(11) When the chum salmon return is projected to be inadequate to meet escapement and subsistence needs, the department shall manage the coho salmon fishery to minimize the incidental harvest of chum salmon.

Escapement Goal Review

Although there are many new and recently established escapement projects within the Kuskokwim drainage, there are few with sufficient historical data available concerning chum salmon stocks. No escapement goal analysis will be completed at this time. The department recommends that five previously established goals be dropped, because of our inability to accurately census chum salmon from the air in these streams. Remaining goals will be classified as "preliminary Sustained Escapement Goals".

List of Current and Proposed BEG, or SEG for Stock

Stream	Current Goal	Proposed Goal
Kwethluk River/Canyon Creek - Aerial	7,000 BEG	discontinue
Kisaralik River - Aerial	8,000 BEG	discontinue
Kasigluk River – Aerial	4,000 BEG	discontinue
Tuluksak River - Aerial	5,000 BEG	discontinue
Aniak River drainage		
Aniak River – Aerial	10,000 BEG	10,000 SEG
Salmon River – Aerial	3,000 BEG	discontinue
Aniak River – Sonar Count	250,000 BEG	250,000 SEG
Holitna River drainage		
Holitna River – Aerial	12,000 BEG	12,000 SEG
Kogrukluk River Weir	30,000 BEG	30,000 SEG

Identify Research Needed On Kuskokwim River Chum Salmon Stock

List of Past Research On Kuskokwim River Chum Salmon

Project Name	Years	Location	Primary Objective(s)
Kwegoyuk Test Fishery	66-83	Kuskokwim River, mile 26	Index chinook, chum, sockeye and coho salmon run timing and abundance using set gillnets
Eek Test Fishery	88-94	Kuskokwim River, mile 24	Index chinook, chum, sockeye and coho salmon run timing and abundance using drift gillnets
Lower Kuskokwim River Test Fishery	95	Kuskokwim River, mile 24 and 35	Index chinook, chum, sockeye and coho salmon run timing and abundance using drift gillnets
Aniak Test Fishery	92-95	Kuskokwim River, mile 225	Index chinook, chum, sockeye and coho salmon run timing and abundance using drift gillnets
Chuathbaluk Test Fishery	92-93	Kuskokwim River, mile 233	Index chinook, chum, sockeye and coho salmon run timing and abundance using drift gillnets
Kuskokwim River Subsistence Test Fishery	88-90	Lower and Middle Kuskokwim River	Determine catch per unit effort of salmon by selected subsistence fishers inseason
Kuskokwim River Sonar	93-95	Kuskokwim River, mile 79	Estimate passage of salmon by species using side-scan sonar
Kwethluk River Weir/Tower	91 (weir) 96-98	Kwethluk River, mile 50	Estimate escapement and age, sex, and size (ASL) composition of salmon into the Kwethluk River
Tuluksak River Weir	91-94	Tuluksak River, mile 48	Estimate escapement and ASL composition of salmon into the Tuluksak River
Kogrukluk River Tower	69-78	Kogrukluk River, mile 5	Estimate escapement and ASL composition of salmon into the Kogrukluk River
Takotna River Tower	95-98	Takotna River, mile 45	Estimate escapement of salmon into the Takotna River
Salmon River Weir	81-82	Salmon River/Pitka Fork, mile 3	Estimate escapement and ASL composition of salmon into the Salmon River
Kuskokwim River Tagging Studies	61-63 66	Kuskokwim River	Estimate migratory timing of salmon
Kuskokwim River Genetic Stock Identification	90-96	Kuskokwim River drainage	Determine genetic composition of chinook and chum salmon stocks in various Kuskokwim River tributaries
Chum Salmon Radio-telemetry Tagging Study	95	Kuskokwim River	Determine migratory timing and distribution of chum salmon

