



Advisory Announcement
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UPPER COOK INLET
2026 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL DRIFT GILLNET
SALMON FISHING

Sockeye Salmon Forecast

In 2026, a run of approximately 7.6 million sockeye salmon is forecast to return to Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) with an estimate of 5.6 million available for harvest (commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence).

The Kenai River sockeye salmon forecast is approximately 4.45 million fish. The 2026 Kenai River forecast is 464,500 (12%) fish more than the historical (1986–2025) average run of 3.98 million fish and 833,000 (23%) fish more than the recent 10-year (2016–2025) average run of 3.6 million fish. For sockeye salmon runs 2.3–4.6 million fish, the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* (KRLSSMP) stipulates ADF&G manage to the SEG range of 750,000–1,300,000 and achieve an inriver goal of 1.1 to 1.4 million fish. The department will formally reassess the UCI sockeye salmon run after July 20.

The Kasilof River sockeye salmon run forecast is approximately 1.46 million fish. The 2026 forecast is 515,000 fish (54%) greater than the historical (1986–2025) average run of 954,000 fish and 439,000 fish (43%) greater than the recent 10-year (2016–2025) average run of approximately 1.02 million fish.

Approximately 489,400 and 100,000 sockeye salmon are forecast to return to the Susitna River and Fish Creek respectively in 2026. The 2026 Susitna River sockeye salmon forecast is approximately 93,000 fish (24%) above the historical (2006–2025) average run of 396,000 fish but approximately 126,000 fish (35%) greater the recent 10-year (2016–2025) average run of 363,000 fish. The 2026 Fish Creek sockeye salmon forecast is approximately 10,000 (9%) fish fewer than the recent 10-year (2016–2025) average run size of 110,000.

2026 Sockeye Salmon Forecasts and Escapement Goals

System	Forecast	Goals ^a
Kenai River ^{b,c}	4,450,000	1,100,000–1,400,000
Kasilof River ^{b,d}	1,460,000	140,000–320,000
Susitna River	489,400	
Larson Lake	N/A	15,000–35,000
Chelatna Lake	N/A	20,000–45,000
Judd Lake	N/A	15,000–40,000
Fish Creek	100,000	15,000–45,000
Unmonitored Systems ^e	1,100,600	N/A
Total	7,600,000	

^a Goals listed here are as follows: Kenai River: Inriver; Kasilof River: Biological Escapement Goal (BEG); Susitna River: Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG); and Fish Creek: SEG.

^b Kenai River and Kasilof River goals are Aris-based

^c Kenai River SEG is 750,000–1,300,000 sockeye salmon.

^d Kasilof River Optimal Escapement Goal (OEG) is 140,000–370,000 sockeye salmon.

^e Unmonitored systems are estimated to be ~17% of monitored systems.

General Information for the UCI State of Alaska waters Drift Gillnet Fishery:

- All descriptions in this document will be for State of Alaska (SOA) waters only (Figure 1).
- Recent Board of Fisheries actions significantly altered drift gillnet fishing regulations (see below).
- For more information on commercial drift gillnet salmon fishing regulations in the Federal waters of Upper Cook Inlet see the link below:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/commercial-fishing/salmon-management-federal-waters-cook-inlet-cook-inlet-eez>

Upper Cook Inlet Statistical and Drift Areas

- SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Areas 1 and 2 have been removed from regulation and cannot be opened.
 - Openings that include the Expanded Kasilof Section and Drift Area 4 will be in SOA waters only (Figure 2). It is the responsibility of fishery participants to ensure they are fishing in legal areas.
 - Drift gillnet statistical areas were updated in 2024 to reflect the new jurisdictional boundaries and management strategies in UCI (Figure 1).
 - Statistical Area 244-60 will not be used.
 - UCI Federal waters (EEZ) will be identified under statistical code 244-64.
- <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable-fisheries/cook-inlet-eez-area-maps>

