



Advisory Announcement

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BRISTOL BAY 2022 COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHING OUTLOOK

INTRODUCTION

This document provides general information to fishermen, processors, and the public concerning the upcoming Bristol Bay salmon season. Included is the general framework for management of each of the five major districts and the 2022 salmon forecast.

During the season, Bristol Bay salmon fishing announcements are broadcast on marine VHF channel 07A. Current fishing announcements are aired on local radio stations—KAKN and KDLG. As conditions in the fishery change, for the most current information, fishermen should stand by at regular announcement times: 9:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, 3:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., and 8:00 p.m., unless otherwise stated. Information is also available via telephone; for eastside fisheries (Naknek-Kvichak, Egegik, and Ugashik), dial 907-246-INFO (4636), for westside fisheries (Nushagak and Togiak) dial 907-842-5226. Fishermen are asked to note that regular office hours at the Dillingham (Alaska Department of Fish and Game) office will be 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday, except from June 17 thru July 17, the office will be open 7 days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In King Salmon, the office hours are as follows: June 1 to June 17 and after July 17: 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., closed for lunch and weekends. From June 17 thru July 17: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. seven days per week.

ADF&G Forms

All relevant Bristol Bay forms are available online and can be submitted in various ways including by email. To avoid problems please submit forms early. Contact your processor for a digital copy of your Permit Holder's Agent Authorization (PHAA) form. Regarding district registration cards, set gillnet permit holders are only required to fill out and return set gillnet registration cards if they fish in the Nushagak District. Drift gillnet permit holders must fill out and return district registration cards prior to commercial fishing in any district in Bristol Bay. PDF files of district registration cards, permit holder agent authorization forms, and dual drift registration forms are posted online on the department Bristol Bay homepage and can be printed, completed, then mailed to the address on the printout, or submitted electronically to DFG.BristolBay.CF.Forms@alaska.gov. If electronic submission or mail submission is not possible, forms will be available in and may be submitted to Anchorage, King Salmon, or Dillingham office personnel. These resources are available online at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.salmon#management>

Inseason Fishery Information

Fishery updates, announcements, catch and escapement information, and Port Moller Test Fishery genetic stock composition estimates will be available at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.salmon>

The Port Moller Test Fishery daily catch updates and interpretations of the data will be posted at the following web site once the project becomes operational on June 10:

<https://www.bbsri.org/port-moller-test-fishery>

Alaska Wildlife Troopers – Summer 2022 Outlook – Bristol Bay

Enforcement priorities:

- The department is concerned about underreporting of king salmon harvested in the Bristol Bay fishery. Tenders can expect to be boarded and checked for unreported king salmon on their vessels. All salmon, including king and coho salmon, are required by regulation to be reported on fish tickets at the time of delivery even when taken but not sold - see 5AAC 39.130 and 5AAC 06.377(b) for details.
- Strong focus on fishing district lines and open/closed fishing periods in all districts using all available assets.
- Troopers will conduct routine boardings of drift gillnet and processor vessels as well as beach patrols to verify licensing and permitting regulations are met.
- Fishermen and processors are reminded at the time of delivery of fish, a fish ticket must be generated and must include the signature of a company representative and the full name and signature of the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permit holder (BOTH permit holders if dual drift operation). The permit holder(s) must be present at the time of delivery to sign the fish ticket. Crew members cannot sign fish tickets for permit holders. Fish tickets also must include the number or pounds of fish, by species, retained by a commercial fisherman for that person's own use.
- Continued enforcement of vessel and gear identification markings.
- Fishermen are reminded to review regulations on gillnet specifications and operations. Be aware regulations prohibit drift gillnet fishing when the net, or vessel to which it is attached, is grounded.
- Loss of a gillnet, or portion of a gillnet, must be reported directly to a local ADF&G department office in Dillingham or King Salmon within 15 hours of the gear loss.
- Drift fishermen are reminded when registering or reregistering (changing districts) under 5AAC 06.370 with an agent authorization on file, the CFEC permit holders are still responsible for ensuring that the registration was accomplished by their agent.
- Continued enforcement of state boating safety laws in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard.
- Drift fishermen should ensure their GPS boundaries and waypoints match 2022 fishing districts and sections.

SALMON OUTLOOK

BAYWIDE

The 2022 Bristol Bay inshore sockeye salmon run is forecasted to be approximately 73.4 million fish (<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1346495668.pdf>). Based on the forecast and using the midpoints of either the lower or upper portion of escapement goal ranges, depending on forecasted run size, there is a potential surplus of 59.9 million sockeye salmon (Table 1). The department manages fisheries based on inseason information regarding abundance. The inseason management approach uses a suite of assessment tools to provide information on abundance and run timing in each district, and that information will be used by the department to determine fishing opportunity.