List of Present Research On Kuskokwim River Chum Salmon

Project Name	Location / Start-up	Primary Objective(s)
Commercial Harvest and Effort Assessment	Kuskokwim River Districts W-1 & 2	Document and estimate harvest and associated effort of Kuskokwim River commercial salmon fishery
Commercial Harvest Sampling and Monitoring	Kuskokwim River Districts W-1 & 2	Determine age, sex, and size of salmon harvested in Kuskokwim River commercial fisheries; monitor commercial fishery openings and closures
Subsistence Harvest Assessment	Kuskokwim River drainage	Document and estimate the subsistence harvest and effort of the Kuskokwim River drainage subsistence salmon fishery via household surveys
Sport Catch, Harvest, and Effort Assessment	Kuskokwim River drainage	Document and estimate the catch, harvest, and associated effort of the Kuskokwim River sport fishery via post-season, mail-out questionnaires
Aerial Surveys	Kuskokwim River tributaries	Index the relative abundance of salmon spawning escapements by aerial surveys of selected tributary salmon spawning populations
Bethel Drift Gillnet Test Fishery	Kuskokwim River, mile 79; began 1984	Index chinook, chum, sockeye, and coho salmon run timing and abundance using drift gillnets
Kwethluk River Weir	Kwethluk River, mile 50; restarted 2000	Estimate daily escapement of salmon into the Kwethluk River; estimate ASL composition of chinook, chum, and coho salmon escapement
Aniak River Sonar	Aniak River, mile 11; began 1980	Estimate daily fish passage into the Aniak River; estimate ASL composition of chum salmon escapement
George River Weir	George River, mile 4; began 1996	Estimate daily escapement of salmon into the George River; estimate ASL composition of chinook, chum, and coho salmon escapement
Kogruklu River Weir	Kogruklu River, mile 1; began 1976	Estimate daily escapement of salmon into the Kogruklu River; estimate ASL composition of chinook, chum, and coho salmon escapement
Tatlawiksuk River Weir	Tatlawiksuk River, mile 2; began 1998	Estimate daily escapement of salmon into the Tatlawiksuk River; estimate ASL composition of chinook, chum, and coho salmon escapement
Takotna River Weir	Takotna River, mile 45; began 2000	Estimate daily escapement of salmon into the Takotna River; estimate ASL composition of chinook, chum, and coho salmon escapement

List of Proposed Research On Kuskokwim River Chum Salmon

Project Name	Location	Primary Objective(s)
Inseason Subsistence Harvest Monitoring	Kuskokwim River (McGrath, Aniak and Bethel areas)	Determine progress and relative success of subsistence fishing inseason; estimate ASL composition of chinook salmon harvested by the fishery
Kuskokwim River Sonar	Kuskokwim River, mile 91	Estimate passage of salmon by species using side-scan sonar
Tuluksak River Weir	Tuluksak River, ~mile 40	Estimate daily escapement of salmon into the Tuluksak River; estimate ASL composition of chinook, chum, and coho salmon escapement
Additional Weirs	Various Rivers	Estimate daily escapement of salmon into the selected rivers; estimate ASL composition of chinook, chum, and coho salmon escapement
Database Development Project	Kuskokwim River	Inventory and integrate complete complement of historical salmon abundance and ASL data to support the process of determining data shortfalls and needs, and to enhance access to historic data for inseason management purposes.
Kuskokwim River Tributary Weir Site Surveys	Kuskokwim River tributaries	Survey selected Kuskokwim River tributaries to identify sites where salmon counting weirs can be installed and operated.
Holitna River Radio-telemetry Tagging Study	Holitna River drainage	Estimate spawning distribution and total escapement of chinook and coho salmon in the Holitna River drainage
Aniak River Subsistence Fishery Study	Aniak River drainage	Determine level of subsistence use for the Aniak River drainage, harvest estimates for all fish species, gather traditional ecological knowledge from residents using the river
Effects of Propeller- and Jet- Driven Boats on Spawning Salmon in the Aniak River	Aniak River	Determine effects of boat traffic on spawning salmon and salmon eggs in the Aniak River
Survey of Sport Fishing in the Aniak River	Aniak River drainage	Estimate sport effort, catch, and harvest of salmon and resident species in the Aniak River drainage