Central District Drift Gillnet fisheries Overview

- The department manages the UCI drift gillnet fleet primarily under the guidance of the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan (CDDGFMP)*. The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into Northern Cook Inlet drainages and to provide the department with management guidelines. All the following regarding the drift gillnet fishery is applicable to the waters of the SOA only (Figure 1).
- The drift gillnet fishery opens the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later.
- The 2026 drift gillnet fishery may open June 22 for the first regular period.
- Drift gillnet openings follow regular Monday/Thursday fishing periods; 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and are restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Kasilof sections only.
- There are mandatory closed fishing windows each week from 11:00 p.m. Monday through 7:00 a.m. Wednesday and from 11:00 p.m. Thursday through 7:00 a.m. Saturday.
- Drift gillnet fishing is closed within 2 miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline.
- Additional fishing time may be added if the Kenai River sockeye salmon late-run forecast is over 2.3 million fish and will be based on sockeye salmon abundance considering Chinook and coho salmon abundance. Additional commercial periods are restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Kasilof sections only.
- Beginning August 1, if the department determines that less than three percent of the season total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period, for two consecutive fishing periods by drift gillnets, then regulatory fishing periods will be restricted to SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 (Figure 2).

Inseason Management

- **June 19 through July 31**
 - Regulations specify 12-hour periods, from 7:00 a.m. through 7:00 p.m., in SOA waters on Mondays and Thursdays in the Expanded Kenai and Kasilof sections only. These periods will coincide with the established federal periods in federal waters. Under federal regulations, drift gillnet vessels who participate in the federal fishery cannot participate in any SOA fisheries on the same day. This means that if a permit holder chooses to fish in federal waters they cannot fish in SOA waters on the same day.
 - Additional fishing periods may be opened at run strengths of greater than 2.3 million Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
 - Extended time may be allowed in SOA waters of the Expanded Kenai and Kasilof sections only for a maximum of 16 hours per day (7:00 a.m. through 11:00 p.m.).
- **From August 1 through August 15,**
 - Regular Monday and Thursday fishing periods will be in the Expanded Kenai and Kasilof sections only. Any additional fishing time will be dependent upon meeting sockeye and coho salmon escapement objectives but is limited to the Expanded Kenai and Kasilof

sections.

- Dual percentage-based rules apply to drift gillnet fishing in August. If the entire ESSN fishery is closed per its own one-percent rule, or if the department determines that less than **three** percent of the season total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period, for two consecutive fishing periods by drift gillnets, then regulatory fishing periods will be restricted to SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 (Figure 2).
- The department will utilize cumulative harvest from state and federal drift gillnet periods to calculate the drift gillnet three percent rule.
- **From August 16 until closed by EO,**
 - SOA waters of Drift Areas 3 and 4 are open for regular Monday and Thursday periods.
 - Chinitna Bay may be opened by EO only, based upon chum salmon escapement objectives in Clearwater Creek being met or when the chum salmon run is complete.
- SOA waters drift fisheries close for the season by EO, when effort ceases, which is generally mid- to late-September.

General information and Contact Numbers

The UCI commercial fisheries information line will again be available by calling 907-262-9611. The most recent EO announcement is always available on the recorded message line and catch, escapement information is included whenever possible. The same recording may be accessed at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.main> and clicking on the UCI Commercial Fisheries Information Recording player.

All EO announcements are posted online at:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon#fishery>.

If you would like all EOs and News Releases to be emailed to you as soon as they are released, you can subscribe at this website for that service <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.search>. For very general information, the Commercial Fisheries web page is found at:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingCommercial.main>

If, during the summer, permit holders have information or questions concerning the commercial fishery, the Soldotna Division of Commercial Fisheries staff can be reached by phone at 907-262-9368, or 907-420-7740, by fax at 907-262-4709, or by mail at 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Road, Suite B, Soldotna, 99669.

