

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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Date Issued: 9/21/2012

2012 BRISTOL BAY SALMON SEASON SUMMARY

The following is an overview of the 2012 Bristol Bay commercial salmon season. Fishing has been completed in all districts and preliminary harvest totals should be representative for all species. It should be noted that numbers in the narrative are expressed in rounded forms for simplicity and that all data are considered preliminary.

The 2012 inshore Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run of 29.1 million fish and (20.6 million harvest) ranks 14th over the last 20 years (1992–2011) and was 28% below the average run of 37.3 million for the same period. This year's run to the Bay was 7% below the preseason inshore forecast of 31.3 million fish. Both Egegik and Nushagak Districts fell short of their preseason harvest projections by 9% and 73% respectively. The remaining districts exceeded preseason expectations as follows: Naknek–Kvichak District by 11%; Togiak District by 10%; Ugashik District by 11%. The commercial harvest of sockeye salmon was 6% below the 21.76 million preseason forecast. Total Bristol Bay escapement was 8.5 million sockeye salmon. It should be noted that this does not include an escapement count for the Alagnak River for the first time since 2000.

Approximately 17,000 Chinook salmon were harvested in Bristol Bay in 2012; 293% below the average harvest for the last 20 years (67,188). The chum salmon harvest of 666,000 fish was 44% below the 20-year average of 957,000 fish. Coho salmon harvest of 107,000 fish was 22% above the 20-year average of 84,000. Reported pink salmon harvest was 910,000 fish, more than three times the even year average since 1992 of 253,000.

EXVESSEL VALUE

The 2012 harvest of all salmon species in Bristol Bay was 22.3 million salmon. To derive an estimate of the exvessel value of the fishery, the figures listed in Table 1 were used. These figures represent an estimate since the contribution of future price adjustments, loyalty bonuses, and differential prices for refrigerated versus non-refrigerated fish were not included. The calculated preliminary exvessel value of the 2012 Bristol Bay salmon fishery is approximately \$121.1 million, which is 5% above the 20-year average, and ranks 9th over that same period. The following table summarizes harvest and value by species.

Table 1.—Average price, weight, and value of salmon harvest in Bristol Bay, 2012.

Species	Average price/Lb.	Average Weight	Number of Fish	Total Weight	Value
Sockeye	\$1.00	5.7	20,556,967	117,833,171	\$117,833,171
Chinook	\$0.85	13.9	17,091	237,384	\$201,776
Chum	\$0.35	6.7	665,934	4,464,721	\$1,562,652
Pink	\$0.40	3.1	910,375	2,848,873	\$1,139,549
Coho	\$0.55	5.4	107,451	576,720	\$317,196
Totals			22,257,818	125,960,869	\$121,054,869

ALLOCATION

The 2012 season was the 15th year of managing drift and set gillnet sockeye salmon harvest allocation in four of the five districts in Bristol Bay. Togiak District is excluded from the allocation plan. Table 2 lists the allocations adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in November, 1997 and the resulting harvests by gear group, from June 1 to July 17, for the 2012 season.

Table 2.—Allocation of Bristol Bay drift gillnet and set gillnet harvest, 2012.

District	Drift Gillnet	Set Gillnet	Set Gillnet
	Percent of Harvest	Percent of Harvest	Percent of Harvest
	Allocated /Caught	Allocated /Caught	Allocated /Caught
<i>Naknek / Kvichak</i>	84% / 85%	16% / 15%	<i>Naknek:</i> 8% / 7% <i>Kvichak:</i> 8% / 8%
<i>Egegik</i>	86% / 83%	14% / 17%	Not applicable
<i>Ugashik</i>	90% / 90%	10% / 10%	Not applicable
<i>Nushagak</i>	74% / 67%	26% / 33%	<i>Nushagak:</i> 20% / 27%
	WRSHA: 74% / 45%	WRSHA: 26% / 55%	<i>Igushik:</i> 6% / 6%

Strategies used to achieve allocation percentages between gear groups included varying the amount of fishing time and providing separate gear group openings.