Kuskokwim River Salmon Research Plan

The following statements of goals and objectives provide the basis of a research plan to address the most significant concerns associated with managing chinook and chum salmon fisheries in the Kuskokwim River drainage. The five goals in the research plan incorporate principles of the Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Policy. Research needs and priorities are articulated as objectives. Difficulties to achieving objectives are outlined, and projects and actions to address or overcome the difficulties are identified.

DRAFT

Goals	Objectives
1. Maintain wild salmon stock escapements within ranges to sustain salmon production, diversity and normal ecosystem functioning	1a. Establish BEG for drainage 1b. Establish SEG for tributaries where appropriate 1c. Establish acceptable standards for escapement quality
2. Harvest with caution commensurate with uncertainty	2a. Manage escapement for the drainage 2b. Incorporate system productivity into management decisions 2c. Evaluate the effects of enhanced stocks on wild stocks 2d. Rebuild depleted stocks 2e. Understand sources of mortality and exploitation of stocks in fisheries 2f. Evaluate management systems 2g. Develop reliable forecasting tools 2h. Evaluate enforcement for effectiveness
3. Protect marine, coastal and watershed habitat for wild salmon migration, spawning and rearing	3a. Identify critical habitat 3b. Characterize critical habitat and understand variability 3c. Monitor habitat for change 3d. Evaluate habitat management and enforcement for effectiveness 3e. Restore degraded habitat if warranted
4. Promote public support and involvement for sustained use and protection of salmon resources	4a. Distribute information about the planning effort to build public support 4b. Develop field research projects with public involvement 4c. Continued public involvement in salmon working group
5. Consider net social and economic benefits from the fisheries to users	5a. Assess the impact of management decisions on socioeconomic benefits 5b. Derive local benefits for development and use of Kuskokwim fisheries 5c. Evaluate long term viability of fisheries to promote economic health

ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Kuskokwim River Chum Salmon Rebuilding Action Plan Goal

Reduce fishing mortality in order to meet spawning escapement goals, to provide for subsistence levels within the ANS range, and to reestablish historic range of harvest levels by other users.

Action Plan Alternatives – Kuskokwim River

ACTION #1

Amend 5AAC 07.365(b)(4) to delete the requirement that there be at least three eight-hour periods in June:

Objective

The objective of this action is to bring the management plan into consistency with current management practices which open commercial fishing periods based on the strength of the chum salmon run and opportunities for subsistence fishers to harvest salmon necessary for subsistence.

Specific action recommended to implement the objective

Amend the existing regulation to delete the requirement.

Subsistence issues/considerations

The requirement that there be three eight-hour commercial fishing periods in June could result in reduced subsistence fishing opportunity. The recommended action is consistent with state subsistence law requirements. Basing the commercial fishing periods on the timing and strength of the chum salmon run while minimizing the incidental harvest of chinook salmon in the commercial fishery will continue to provide an opportunity for subsistence fishing.

Performance measures

Since this regulation was adopted, chum salmon run strength has not been sufficient to allow for three eight-hour fishing periods in June and still provide for escapement and subsistence needs. The amount of commercial fishing time in June varies each year based on chum and chinook salmon run strength. Likewise, the amount of subsistence fishing closures each June is greater during years when there are commercial fishing openings. Inseason chum salmon run assessment will be based on test fisheries, subsistence catch reports, age and sex composition, and preliminary escapement monitoring information. The department will participate in Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group meetings inseason to gather information from the public and to discuss run status and management actions.

Research plan to address stock of concern

A research plan is not applicable to this proposed action.

ACTION #2

When very low chum salmon runs are projected and commercial fishing is likely to remain closed, reduce subsistence fishing time early in the run to help ensure that subsistence harvests do not impair meeting escapement needs or reasonable opportunity for all subsistence users.