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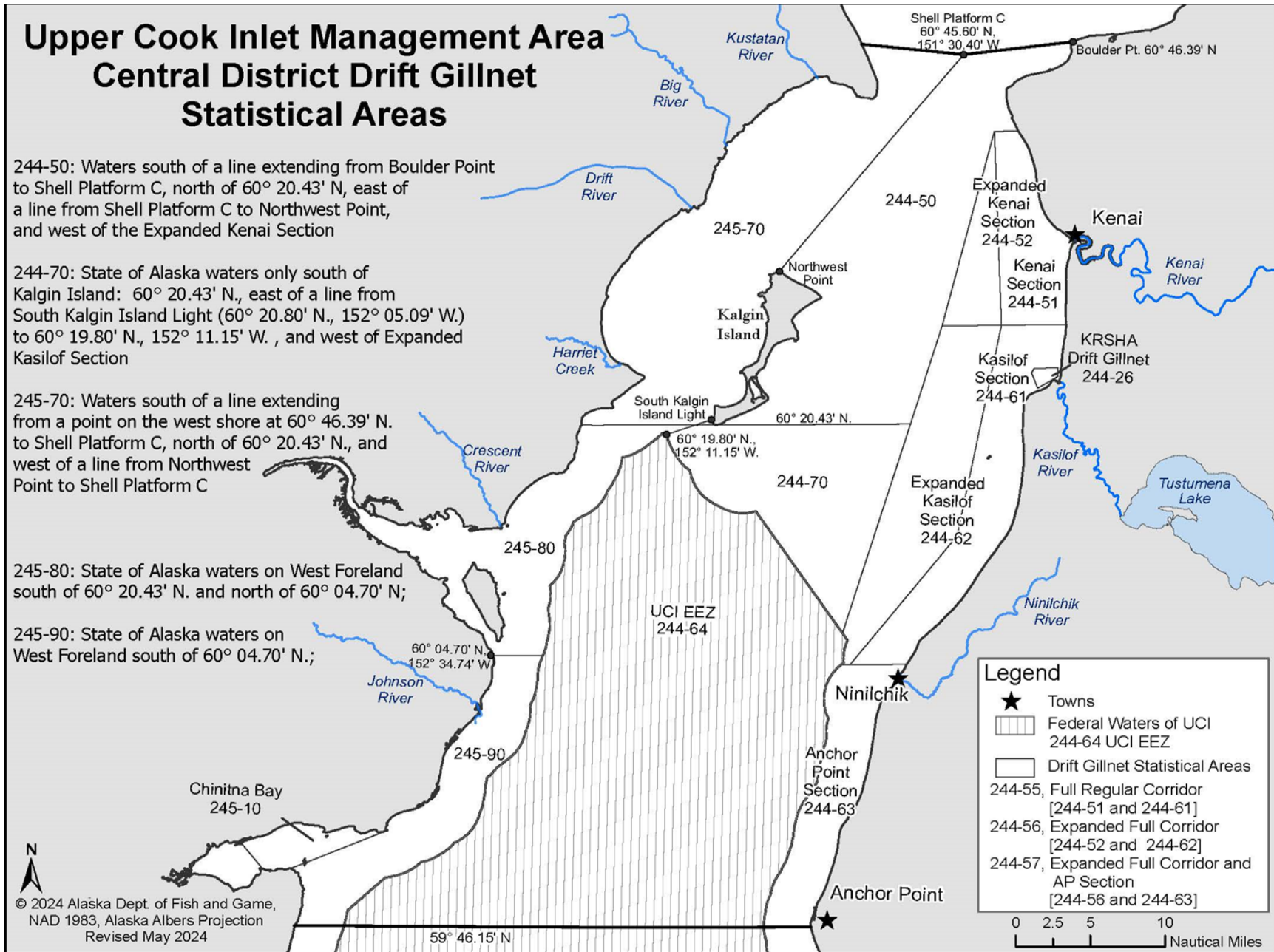


Figure 1.– Map of Upper Cook Inlet Drift Gillnet Statistical Areas.

