

SOUTH UNIMAK AND SHUMAGIN ISLANDS
JUNE SALMON FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN, 1997

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INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to provide commercial fishers and processors with information the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) will use to manage the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Fishery. There are several procedures that fishers and processors are asked to comply with to facilitate the management of this fishery.

The first fishing period may be as early as June 11, however, the opening may be delayed if an unacceptably high number of chum salmon are present. Chum salmon abundance will be determined by ADF&G test-fish projects in both the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands areas. In addition, the Department requests that subsistence fishermen provide whatever information they can regarding their personal catches of sockeye and chum salmon in early June.

Inseason announcements will be broadcast over A.M. radio station KSDP, VHF 6 & 73, and on Single Side Band (SSB) 3230, 3261, and 4125. Information may also be obtained over the ADF&G record-a-phone in Sand Point at 383-2334 (383-ADFG).

In April 1996, the Board of Fisheries (BOF) adopted regulation 5 AAC 09.365 (i) which specifies: All chum salmon caught by a CFEC permit holder must be retained and each CFEC permit holder must report the number of salmon caught, including chum salmon taken but not sold, on an ADF&G fish ticket. For the purpose of this section, "caught" means, brought aboard the vessel.

As required by 5 AAC 39.130 (a)(3) buyers must report daily their salmon purchases by species, (in both numbers of fish and pounds) and number of deliveries by gear to either ADF&G offices in Cold Bay and Sand Point or to the ADF&G representative on the grounds at South Unimak aboard an enforcement vessel. Catch reports must be made as soon as possible on the morning after a fishing period ends. Contact can be made over VHF 6, SSB 3230, or SSB 4125. Buyers may also phone or fax their information in, either to the Cold Bay or Sand Point offices.

Cold Bay	Telephone: 532-2419	Fax: 532-2470
Sand Point	Telephone: 383-2066	Fax: 383-2606

Fish tickets must be given to the ADF&G representative at South Unimak or mailed to one of the addresses listed below:

Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game
P.O. Box 50
Cold Bay, AK 99571

Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game
P.O. Box 129
Sand Point, AK 99661

Fish tickets must be delivered to ADF&G offices in Sand Point or Cold Bay within seven days of the purchase date or be hand delivered to an ADF&G representative on the fishing grounds. If compliance with this causes undue inconvenience, processors must contact ADF&G to make other arrangements.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

The South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Fishery Management Plan is in effect from June 11 through June 30. However, the opening date of the fishery may be delayed, depending on the results of the ADF&G test fish programs. Historical data indicates sockeye abundance generally peaks about June 20, but rapidly declines shortly after that date.

The department will manage the fishery to minimize the chum salmon catch while attempting to obtain the sockeye salmon guideline harvest levels (GHL).

The South Unimak fishery includes the following locations (Figure 1):

- A. Unimak District as described in 5 AAC 09.200.
- B. Bechevin Bay Section of the Northwestern District as described in 5 AAC 09.200.

The following portions of the Southwestern District:

- C. Ikatan Bay Section as described in 5 AAC 09.200.
- D. Those waters of the Southwestern District in addition to the Ikatan Bay Section listed below: (Note: this does not include CLOSED WATERS as described under 5 AAC 09.350)
 - 1. Those waters north and west of a line from Cape Pankof Light to Thin Point (54°57'26" N. lat., 162°33'12" W. long).
 - 2. Those waters enclosed by a line from Thin Point to Stag Point (54°10' N. lat., 161°53'45" W. long.) to Dolgoi Cape (55°03'45" N. lat., 161°44' W. long) and from Bluff Point (55°10' N. lat., 161°53'45" W. long.) to Arch Point (55°12'20" N. lat., 161°54'15" W. long.).

The Shumagin Islands fishery includes only the Shumagin Islands Section of the Southeastern District (Figure 2) as described in 5 AAC 09.200. DESCRIPTION OF DISTRICTS AND SECTIONS.

Fishermen should be aware that waters closed to commercial salmon fishing as specified under (5 AAC 09.350) in the regulation book are in effect during June. There is no change as to the legal gear types in a given location other than what is specified in the most recent commercial salmon fishing regulation book. Gillnet fishermen are reminded that the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fisheries are the only fisheries in the South Peninsula which have no minimum salmon gillnet mesh size.

