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Advisory Announcement

For Immediate Release: June 8, 2023

Time: 12:01 p.m.

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**Kuskokwim Area Management Biologists
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Kuskokwim River Fishery Announcement #3

Emergency Order #3-S-WR-03-23

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

- **Subsistence Sections 4 and 5** (From a line between regulatory markers at the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge boundary near Aniak to the headwaters of the Kuskokwim River):
 - Subsistence fishing will open with 6-inch or less mesh gillnets (set or drift), not to exceed 25 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth beginning **12:01 a.m. June 12, 2023, until further notice.**
 - King salmon may be retained while subsistence fishing if caught with fish wheels, dip nets, beach seines, and hook and line beginning **12:01 a.m. June 12, 2023, until further notice.**
 - **Aniak Box:** The waters of the Kuskokwim River from the Yukon Delta NWR boundary at Aniak upstream to a line formed between two points lat 61° 35.308' N, long 159° 29.167' W and lat 61° 34.731' N, long 159° 28.939' W (Figure 1) **will remain closed to subsistence fishing with gillnets until further notice.** Subsistence fishing with hook and line, fish wheels equipped with a live box or chute, beach seines and dip nets is allowed, **but all king salmon caught must be returned to the water alive.** These closed waters are in place to help provide protection for king salmon bound for the Aniak River.

As previously announced:

- Between June 7 and June 11, 2023, subsistence fishing in sections 4 and 5 is restricted to 6-inch or less mesh set gillnets that may not exceed 60 feet in length and 45 meshes in depth and may not be operated more than 100 feet from the ordinary high-water mark.
- Subsistence fishing with gillnets and harvest of king and chum salmon in selective gears will continue to be closed in the Aniak River drainage to the ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River.
- Any chum salmon caught while subsistence fishing with hook and line, fish wheels equipped with live boxes or chutes, beach seines, and dip nets must be returned to the water alive.

The department manages Kuskokwim River salmon fisheries as directed by the Alaska Board of Fisheries under 5 AAC 07.365 Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan. The management plan provides guidelines for

management of the Kuskokwim River salmon fisheries that result in the sustained yield of salmon stocks large enough to meet escapement goals. The department uses the best available data, including preseason and in season run projections, test fishing indices, age and sex composition, harvest reports, sonar estimates, and recognized uncertainty, to assess run abundance for the purpose of implementing the plan. 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 harvest priority on identified surplus.

The preseason forecast of Kuskokwim River king salmon is for a range of 115,000 to 170,000 fish. Current assessment and harvest reports indicate that the king salmon run is just beginning to build in the lower Kuskokwim River, which is similar to recent years. As of June 6, the Bethel test fishery cumulative CPUE for king salmon was 8. Bethel test fishery CPUE are tracking the 2018 and 2020–2022 king salmon runs, which had total runs of 132,532, 124,322, 129,556, and 142,495 fish, respectively. Drainage-wide escapement in 2018 and 2020–2022 was 109,801, 88,121, 100,805, and 107,980 fish, respectively.

Harvest reports indicate that non-salmon fishes, such as sheefish, pike, and whitefishes, are being caught in subsistence sections 4 and 5 with the occasional king salmon also being caught. Annual king salmon harvest in these sections has ranged from 1,303 to 3,234 fish since 2015. When factoring in the number of households in these sections of the Kuskokwim River, the annual harvest of king salmon is less than 7 fish per household. Given the current assessment of the king salmon run and the ability to provide for the additional harvesting of non-salmon species, providing fishing opportunity in subsistence sections 4 and 5 is warranted.

Kuskokwim River Salmon Working Group:

The next Working Group meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 14, 2023, at 10:00 a.m., by teleconference or in-person, at the Bethel ADF&G office. This meeting is open to the public. Please call 1-800-315-6338, passcode: 58756#, to attend via teleconference.

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. For additional information or questions regarding Kuskokwim Area fisheries, contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game office in Bethel at 543-2433 or toll free at 1-855-933-2433.

For information regarding federal subsistence fishing regulations and any announcements, please contact the Yukon Delta NWR at (907) 543-3151 or (907) 543-1021.