Objectives

Reduce subsistence harvests early in the season when there is a much higher level of uncertainty in projecting total run abundance and spread subsistence fishing opportunity among users.

Specific action recommended to implement the objective

Through involvement with the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group and other members of the public, the department would identify times and areas when closures to the subsistence fishery are most appropriate. To spread harvest opportunity among all subsistence users, management of the subsistence fishery would use time and/or area and gear restrictions to provide for opportunity throughout the drainage while allowing chum salmon to pass through the districts and meet escapement goals. The department would establish subsistence fishing periods, and implement gear restrictions by emergency order based upon inseason run assessment and reasonable opportunity as developed through the Board and public process. If subsistence restrictions are implemented, they could be easily modified as necessary based on changes in the strength or timing of the salmon run.

Benefits

Salmon run outlooks in the Kuskokwim River are qualitative in nature and based on parent year spawning escapements, age composition information, and recent trends in run strength. While the harvest outlooks provide for a general level of expectation, the fisheries are managed based upon inseason assessments of run strength. When a very poor run is projected and commercial fishing is likely to be closed, there is the potential that typical subsistence harvests may not provide for adequate spawning escapements. Additionally, during years when there are no commercial fishing openings, subsistence opportunity is increased due to the lack of subsistence closures associated with commercial fishing periods. In a year with average run strength, there are usually two commercial periods per week, which allows for approximately five days of subsistence fishing a week. If this action is accepted, the length of the subsistence fishing periods would vary depending on salmon run strength and other factors. Closing subsistence fishing on weekends would probably have least impact on 'full-time' subsistence fishers. Managing the subsistence fishery using the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group and the public in an advisory capacity would provide the flexibility necessary to react in a timely manner to inseason run assessment information.

Detriments

Currently subsistence harvest levels cannot be determined inseason. Closure or restrictions to the subsistence fishery early in the season could be overly restrictive or too lenient prior to obtaining complete run abundance information. Subsistence fishers could forego some harvestable surplus that was not identified until it had already passed through their area or conversely, they may harvest fish needed for escapement. If subsistence fishing closures are lengthy, resulting in short (less than 36 hours) subsistence fishing openings, individuals, particularly older fishers using set nets, would be repeatedly setting, removing and resetting their nets. There could be increased competition for a limited number of good setnet sites. Setnet fishers who traditionally occupy the same location every year could lose the site once their net was removed.

Subsistence issues/considerations

Reduction of subsistence fishing time may result in reduced fishing opportunity, which may decrease the ability of some subsistence users to meet their needs. Having short open and closed periods would most impact fishers who use set nets to harvest their fish.

Performance measures

The department encourages fishermen to keep track of their subsistence salmon harvests on household subsistence catch calendars. Harvest levels would be determined through postseason subsistence surveys. A postseason analysis of subsistence salmon harvests will be conducted to determine if the objective of spreading reasonable opportunity among all subsistence users was achieved. Inseason chum salmon run assessment will be based on test fisheries, subsistence catch reports, age and sex composition, and preliminary escapement monitoring information. Although it will be difficult to measure the degree to which subsistence restrictions contributed to achieving actual escapement goals, it can be expected that escapements would have been lower had these restrictions not been in place.

Research plan to address stock of concern

Information needs include increased escapement monitoring and inseason subsistence harvest monitoring.

ACTION #3

Provide the department authority to change bag limits for subsistence rod and reel fisheries by emergency order when necessary to help ensure that subsistence harvests do not impair meeting escapement needs (Related proposal #134).

Objective

Reduce the potential total harvest rate of chum salmon in tributary streams to provide for adequate spawning escapement while allowing the harvest of other species for subsistence needs.