The area of Sanak Island south of 54°33' 10" N. lat., (the latitude of Hague Rock) and east of 163°03' 36" W. long., (the longitude of Cape Pankof Light) as shown in Figure 1 will be closed to commercial salmon fishing during June by emergency order. Historical commercial salmon fishing

records indicate that very limited effort has occurred in this area. However, during the 1990-91 fishing season, effort in this area increased and a substantial number of chum salmon were harvested. Closure of this area is an attempt to minimize the chum salmon harvest and to provide for a fishery in other areas where harvests have demonstrated greater sockeye to chum salmon ratios.

In 1994, 1995, and 1996, ADF&G did not allow fishing periods early in the season unless test fishing results indicated the sockeye salmon to chum salmon ratio was approximately the level needed to harvest the entire sockeye salmon guideline harvest level, without reaching the chum salmon cap. The test fishing indicated the sockeye to chum salmon ratios were below the desired levels and the fisheries were delayed for an extensive length of time. The result was that the sockeye harvests never did materialize as expected and the total catch fell far short of the sockeye salmon guideline harvest level. This was particularly true at South Unimak where daily catches were very low in late June. After the fisheries were over, it was obvious that much of the best sockeye salmon fishing time was passed over by not fishing earlier. At the fisheries end, it became apparent that the highest sockeye harvests occurred during the first days of the fisheries, followed by a major decline. More sockeye likely would have been harvested by fishing earlier. In 1997, ADF&G plans to use three test fishing boats at South Unimak, beginning June 7. The Shumagin Islands test fishing program will remain unchanged from previous seasons. ADF&G would consider a six hour commercial test fishery from 6:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon (set gillnet gear would have a 16 hour fishing period) on June 11 if the ratio was greater than 1:1 and the abundance of chum salmon was not at a level where large volumes may be harvested. If fishermen report good sockeye to chum salmon ratios, ADF&G will consider extending the fishing period. If the period is not extended, a second fishing period will be announced after the first commercial test fisheries' harvest is tallied and analyzed. The length and time of the second fishing period will depend on the results of the first fishing period. If sockeye to chum salmon commercial test fishery ratios remain below two to one, ADF&G will continue to use six hour commercial test fishery openings until June 15, when management will return to the established practices of optimizing sockeye salmon harvests while not allowing the chum salmon cap to be exceeded, as well as other late-season regulatory mandates of the Board of Fisheries.

Prior to June 11, ADF&G will issue a news release informing the fleet that the advance notice period prior to a fishing period will be reduced to three (3) hours, however all efforts will be made by the department to provide as much notice as possible.

SOCKEYE GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVELS

The 1997 South Unimak June sockeye guideline harvest level (GHL) is 1,840,000 fish. The Shumagin Islands June sockeye GHL is 406,000 fish. The combined South Unimak-Shumagin Islands sockeye GHL is 2,246,000 fish.

CHUM SALMON CAP

The BOF has placed a 700,000 chum salmon harvest limit (chum cap) on the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fisheries combined. If the chum cap is reached, the fisheries will close regardless of how many sockeye salmon remain unharvested from the guideline harvest level. The BOF has indicated that keeping the chum salmon catch below 700,000 has precedence over attaining the sockeye guideline harvest level.

SAFEGUARDS TO PREVENT EXCEEDING THE CHUM SALMON CAP

ADF&G may take the following actions to limit the harvest of chum salmon:

1. Curtailment or complete closure of any location demonstrating substantially higher chum to sockeye ratios than other major harvest locations.
2. Possible reductions in the duration of fishing periods for seine and drift gillnet gear (the BOF intended set gillnet fishing periods to be at least 16 hours in duration when it is necessary to shorten fishing periods to reduce the harvest of chum salmon).
3. After the harvest figures have been reported and all fishing effort accounted for, the fishery may be reopened on short notice, depending on the need to maximize fishing time to harvest sockeye salmon. The commercial fishery will not reopen until all harvest figures have been reported. The duration of fishing periods will depend on the reported sockeye to chum salmon ratio.
4. In the event, the chum salmon harvest has exceeded 500,000 fish, it may be necessary to reduce or close the Cape Lutke Section depending on the cumulative chum harvest. During late June of the 1981 and 1991 seasons, this location demonstrated a sudden increase in chum salmon catches and was the main reason the chum cap was exceeded in 1991. ADF&G recognizes substantial fishing effort is required at Cape Lutke to harvest a large South Unimak sockeye GHL.
5. As the harvest of chum salmon approaches 700,000 fish, the duration of fishing periods and the area open to commercial salmon fishing may become more restricted.
6. After June 24, the BOF restricted the duration of commercial salmon fishing periods for seine and drift gillnet gear in both the South Unimak or Shumagin Islands fisheries to six hours per day if the sockeye to chum salmon ratios are two to one or lower. If the ratio of sockeye salmon to chum salmon is two to one or less for any three aggregate days in either of the two fisheries, then that fishery will be closed to all gear types for the balance of June.