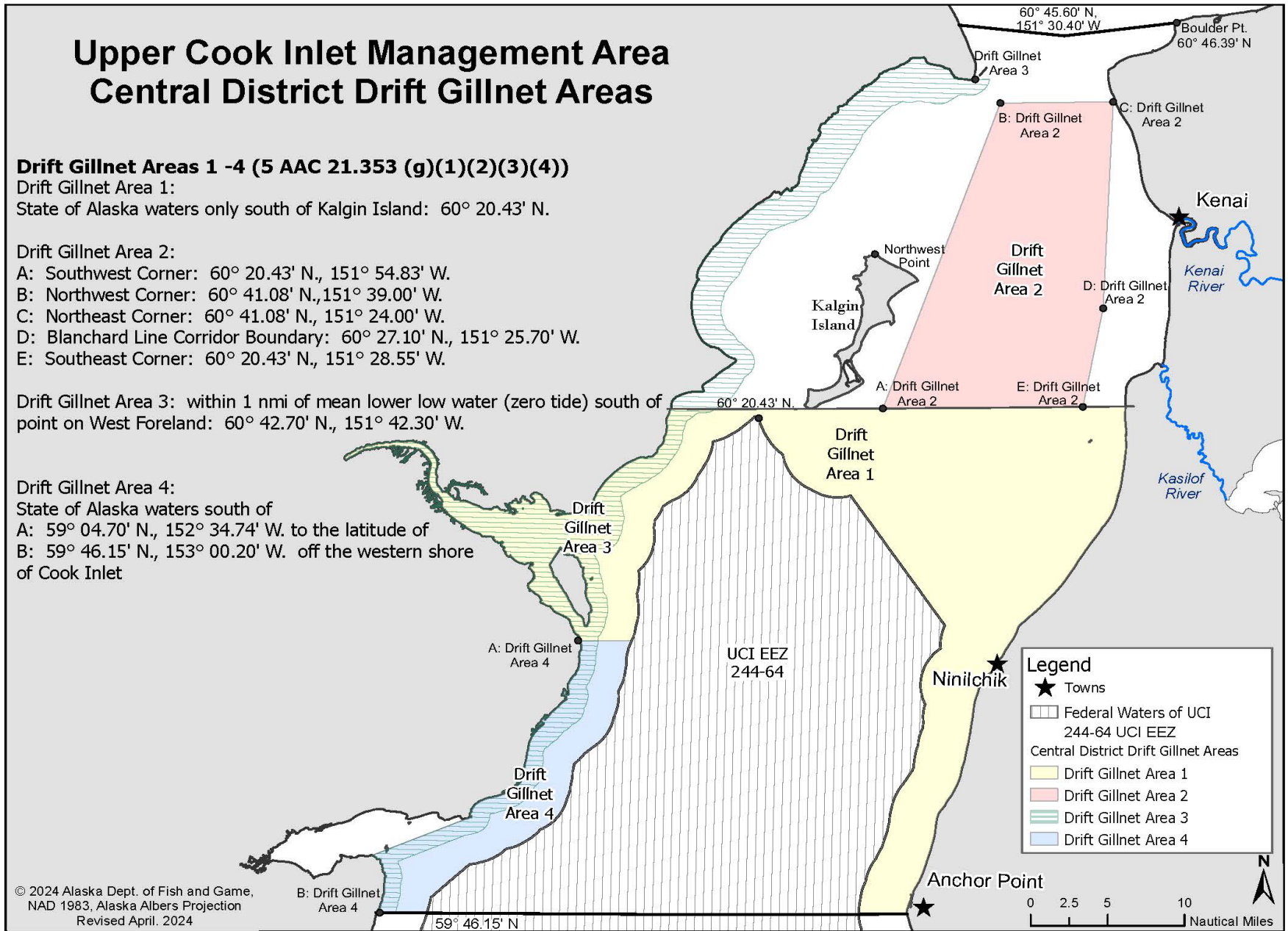


Figure 2.– Map of Upper Cook Inlet Drift Gillnet Areas. **Note: Drift Gillnet Areas 1 and 2 are no longer in regulation and cannot be opened.**