Specific action recommended to implement the objective

Emergency order authority to limit the harvest of chum salmon by subsistence fishers using a rod and reel (line attached to a rod or pole) would enable the department to adjust subsistence bag limits to meet specific conservation needs. This emergency order authority would be used when and where a need to conserve chum salmon is identified. Authority to regulate tackle (e.g. no bait, single hook lures, etc.) should also be considered in order to allow for capture methods that would allow for increased survival of released chum salmon.

Benefits

This action would provide added protection for chum salmon on the spawning grounds. Presently, there are no limits on the subsistence harvest of salmon by rod and reel. If the character of the subsistence rod and reel fishery changes significantly, there is a potential for the chum salmon harvest by rod and reel to increase. Fishing for chum salmon with rod and reel gear occurs primarily in the spawning tributaries. By the time salmon reach the spawning tributaries, they are already through the primary gillnet fishery. The potential harvest of chum salmon on the spawning grounds by rod and reel gear will be reduced.

Detriments

Subsistence users that harvest a significant portion of their chum salmon using rod and reel may not have a viable alternative method to harvest chum salmon. Subsistence fishers may find it inappropriate to release fish that they catch. Complex regulations that disallow the use of bait and treble hooks in some drainages, but not in others, may result in uncertainties and misunderstandings about subsistence fishing regulations.

Subsistence issues/considerations

See above paragraph.

Performance measures

The department encourages fishermen to keep track of their subsistence salmon harvest on household subsistence catch calendars. A postseason analysis of subsistence salmon harvests and escapement monitoring projects will be conducted to determine if the objective was achieved. Subsistence fishers will be asked if they harvested salmon with rod and reel gear and if so, the species and number of salmon harvested. Inseason chum salmon run assessment will be based on test fisheries, subsistence catch reports, age and sex composition, and preliminary escapement monitoring information. The department will participate in Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group meetings inseason to gather information from the public and to discuss run status and management actions.

Research plan to address stock of concern

A research plan may be developed if applicable, should the Board accept this action.

ACTION #4

When very low runs are projected, determine when commercial and sport fisheries are closed in relation to one another.

Objective

This action integrates management of the Kuskokwim River drainage sport fishery into the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan. The measure develops a policy or regulation under which certain actions taken in regards to the commercial fishery would result in appropriate actions in the sport fishery.

Specific action recommended to implement the objective

Take appropriate action to limit sport fish harvest (reduce bag limits, catch and release, or closure) of chum salmon when the commercial fishery is closed to conserve chum salmon. An appropriate action could depend on whether commercial fishing is closed for an extended period of time or for the season.

Benefits

The general public, sport fishers, and sport fishing guides would benefit if there was a policy or regulation that addressed what conservation actions would occur in the sport fishery based on conservation actions taken in the commercial fishery.

Detriments

Sport fishing guides could be adversely effected if their ability to attract clients is diminished by closure or restriction of sport fishing opportunities.

Subsistence issues/considerations

Failure to restrict the sport fishery concurrent with the subsistence fishery would likely result in substantial negative public opinion; however, the estimated average sport harvest of chum salmon is only 600 fish for the entire Kuskokwim River drainage. Catch rates for chum salmon in the sport fishery are much higher, but the fish are typically released so the harvest rate is low.

Performance measures

The department collects data on sport fish effort and harvest using various survey techniques. Sport fish effort, catch and harvest estimates are generated for streams from which significant data are collected. The department routinely **contacts sport fishers, sport fish guides and other members of the public** inseason to solicit their input concerning the sport fishery. The department will participate in Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group meetings inseason to gather information from the public and to discuss run status and management actions.

Research plan to address stock of concern

A research plan may be developed if applicable, should the Board accept this action.

ACTION #5

Adopt regulations creating a Tier II subsistence fishery and Tier II permit scoring system for the stock of concern, or segments of a stock of concern, when there is a chronic inability of subsistence harvests to meet the Amount Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) range established by the Board. A “chronic inability” means the continuing or anticipated inability to meet the ANS range over a four to five year period, which is approximately equivalent to the generation time of most salmon species.

