

Division of Commercial Fisheries
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Advisory Announcement

For Immediate Release: May 11, 2021

Time: 4:00 p.m.

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**Kuskokwim Area Management Biologists
(907) 267-2379**

Kuskokwim River Salmon Fishery Announcement #1

Kuskokwim River Subsistence Fishery Outlook and Front-End Closure

Emergency Order #3-S-WR-01-21

This is an announcement from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) for subsistence fishermen in the Kuskokwim River Drainage.

2021 Run and Harvest Outlook for Kuskokwim River Salmon:

	Chinook	Chum	Sockeye	Coho
Projection:	Below Average	Below Average	Above Average	Average
Escapement:	Expect to meet goals	Expect to meet goals	Expect to meet goals	Expect to meet goals
Subsistence:	Limited Harvest	Normal harvest	Normal harvest	Normal harvest
Commercial*:	None	None	None	None

**No commercial buyer registered at this time.*

Chinook Salmon Forecast

The 2021 Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon forecast is for a range of 94,000–155,000 fish. The drainage-wide Chinook salmon escapement goal is 65,000–120,000 fish. If the run comes back as projected, the drainage-wide escapement and tributary goals are expected to be achieved and a surplus above escapement needs may be available to support a limited subsistence harvest. The 2021 season will be managed in accordance with the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 07.365) with input from the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group. It is the intent of the department that all Kuskokwim River salmon stocks shall be managed in a conservative manner consistent with the Policy for the Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries under 5 AAC 39.222 to meet escapement goals and the subsistence priority.

Based on the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 07.365) and the 2021 Chinook salmon forecast, the department's early season management strategy is to put in place the front-end closure (**dates and times listed below**). The department will be assessing the run inseason through the Bethel Test Fishery, Subsistence harvest reports, Kuskokwim River Sonar, and the Aniak Test Fishery. The department will meet with the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group weekly, beginning Wednesday, June 2, 2021 at 10 a.m., to review inseason assessment information and to determine subsistence fishing periods after the front-end closure.

Subsistence fishing with gillnets in the Kuskokwim River will be closed during the following times and areas until further notice:

- Sections 1, 2 & 3: Beginning 12:01 a.m. Tuesday, June 1, 2021, the Kuskokwim River drainage from the Yukon Delta NWR boundary at the mouth of the Kuskokwim River to ADF&G markers at the Yukon Delta Refuge boundary near Aniak;
- Section 4: Beginning 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, June 9, 2021, from the Yukon Delta Refuge boundary near Aniak to the ADF&G regulatory markers near the Holitna River mouth; and
- Section 5: Beginning 12:01 a.m. Friday, June 11, 2021, upstream of the ADF&G regulatory markers located near the Holitna River mouth to the headwaters of the Kuskokwim River.

The following tributary gillnet fishing closures go into effect beginning 12:01 a.m. Tuesday, June 1, 2021 until further notice:

- The Eek River drainage to its confluence with the Kuskokwim River.
- The Kwethluk River drainage to regulatory markers at its confluence with Kuskokuak Slough.
- The Kasigluk and Kisaralik River drainages, including Old Kuskokuak Slough, to ADF&G regulatory markers at the confluence of Old Kuskokuak Slough with Kuskokuak Slough.
- The Tuluksak River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately 1-mile to ADF&G regulatory markers.
- The Aniak River drainage to ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River.
- All Kuskokwim River tributaries not specifically mentioned above that are within the Yukon Delta NWR will close to subsistence fishing with gillnets from their confluence with the Kuskokwim River upstream 100 yards. Subsistence fishing with gillnets will remain open upstream of that 100-yard closure area.

The following subsistence fishing restrictions will also go into effect beginning 12:01 a.m. Tuesday, June 1, 2021 until further notice:

Subsistence fishing with hook and line for Chinook salmon will close until further notice. Any Chinook salmon caught must be returned alive to the water.

Subsistence fishing with fish wheels will be allowed until further notice. Fish wheels are required to have a live box with no less than 45 cubic feet of water, must be checked at least every 6 hours. Fish wheels may be equipped with a chute and must be closely attended while in operation. All Chinook salmon must be returned alive to the water.

Subsistence fishing with dip nets and beach seines will be allowed until further notice. Any Chinook salmon caught in a dip net or beach seine must be returned immediately to the water alive.

Further announcements will be made from the Bethel Fish and Game office, on the State of Alaska web site (<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>), local radio stations, and Kuskokwim River Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/KuskoRiverFishingADFG/>). Advisory Announcements will be faxed to area villages.

Under Alaska's Health Advisories 1, 2, 3, and 4, subsistence and commercial fishing is considered essential and is part of Alaska's Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Commercial fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities in support of commercial fishing operations follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Advisories. COVID-19 Health Advisories may be found here: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/health-advisories/>.

Federal Special Action

Beginning Tuesday, June 1, 2021, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Federal Inseason Manager closed Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River drainage from the mouth of the Kuskokwim River upstream to the Yukon Delta NWR boundary at Aniak (defined as the Federal Conservation Unit) to the harvest of salmon except by Federally qualified subsistence users under Emergency Special action 3-KS-01-21. For information regarding salmon subsistence fishing regulations within the Yukon Delta NWR please contact USFWS at 907-543-3151 or 907-543-1002.

For additional information concerning this advisory announcement:

ADF&G: Nicholas Smith in Anchorage 907-267-2379 or Ben Gray 907-543-2331

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