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opens June 1 by regulation. Fishing in eastside districts and the Togiak District will be allowed using a weekly schedule that varies by section. The schedules are in place to balance fishing opportunity with escapement in the early part of the season, particularly for king salmon. As each run develops and sockeye salmon run characteristics become defined within individual districts, fishing time will be adjusted accordingly. In the Nushagak District, management will focus on king salmon in the early part of the season, and switch to sockeye salmon management as abundance dictates.

The average size of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon is expected to continue to be small in 2022 based on recent trends and forecast return of smaller 1.2 and 2.2 age classes.

2022 Preseason Processor Capacity Survey in Bristol Bay

In January 2022, the department surveyed the 15 main commercial salmon processing companies that intend to purchase sockeye salmon in Bristol Bay in 2022. The purpose of the survey was to estimate total intended purchases, daily and season-long processing capacity, and tender fleet capacity. Processors intend to purchase 52 million fish in 2022, with a daily processing capacity of 3 million fish. An estimated 60 million fish will be available to harvest based on our preseason run forecast released in November 2021.

The intended purchases in 2022 would be an increase of 10 million fish, or 25%, since the last survey in 2019. Five processors account for 96% of this increase; three are established operations that increased capacity by 20–30% each, and the other two were new to the survey in 2019 and report increased capacity of ~5% each.

Ten companies intend to provide tenders in Bristol Bay, with a total holding capacity of 9 million fish. Three of these companies will also provide long haul tenders in 2022, delivering to at least four locations outside of Bristol Bay. The daily capacity of the Bristol Bay long haul tender fleet is 650,000 fish. Full results from this survey will be published in a Special Publication later in 2022.

2022 Regulatory Changes and Alaska Board of Fisheries

There have been no regulatory changes for the Bristol Bay salmon fishery in the last year. The Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting originally scheduled for December 2021 has been delayed until November 2022 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. With this delay, the proposal deadline has been extended until April 11, 2022.

NAKNEK-KVICHAK DISTRICT

An inshore run of approximately 20.7 million sockeye salmon is expected for the Naknek-Kvichak District in 2022. Based on the forecast, the projected surplus in the Naknek-Kvichak District is

approximately 13.0 million sockeye salmon: 4.2 million from the Kvichak River, 2.1 million from the Alagnak River, and 6.7 million from the Naknek River (Table 1). Sockeye salmon returning to the Naknek-Kvichak District are predicted to be 46% age-1.2, 41% age-1.3, 9% age-2.2, and 3% age-2.3 fish.

The Naknek River escapement goal range is 800,000 to 2.0 million sockeye salmon. The Kvichak River escapement goal range is 2.0 million to 10.0 million sockeye salmon. The Alagnak River escapement goal is a minimum of 210,000 sockeye salmon. Escapements will be managed within the lower or upper portions of the escapement goals, proportional to the run size based on the preseason forecast and inseason assessment of run size.

Fishing in the entire Naknek-Kvichak District for both drift and set gillnets will be open four days per week from 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday, beginning 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 1 and ending 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 24. From June 24 until July 17, fishing periods will be based on sockeye salmon escapements, abundance in the district, and gear group harvest allocation percentages. District test fishing for inseason management may be conducted periodically depending on run characteristics. As in previous years, some openings could occur on short notice.

ELEGIK DISTRICT

The 2022 Egegik River inshore run is forecast to be approximately 16.0 million sockeye salmon. With an escapement goal of 800,000 to 2.0 million fish, the potential surplus is 14.3 million (Table 1). Approximately 49% of the run is expected to be age-1.2 fish, followed by age-2.2 (21%), age-1.3 (22%), and age-2.3 (8%).

In 2022, separate gear openings and extensions will be used to adjust harvest in an attempt to achieve allocation percentages. Fishermen are reminded that regulations direct the department to avoid “to the extent practicable,” continuous fishing with set gillnet gear in the Egegik District; therefore, Egegik set gillnet fishermen should expect breaks in fishing.

Based on the Kvichak River sockeye salmon forecast, fishing will begin in the full Egegik District. The season will start with a three day per week schedule that will be in effect until June 17. The primary reason for the three day per week schedule is to provide for king salmon escapement. Commercial fishing will be allowed in the Egegik District from 9:00 a.m. Monday, until 9:00 a.m. Wednesday and from 9:00 a.m. Thursday until 9:00 a.m. Friday. This schedule will begin at 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 1 and run through 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 17, after which additional fishing time for both gear groups will be scheduled according to sockeye salmon run strength. As in previous years, some openings could occur on short notice.