7. Management action taken shall demonstrate that the maximum or less harvest of 700,000 chum salmon supersedes attempts to reach the sockeye salmon guideline harvest levels.

ADF&G will remain flexible, recognizing that inseason conditions may require actions different from the preseason management plan. ADF&G encourages suggestions from the public, Fish and Game Advisory Committees, fisheries organizations, and processors in reviewing the management of this fishery.

Fishermen are encouraged to report sockeye to chum ratios throughout the fishery. Fishing periods may be extended based upon verbal reports from fishermen on the grounds. This is most applicable when the chum cap is well under 700,000 and fishing time must be maximized to harvest the sockeye GHL. If reports are not received, the Department will assume the sockeye to chum ratio in a given area is poor and the commercial fishing period in that area will close as scheduled. If fishermen encounter substantial numbers of chum salmon, they should report the situation and location to ADF&G immediately.

Fishermen can report sockeye to chum salmon ratios to ADF&G by one of the following methods:

1. Through the fish processors or their tenders.
2. To Fish & Wildlife patrol vessels on the grounds over VHF channel 6.
3. Directly to ADF&G in Cold Bay or Sand Point over the following radio frequencies and at the following times:

VHF 6.	8:00a.m.-noon	1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.	7:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.	
SSB 3230	8:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.-noon	1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.	7:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
SSB 3261	9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.			
4125	(Cold Bay office only)	9:00 a.m.-noon	1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.	

Fishermen should report ratios well before the scheduled closing time of a fishing period to allow ADF&G sufficient time to analyze the data and make an announcement. Delays in reporting ratios could result in lost fishing time.

Table 1. South Unimak June commercial salmon harvest, in number of fish^a, by species, 1987-96.

Year	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
1987	4,017	653,536	380	11,342	406,077
1988	2,125	474,457	11	86,678	464,765
1989	2,263	1,347,547	0	154,168	407,635
1990	8,465	1,090,710	1	444,442	455,238
1991	3,066	1,215,658	5	500,922	670,103
1992	2,373	2,046,022	3	501,127	323,891
1993	4,587	2,366,573	506	37,735	381,941
1994	4,468	1,001,250	1,271	1,731,741	374,409
1995	7,850	1,451,490	5,102	119,094	342,307
1996	1,228	572,495	11,730	146,799	129,889
1987-96					
Average	4,044	1,221,974	1,901	373,405	395,626

^a Numbers of salmon do not include test fish catches.

Table 2. Shumagin Islands June commercial salmon harvest, in number of fish^a, by species, 1987-96.

Year	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
1987	1,146	140,567	0	5,640	37,064
1988	1,939	282,230	244	93,546	61,946
1989	495	396,958	0	45,067	47,528
1990	1,868	255,585	0	70,798	63,501
1991	1,407	333,272	7	118,215	102,602
1992	1,387	411,834	1	140,963	102,312
1993	4,879	607,171	727	43,401	150,306
1994	3,122	460,013	308	760,773	207,756
1995	6,897	653,831	940	59,541	195,126
1996	1,617	456,475	1,489	230,885	229,931
1987-96					
Average	2,476	399,794	372	156,883	119,807

^a Numbers of salmon do not include test fish catches.

Table 3. Combined South Unimak-Shumagin Islands June commercial salmon harvest, in number of fish^a, by species, 1987-96.