Objectives

To create a Tier II system consistent with the sustainable fisheries policy and AS 16.05.258(b)(4), when the harvestable portion of the stock is not sufficient to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses.

Specific Action Recommended to Implement the Objective

The language of the action option may be included as a provision of a management plan. When the threshold conditions are met, the department will bring to the board options for a Tier II system. Proposals from the public requesting Tier II management may require provisions be developed and implemented before the threshold conditions are met.

Benefits

The action creates a process for the development of Tier II system when consistently poor subsistence harvests have occurred. The Tier II system may be tailored to the stock of concern, with input by the public during a noticed board meeting. Clear, measurable conditions for consideration and initiation of Tier II provisions allows the public time to discuss and develop effective Tier II factors to ensure compliance with statutory criteria.

Detriments

Failure to achieve harvest levels within the ANS range may involve other factors that are unrelated to low run abundance. Examples of factors effecting subsistence harvest may include: river conditions affecting harvest efficiency; changes in employment (eg. fire fighting); owner of a large dog lot moves or gets rid of his dogs; changes in the reporting of subsistence harvests. It should be clearly established that the chronic inability to meet the ANS range is primarily due to poor salmon runs.

There may be a time lag between the development and implementation of Tier II regulations, during which opportunity by all subsistence users are restricted, rather than distinguishing among subsistence users based on statutory criteria.

Research plan to address stock of concern

A research plan may be developed if applicable, should the Board accept this action.

ACTION PLAN ALTERNATIVES – DISTRICT W-4, QUINHAGAK

ACTION #1

When preseason run projections for Kuskokwim River chum salmon indicate that commercial fishing will not be allowed, and subsistence fishing restrictions may be required to conserve chum salmon, the boundaries of District W-4 will be reduced to lower the potential harvest of Kuskokwim River chum salmon.

Objectives

This action is intended to decrease the potential harvest of Kuskokwim River chum salmon stocks in the District W-4 commercial fishery.

Specific action recommended to implement the objective

Move the northern boundary of District W-4, south to a point between the mouth of Oyak Creek and the Kanektok River.

Benefits

The number of Kuskokwim River chum salmon being harvested in the District W-4 fishery may be reduced, but the amount is unknown. A tagging study conducted in District W-4 in 1969-70 showed the presence of Kuskokwim River chum salmon stocks in the W-4 fishery, but the information is not adequate for determining the proportion of Kuskokwim River fish present in that fishery. Moving the W-4 boundary south would redistribute the W-4 fleet and place fishers farther from the Kuskokwim River. This action may reduce the interception of fish bound for the Kuskokwim River, but it assumes that chum salmon caught near the northern boundary of District W-4 have a higher proportion of Kuskokwim River fish than fish caught farther south. This assumption has not been verified. The 1969-70 tagging study occurred between June 24 and July 11, and all salmon tagged were within 500 yards of the Kanektok River. Fleet distribution information collected from aerial surveys from 1997 to 2000 show that about 80% of the W-4 fishing effort occurred within 2 miles of the Kanektok River mouth. About 11% of the effort was observed north of Oyak Creek which is located 3 miles north of the Kanektok River.

Detriments

District W-4 fishers would have a reduced fishing area, causing increased crowding and competition for preferred fishing sites. Harvest of all salmon species may be reduced depending on fish distribution and on the amount of crowding that occurs.

Subsistence issues/considerations

Reducing the boundaries of District W-4 would probably have no effect on subsistence in District W-4. The effect on escapement and subsistence harvest in the Kuskokwim River is unknown, but presumably the action would be beneficial.

Performance measures

Currently, the department is unable to quantify any possible reduction in the number of Kuskokwim River chum salmon taken in District W-4 due to a boundary reduction.