UGASHIK DISTRICT

The 2022 forecasted inshore run of sockeye salmon to Ugashik River is 6.1 million fish. With an escapement goal of 500,000 to 1.4 million sockeye salmon, the potential surplus is 4.9 million (Table 1). Approximately 52% of the run is expected to be age-1.3, 31% age-1.2, 11% age-2.2, and 6% age-2.3 fish. Separate gear openings and adjusting length of commercial periods will be used to address allocation between gear groups in 2022.

Beginning 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 1, commercial fishing in the Ugashik District will be allowed on a 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday schedule through 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 24. With an expected run to the Kvichak River that exceeds the minimum escapement goal stipulated in regulation, fishing will begin in the full Ugashik District. Additional fishing time after June 24 will depend on fishery performance and run strength indicators. Permit holders should note that

the regulation restricting opportunity to no more than 48 hours between June 16 and June 23 will not be in effect for 2022.

As a reminder, Registration Area T permit holders may fish in the inner portion of the Cinder River Section (river and lagoon) and the Inner Port Heiden Section during all months when open by regulation. For further information, contact ADF&G in Port Moller at 907-375-2716. Registration Area T permit holders who fish the Cinder River and Port Heiden sections and deliver their catch in the Ugashik District are reminded to report the section of catch on the appropriate fish tickets and note that transporting fish from the sections mentioned above to deliver in the Ugashik District is not permitted during July.

WALRUS

It is unknown at this time whether walrus will return to the Cape Greig area. If they do, the department will use the adjusted line as with previous years. If they do not, the district boundaries will revert to those in regulation at 5 AAC 06.200(d). The first announcement of the 2022 season will clarify which boundary will be in place for the summer.

NUSHAGAK DISTRICT

The Nushagak District sockeye salmon inshore run forecast is approximately 29.5 million fish; 2.6 million for escapement with a potential surplus of 26.9 million (Table 1). The total inshore run by river system is as follows: Wood River, 9.4 million (escapement goal range 700,000 to 1.8 million), Igushik River, 2.0 million (escapement goal range 150,000 to 400,000), and Nushagak River, 18.1 million (escapement goal range of 370,000 to 900,000). Approximately 35% of the forecasted run is expected to be age-1.2 sockeye salmon, < 1% age-2.2, 64% age-1.3, and < 1% age-2.3 fish.

Nushagak River king salmon are managed according to the *Nushagak-Mulchatna King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 06.361). This plan directs the commercial fishery to be managed for an inriver goal of 95,000 king salmon. King salmon returns to the Nushagak River have been poor in recent years. The department has used, and will continue to use in 2022, a conservative management approach to in an effort to meet the king salmon inriver goal. This means there will likely be significant sockeye salmon escapement into the Nushagak and Wood rivers prior to any commercial openings. The department will closely monitor inriver king salmon abundance and does not anticipate any directed king salmon openings in 2022.

The strategy for 2022 is to start directed sockeye salmon openings once there are at least 100,000 sockeye salmon projected past the Wood River tower. This is contingent upon the Nushagak River king salmon escapement projecting to be at least 95,000 fish. If king salmon escapement is projecting below 95,000 fish, the department may wait longer before opening directed sockeye salmon fishing to allow for additional king salmon to pass through the commercial fishing district. The department will also seek to avoid continuous fishing with set gillnets early in the season, which means there will likely be set gillnet closures in the Nushagak Section of the district late into the season if king salmon escapement is below necessary levels.

Openings will be scheduled based on sockeye salmon escapement levels in the Nushagak and Wood rivers. Mesh size will be limited to 5.5 inches or smaller beginning June 1 for the conservation of king salmon. If the run comes in as forecast, it is likely that the Wood River Special Harvest Area will be used in 2022 to harvest surplus sockeye salmon in the Wood River. In this

case, fishing opportunity will be afforded to the gear type that is behind on harvest percentage relative to the allocation.

Igushik River sockeye salmon will be managed independently of the Nushagak and Wood River sockeye salmon stocks. Set gillnet fishing will begin in the Igushik Section when there is a market available; probably in mid-June. Initial openings will be 8 hours per day and additional time will be added if large harvests or escapement information indicate more time is warranted. Drift gillnet openings in the Igushik Section will be added as needed to control sockeye salmon escapement. Igushik River sockeye salmon returns can be quite variable relative to forecasted run strength. Management will incorporate a readiness to respond with increasing early set gillnet openings and attempt to maintain the 6% sockeye salmon harvest allocation to the Igushik Section set gillnet group by only adding drift gillnet openings as needed.

The department will switch to pink and coho salmon management within the Nushagak District around July 23, when sockeye salmon harvest decreases. Nushagak sonar counts will cease approximately July 25; after that, management decisions will be based on catch per unit effort, subsistence reports, and possibly aerial surveys.

District test fishing for inseason management may be conducted periodically depending on run characteristics. Permit holders interested in test fishing in the Nushagak District should contact Tim Sands in Dillingham at (907) 842-5227.

