

Division of Commercial Fisheries
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Advisory Announcement

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SILVER SALMON COMMERCIAL FISHING TO REOPEN IN NORTON SOUND

Commercial salmon fishing will be open for 24 hours in Subdistricts 1 through 6. Golovin, Elim, Norton Bay, Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts will be open from 6 p.m. Sunday, August 8 until 6 p.m. Monday, August 9. Nome Subdistrict will open from 9 p.m. Sunday, August 8 until 9 p.m. Monday, August 9. In all subdistricts, permit holders are limited to 100 fathoms of gillnet in aggregate length and gillnets must have a mesh size of 6 inches or smaller.

All salmon escapement counting projects in Norton Sound are not operating because of high water and likely most of the projects will not be operational anytime soon. The murky water conditions in the rivers also prevent aerial surveys from being effective.

Because of lack of escapement information, the department will switch to harvest-based management for the commercial silver fishery. In harvest-based management the department compares the catches with previous years during the same dates. The recent silver fishing period that ended Wednesday evening had catches like last year and if the next opening again shows below average catches, then there will be increasing time between openings and like last year some subdistricts may not have an opening in over a week.

The sockeye salmon counts were declining fast when counting stopped on July 30 because of high water at the Pilgrim River floating weir. An aerial survey of Salmon Lake on August 4 had less than half the 4,000 sockeyes needed for a minimum escapement in previous years. With the sockeye run well past the average midpoint of July 21 at the weir the department will not reopen net fishing in the Pilgrim River.

COVID-19

Under Alaska's Health Advisories 1, 2, 3, and 4, 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/>