SPECIES PERFORMANCE**Sockeye Salmon**

The 2012 inshore sockeye salmon run of 29.1 million fish was 7% below the preseason inshore forecast of 31.3 million. Runs versus forecasts by district with percent difference from forecast are listed in Table 3.

Table 3.—Difference of Bristol Bay actual run versus forecast, 2012.

District	Inshore Forecast	Inshore Run	% Difference from Forecast
Naknek-Kvichak	14,470,000	15,056,823	4% more
Egegik	6,520,000	6,123,624	6% less
Ugashik	2,990,000	3,017,633	9% more
Nushagak	6,540,000	4,092,240	60% less
Togiak	750,000	829,439	10% more
Totals	31,270,000	29,119,759	7% less

Table 4.—2012 preliminary commercial sockeye harvests compared to the 20-year averages by district:

District	1992–2011 Average Sockeye Harvest	2012 Sockeye Harvest
Naknek-Kvichak	7,840,000	9,992,067
Egegik	8,464,000	4,889,724
Nushagak	5,717,000	2,701,830
Ugashik	2,742,000	2,347,055
Togiak	549,000	626,291
Totals	25,348,000	20,556,967

Sockeye salmon escapements by river system are listed in Table 5. All systems were within established sustainable escapement goal (SEG) ranges.

Table 5.—Bristol Bay sockeye salmon goals and escapement, 2012.

River System	SEG Range	Escapement
Kvichak River	2,000,000–10,000,000	4,164,444
Naknek River	800,000–1,400,000	900,312
Egegik River	800,000–1,400,000	1,233,900
Ugashik River	500,000–1,200,000	670,578
Nushagak River ^a	340,000–760,000	432,438
Wood River	700,000–1,500,000	764,202
Igushik River	150,000–300,000	193,770
Togiak River ^b	120,000–270,000	203,148

^a Nushagak River optimal escapement goal (OEG) is 235,000–760,000.

^b Togiak River has a Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) of 120,000–270,000. All other escapement goals for sockeye salmon in Bristol Bay are Sustainable Escapement Goals (SEG).

The 2012 Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run was close to forecast and near to long term averages; with one significant exception, the Nushagak District. Spring temperatures in the Bering Sea were notably colder than the last several years and stayed that way throughout much of the sockeye salmon season. Given the projected harvest of 21.8 million sockeye, the department planned to allow more fishing time early in the run. At the December 2009 Board of Fisheries meeting, the board changed regulations with the goal of encouraging early season fishing. The board adopted regulations allowing fishermen to fish eastside districts prior to June 25 without having to register their permit or vessel, which allows fishermen a chance to participate early in the run without the penalty of having to wait 48 hours to transfer between districts. Based on run performance in 2010 and 2011 in Egegik the department was more conservative early in the season in 2012. This resulted in no drift openings in Egegik between June 15 and June 25 due to low escapement.

The total sockeye harvest and total inshore run were 6% and 7% below forecast respectively. Also of significance in 2012, the Wood River Special Harvest Area (WRSHA) was utilized. The Naknek River Special Harvest Area was not utilized in 2012; only the fifth time since 1995 that the NRSHA was not opened to commercial fishing.

Chinook Salmon

Chinook salmon harvests in Bristol Bay were below average in every district. No directed Chinook salmon fishing periods were permitted in the Nushagak District but incidental harvest of Chinook salmon during directed sockeye periods did occur with a preliminary total of 11,501 fish. Over the course of the season, the sport fishing seasonal bag limit was reduced to two fish greater than 20 inches in the Nushagak River and then returned to the unrestricted seasonal bag limit of four fish. Chinook salmon escapement into the Nushagak River was 107,786, surpassing the inriver escapement goal of 75,000.