TOGIAC DISTRICT

The 2022 inshore run of Togiak River sockeye salmon is forecast to be approximately 1.2 million fish with a potential surplus of 920,000 fish (Table 1). The escapement goal range is 120,000 to 270,000 sockeye salmon. Approximately 31% of the run is expected to be age 1.2; <1% of the run is expected to be age 2.2; 68% is expected to be age 1.3; and <1% is expected to be age 2.3.

Unlike other fishing districts in Bristol Bay that require emergency orders to announce fishing periods, Togiak District follows a regular weekly schedule that allows fishing in the Togiak Bay Section four days per week, fishing in the Kulukak Section two and a half days per week, and fishing in the Matogak, Osviak, and Cape Peirce Sections five days per week. Following the *Registration and Reregistration* regulations, permit holders are restricted from fishing in the Togiak District until 9:00 a.m. July 27 if they have fished in any other district in Bristol Bay, and conversely, restricts permit holders from fishing in any other district until 9:00 a.m. July 27 if they have fished in the Togiak District. Regulation requires vessel transfers to be restricted in Togiak District similarly to the restriction of permit transfers. Regulation also prevents drift gillnet fishing effort near the Togiak River mouth through July 15 and restricts mesh size to 5.5 inches or smaller between June 15 and July 15 for the conservation of king salmon.

King salmon run strength to the Togiak River has been considered below average for several years. The department anticipates another poor king salmon run, and permit holders can expect emergency orders to reduce the weekly fishing schedule in the last two weeks of June in the Togiak River Section.

Harvest of coho salmon will be dependent on market presence. If a market for coho salmon is present, the department will continue to follow the regular weekly schedule unless it is determined that a more conservative management approach is needed.

Acknowledgements

The department would again like to thank the Bristol Bay Fisheries Collaborative (BBFC) for their funding assistance over the last several years. Created in 2016, BBFC provided financial support to assist management of the salmon fishery. BBFC was an agreement between the department and the Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute (BBSRI) to work together with stakeholders to support fisheries management. Additionally, the department would like to thank BBSRI and Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association for their funding and efforts to operate the Port Moller Test Fishery. Included with these efforts was the deployment of a second vessel and to operate a genetic laboratory on board the *R/V Ocean Cat* to provide more timely genetic stock composition for management.

The department would also like to thank those processors and Bristol Bay communities who provided access for our sampling technicians to collect data last season. We ask for your continued cooperation as we work to keep everyone healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, while still being able to collect critical information needed to effectively manage the fishery.

Table 1.—Forecast of total run, escapement, and harvest of major age classes of sockeye salmon returning to Bristol Bay River systems in 2022 (<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1346495668.pdf>).

DISTRICT	River	Millions of sockeye salmon									
		Forecasted production by age class				Total	Forecasted		Harvest outside		BB Inshore
		1.2	2.2	1.3	2.3		Escapement	Surplus	Area T ^a		
NAKNEK-KVICHAK											
	Kvichak	4.36	1.24	2.57	0.19	8.37	4.00	4.16	0.21	8.16	
	Alagnak	1.93	0.09	2.05	0.16	4.23	2.02	2.10	0.11	4.12	
	Naknek	3.54	0.59	4.16	0.32	8.61	1.70	6.70	0.21	8.40	
	Total	9.83	1.92	8.78	0.68	21.21	7.72	12.96	0.53	20.68	
	EGEGIK	7.97	3.52	3.53	1.38	16.40	1.70	14.29	0.41	15.99	
	UGASHIK	1.95	0.69	3.27	0.35	6.25	1.18	4.92	0.16	6.10	
	NUSHAGAK										
	Wood	7.00	0.18	2.33	0.11	9.63	1.53	7.86	0.24	9.39	
	Igushik	0.45	0.01	1.54	0.01	2.01	0.34	1.62	0.05	1.96	
	Nushagak	3.10	0.06	15.33	0.06	18.60 ^b	0.77	17.37	0.46	18.13	
	Total	10.56	0.25	19.20	0.18	30.24	2.63	26.85	0.75	29.48	
	TOGIAC	0.37	0.00	0.80	0.00	1.18	0.23	0.92 ^c	0.03	1.15	
	BRISTOL BAY										
		30.68	6.39	35.58	2.58	75.27	13.46	59.94	1.88	73.40	
		41%	8%	47%	3%	100%					

Note: This table is a summary. Slight differences may appear due to rounding.

^a Projected harvest outside of Area T is based on the current 5-year running average exploitation rate of 2.5%.

^b Nushagak River forecast total includes approximately 52,000 age-0.3 and age-1.4 fish.

^c Forecasts for Kulukak, Kanik, Osviak, and Matogak River systems are not included. These systems contribute approximately 50,000 sockeye salmon to Togiak District harvest each year.