Research plan to address stock of concern

To determine the proportion of chum salmon present in District W-4 by river of origin would require either a tagging study specifically designed for that purpose or, if feasible, a stock identification study using genetic stock identification, scale pattern analysis or some other method. The existing chum salmon genetic stock identification baseline does not allow for adequate resolution between rivers of origin. Research studies proposed for the summer of 2001 include additional sampling in the Kanektok River in the hope that a finer resolution can be determined.

ACTION #2

When preseason run projections for Kuskokwim River chum salmon indicate that commercial fishing will not be allowed, and subsistence fishing restrictions may be required, the length and or number of commercial openings in District W-4 will be reduced to lower the potential harvest of Kuskokwim River chum salmon.

Objectives

The objective of this action is to decrease the potential harvest of Kuskokwim River chum salmon stocks by the District W-4 commercial fishery in years when very poor runs are anticipated.

Specific action recommended to implement the objective

Reduce commercial fishing time in District W-4 by reducing the number of fishing periods per week during late June and early July or by reducing the length of fishing periods during late June and early July.

Benefits

The number of Kuskokwim River chum salmon being harvested in the District W-4 fishery may be reduced, but the amount is unknown. The normal fishing schedule in District W-4 is two 12-hour periods per week during the chinook salmon fishery, which occurs primarily in June, and three 12-hour periods per week during the sockeye salmon fishery, which occurs primarily in July. The District W-4 chum salmon run timing is nearly the same as that for sockeye salmon and overlaps with the last fifty percent of the chinook salmon run. Based on the Bethel test fishery, approximately 25% of the Kuskokwim River chum salmon run has passed Bethel by June 26, 50% by July 3, and 75% by July 8. It is likely that few Kuskokwim River chum salmon would remain in District W-4 waters after July 8. Reducing the number of fishing periods by one period per week prior to July 8 could reduce the number of Kuskokwim River chum salmon caught in District W-4 by up to 33%. Scheduling fishing periods to coincide with the time of high tide would allow fishers to fish closer to the mouth of W-4 streams, possibly reducing the number of Kuskokwim River chum salmon harvested. It is not possible to

quantify the savings of Kuskokwim River chum salmon achieved by shortening fishing periods.

Detriments

Reduced fishing time would result in loss of harvest in District W-4 of stocks migrating to drainages within the district, which are not stocks of concern. Reducing commercial fishing time in the district by 50% prior to July 1 and 33% between July 1 and July 8 would probably result in approximately a 20% reduction in chum salmon harvest; a 20% reduction in sockeye salmon harvest, and a 37% reduction in chinook harvest. Shortening fishing periods may cause effort levels to drop, especially if fishers find that the costs to travel to the district becomes prohibitive due to lowered harvest per trip. Fishing periods in W-4 are 12 hours long in order to insure that a whole flood tide is available for fishing, when fish are more likely to be moving toward river mouths and fishing can occur closer to the river. If shorter (e.g. 6-hour) fishing periods do not include a good portion of the flood tide, a significant decrease in catch rates could occur. Presently fishing periods begin at 9:00 am and end at 9:00 pm. If shorter periods are scheduled to take advantage of flood tides, the period's starting and ending times will not be fixed as they are presently. This will cause confusion among fishers who are accustomed to fishing periods with fixed starting and ending times.

Subsistence issues/considerations

Reducing commercial fishing time in District W-4 would provide more subsistence fishing time in District W-4. The effect on escapement and subsistence harvest in the Kuskokwim River is unknown, but presumably positive.

Performance measures

Currently, the department is unable to quantify any possible reduction in the number of Kuskokwim River chum salmon taken in District W-4 due to a reduction in fishing time.

Research plan to address stock of concern

To determine the proportion of chum salmon present in District W-4 by river of origin would require either a tagging study specifically designed for that purpose or, if feasible, a stock identification study using genetic stock identification, scale pattern analysis or some other method. The existing chum salmon genetic stock identification baseline does not allow for adequate resolution between rivers of origin. Research studies proposed for the summer of 2001 include additional sampling in the Kuskokwim Area in the hope that a finer resolution can be determined.