

# **ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

## **DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES**

### **NEWS RELEASE**



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner*  
*Jeff Regnart, Director*



---

Contact:  
Jim Menard, Area Management Biologist  
Scott Kent, Assistant Management Biologist  
Phone: (907) 443-5167  
Fax: (907) 443-5893

Norton Sound Area Office  
Pouch 1148  
Nome, AK, 99762  
Date Issued: May 27, 2014  
Time: 10:15 a.m.

### **2014 NORTON SOUND KING SALMON CONSERVATION MEASURES**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game will be managing Norton Sound salmon runs to conserve Chinook salmon in 2014. Chinook salmon runs have continued to be poor throughout western Alaska from Goodnews Bay to Norton Sound including the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers. There will be severe fishing restrictions in the Yukon and Kuskokwim areas in order to meet escapement goals and sustain Chinook salmon for the future. Restrictions are also anticipated in order to conserve Norton Sound Chinook salmon as they migrate through marine waters and return to natal rivers to spawn. Norton Sound Chinook salmon runs are also expected to be very poor. Sport fishing for Chinook salmon will be closed in all waters from Black Point to Point Romanof and from Rocky Point to Cape Denbigh.

#### **Southern Norton Sound Black Point to Point Romanof**

In order to protect Chinook salmon stocks migrating through southern Norton Sound, all marine waters south and west of Black Point to Wood Point will be closed to salmon fishing from June 9 to June 30, 2014. Meetings were held in Stebbins and St. Michael on May 15 to discuss poor Chinook salmon runs and conservation needs. The department is requesting subsistence fishermen in Stebbins and St. Michael to avoid targeting Chinook salmon and only fish with gillnets with a mesh size of 6 inches or less to target more numerous chum and pink salmon.

#### **Northern Norton Sound Subdistricts 2 and 3**

Chinook salmon escapement goals in Subdistricts 2 and 3 have not been met in several years. Although these appear to be small groups of fish at the northern edge of the range of viable Chinook salmon populations, the department is requesting subsistence fishermen to avoid targeting Chinook salmon and only fish with gillnets with a mesh size 6 inches or less. Subsistence fishing with hook and line for Chinook salmon will be closed effective June 9, 2014 until further notice. These actions are necessary to increase spawning escapement of Chinook salmon.

#### **Koyuk, Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Community Meetings**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game will be holding community meetings in the villages of Koyuk, Shaktoolik, and Unalakleet beginning the week of May 27 to discuss the upcoming salmon season. The primary purpose of these meetings is to inform residents about the 2014 Chinook salmon run forecast that is expected to be very poor. The department will discuss management options with village residents to gather input on management options. The Unalakleet meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m., May 28 at the IRA Memorial Hall, the Shaktoolik meeting will be held at 1:00 p.m., June 2 at the Shaktoolik Native Corporation Annex and the Koyuk meeting will be held at 1:00 p.m. at the City office building on May 29.

Nearly 10 years have passed since the last Chinook salmon directed commercial fishing periods in Norton Sound. Escapement goals have been difficult to achieve and in 2013, the estimated total run of Chinook salmon to the Unalakleet River was not sufficient to even reach escapement needs. The 2014 Chinook salmon run is expected to be of similar magnitude to the 2013 run. Chinook salmon runs have continued to be poor and the department has developed a suite of possible management options that could be implemented this season to ensure more Chinook salmon reach the spawning grounds. Furthermore, because of the possibility of an earlier arrival of Chinook salmon this season the department is planning to implement restrictions to subsistence fishing earlier than last year in southern Norton Sound. Restrictions may include temporary closures to marine and freshwater areas, mesh-size restrictions, and fishing time reductions.

### **Outlooks Based on Marine Juvenile Studies**

The department expects the recent trend of poor Chinook salmon runs to continue through 2015 based on juvenile indices and poor production from the 2008 and 2009 brood years observed thus far. However, juvenile Chinook salmon abundance and size condition indices from the 2013 Northern Bering Sea survey were some of the largest ever. This suggests good strength of the 2011 brood year cohort and the possibility of improved adult Chinook salmon returns beginning in 2016 when these fish return as 5-year olds.

If you have any questions regarding these upcoming meetings please contact Fish and Game at 1-800-560-2271 or 443-5167.