Year	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
1987	5,163	794,103	380	16,982	443,141
1988	4,064	756,687	255	180,224	526,711
1989	2,758	1,744,505	0	199,235	455,163
1990	10,333	1,346,295	1	515,240	518,739
1991	4,473	1,548,930	12	619,137	772,705
1992	3,760	2,457,856	4	642,090	426,203
1993	9,466	2,973,744	1,233	81,136	532,247
1994	7,590	1,461,263	1,579	2,492,514	582,165
1995	14,747	2,105,321	6,042	178,635	537,433
1996	2,845	1,028,970	13,219	377,684	359,820
1987-96					
Average	6,520	1,621,767	2,273	530,288	515,433

^a Numbers of salmon do not include test fish catches.

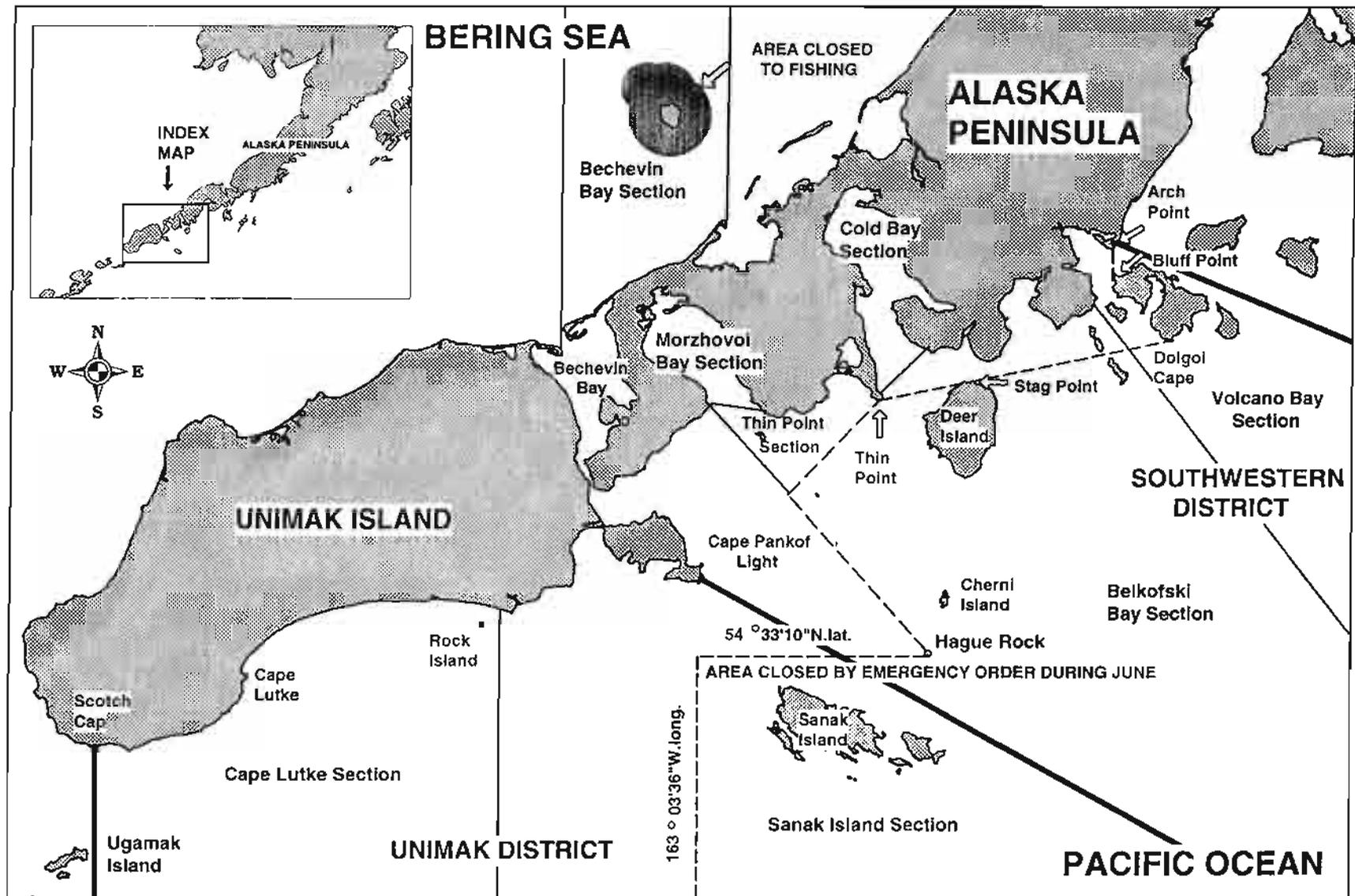


Figure 1. Map of the South Unimak June fishery.