**For additional information concerning this advisory announcement:
ADF&G: Nicholas Smith 907-543-2709 or Dave Runfola 907-543-2331**

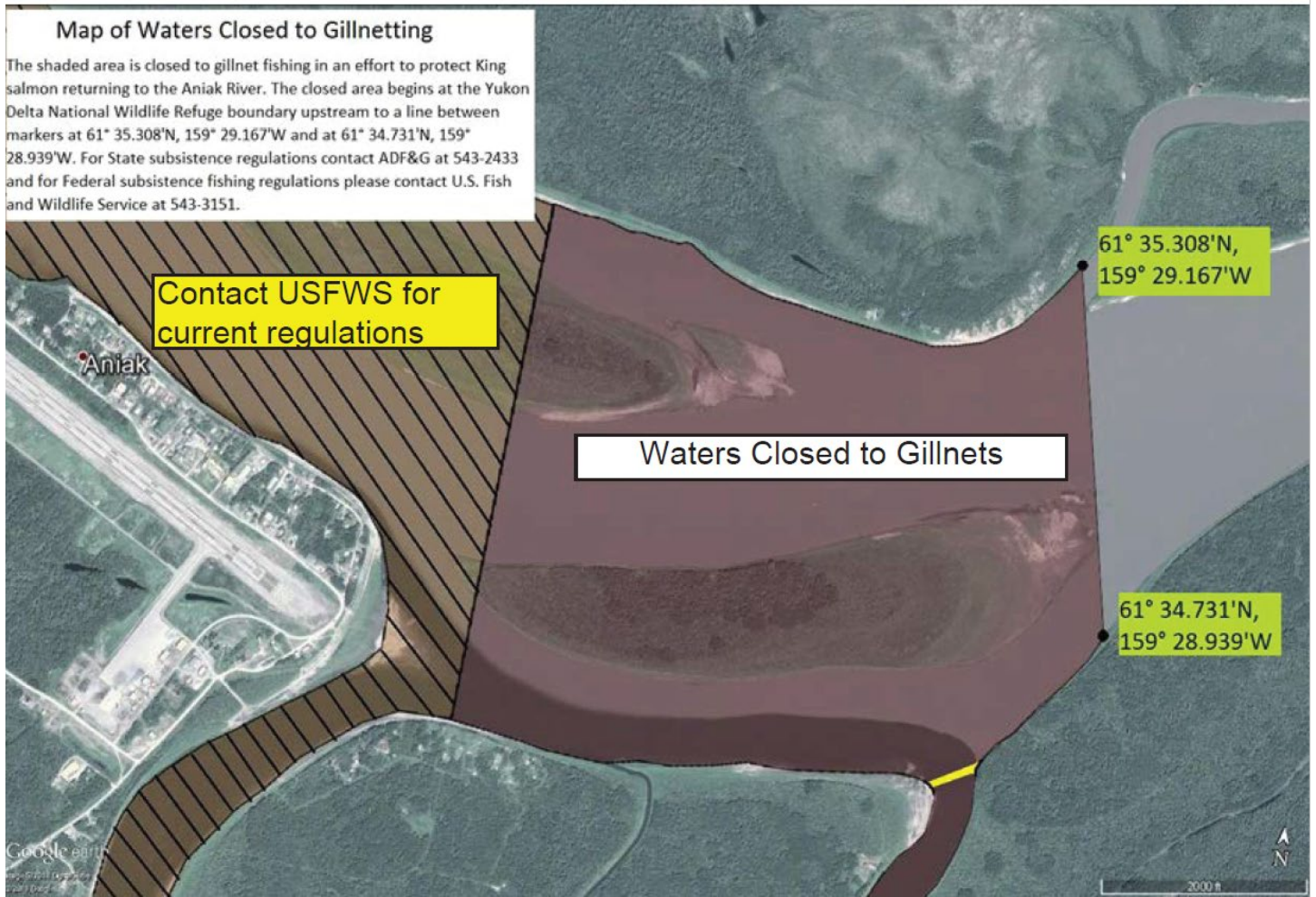


Figure 1.— Map of Aniak area closed waters.

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