2012 Chinook salmon preliminary harvest data by district.

District	1992–2011 Average Chinook salmon Harvest	2012 Chinook salmon Harvest
Naknek-Kvichak	2,536	863
Egegik	906	90
Ugashik	1,307	24
Nushagak	53,667	11,501
Togiak	8,541	4,613
Totals	67,188	17,091

Chum Salmon

The 2012 preliminary Bristol Bay chum salmon harvest was 665,934 fish. Togiak District produced a harvest above the 20-year average, while Egegik, Ugashik, Nushagak and Naknek-Kvichak districts produced less chum salmon than their 20-year averages. Nushagak District was the largest producer of chum salmon, where over 268,361 fish were harvested.

Pink Salmon

Pink salmon runs are strong during even years in Bristol Bay and 2012 saw some market interest in Nushagak District. The Nushagak sonar was operational until 19 August and was able to verify a large escapement of pink salmon. With escapement information indicating fish surplus to escapement needs, the department was able to provide significant amounts of fishing time. The total pink salmon harvest in Nushagak District was 877,466 fish, contributing the majority of the 910,375 bay-wide harvest. Togiak District contributed 29,089 pink salmon to the total.

Coho Salmon

The bay-wide harvest of 107,451 coho salmon was 26% above the recent 20-year average of 79,131. Again, with the Nushagak sonar operational and liberal fishing time due to surplus escapement, there was significant coho salmon harvested in Nushagak District. The harvest was 92,598 in Nushagak District and the escapement was 329,946 coho salmon. The coho salmon harvest in Togiak District was 13,144.

Preliminary 2012 Bristol Bay salmon harvest and escapement by district and species.

District	Sockeye	Chinook	Chum	Pink	Coho	TOTAL
Naknek-Kvichak Catch	9,992,067	863	122,813	3,535	423	10,119,701
Escapement-KvichakTwr.	4,164,444	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	4,164,444
Naknek Twr.	900,312	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	900,312
NK Subtotal	15,056,823	863	122,813	3,535	423	15,184,457
Egegik Catch	4,889,724	24	38,121	285	1,286	4,929,440
Escapement-Egegik Twr.	1,233,900	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	1,233,900
other ^a	300	188	7,600	N.A.	N.A.	8,088
Egegik Subtotal	6,123,924	212	45,721	285	1,286	6,171,428
Ugashik Catch	2,347,055	90	30,108	0	0	2,377,253
Escapement-Ugashik Twr.	670,578	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	670,578
other ^b	45,158	295	10,205	N.A.	N.A.	55,658
Ugashik Subtotal	3,062,791	385	40,313	0	0	3,103,489
Nushagak Catch	2,701,830	11,501	268,361	877,466	92,598	3,951,756
Escapement- Wood Twr.	764,202	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	764,202
Igushik	193,770	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	193,770
Nushagak	432,438	107,786	395,162	1,214,960	329,946	2,480,292
Nushagak Subtotal	4,092,240	119,287	663,523	2,092,426	422,544	7,390,020
Togiak Catch	626,291	4,613	206,531	29,089	16,012	882,536
Escapement - Togiak Twr.	203,148	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	203,148
Togiak R. & Trib.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	0
Kulukak	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	0
Togiak Subtotal	829,439	4,613	206,531	29,089	16,012	1,085,684
Bristol Bay Catch	20,556,967	17,091	665,934	910,375	110,319	22,260,686
Bristol Bay Escapement	8,608,250	110,465	562,967	N.A.	329,946	9,611,628
Bristol Bay Total Run	29,165,217	127,556	1,228,901	910,375	110,319	31,542,368

Note: Escapement data for coho are incomplete (in most cases the data are escapement index counts). Total run data do not include sport or subsistence harvests.

^a Includes aerial surveys of King Salmon River drainage and Shosky Creek.

^b Includes aerial surveys of King and Dog Salmon Rivers.