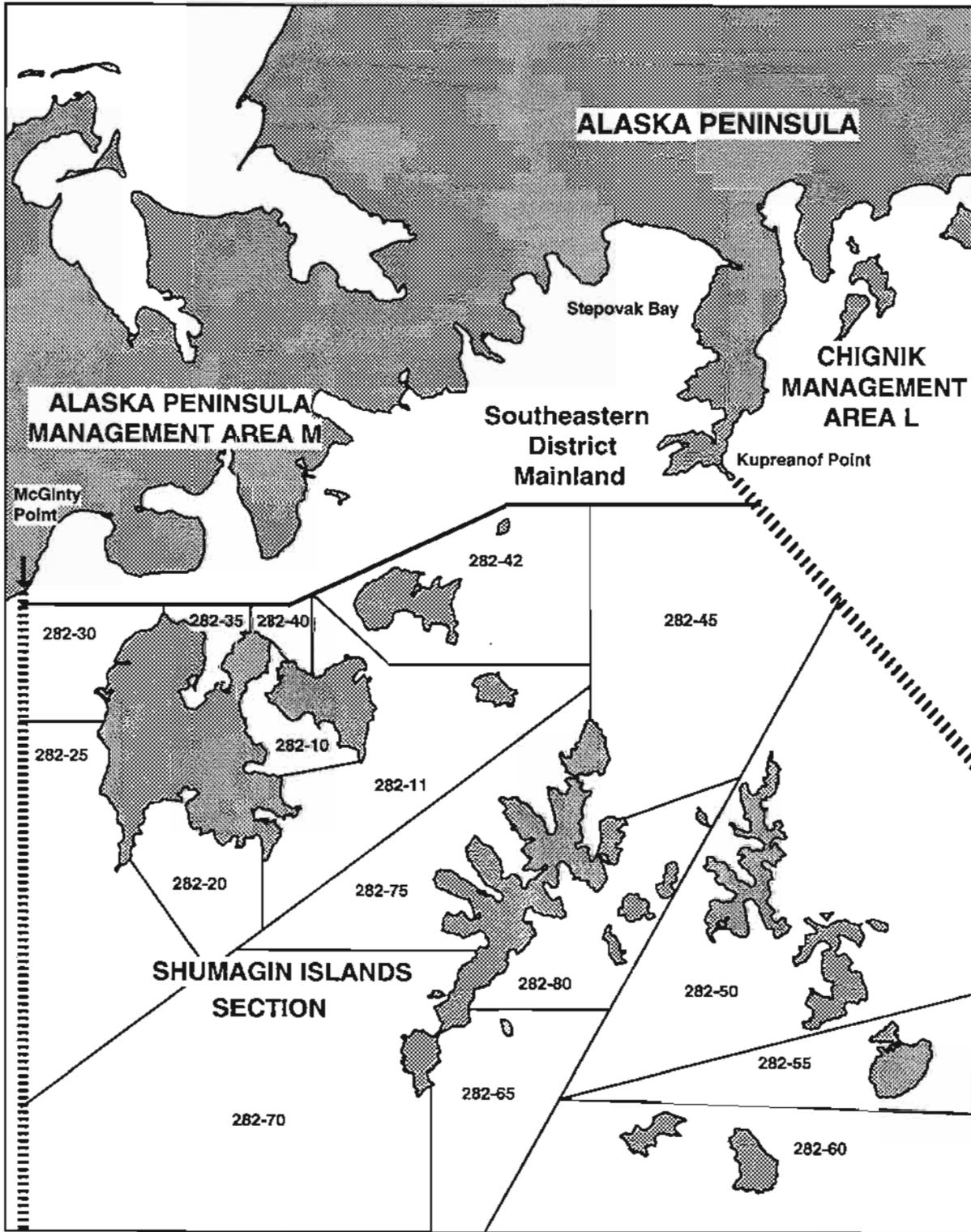


Figure 2. Map of the Shumagin Islands Section with the statistical salmon fishing areas shown.

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