

**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: June 6, 2014
Time: 11:00 a.m.

NORTON SOUND CHINOOK SALMON RESTRICTIONS START JUNE 9

The department's objective this season is to conserve Chinook salmon for escapement needs and refocus harvest pressure on more numerous chum and pink salmon. Like other areas of western Alaska, an early but very poor run of Chinook salmon is expected for Norton Sound this season. In fact, there are already reports of Chinook salmon being harvested in set gillnets in Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts.

The department recently held meetings in Koyuk, Shaktoolik, and Unalakleet to gather input from subsistence users regarding Chinook salmon conservation needs and management of subsistence salmon fisheries this season. The consensus from all three villages was overwhelmingly in favor of providing brief subsistence openings for chum and pink salmon scheduled during favorable weather periods. Residents favored this adaptive management approach rather than establishing set schedules and/or prolonged closures for Chinook salmon at the start of the season. These meetings were very productive and the department has factored subsistence user concerns and preferences into developing an inseason management plan for Chinook salmon in Norton Sound.

The following restrictions to Norton Sound Chinook salmon subsistence fisheries will be implemented effective 12:01 a.m. Monday, June 9. Sport fishing for Chinook salmon is already closed in all waters from Rocky Point to Point Romanof until Saturday, August 16. Any Chinook salmon incidentally caught while attempting to target other species sport fishing may not be removed from the water and must be immediately released alive.

Subdistricts 2 and 3: Golovin and Elim

Subdistrict 2, the Golovin Subdistrict, includes all waters from Rocky Point to Cape Darby. The Elim Subdistrict, Subdistrict 3, comprises all waters from Carson Creek east to Bald Head. In all fresh and marine waters of Subdistricts 2 and 3, hook and line subsistence fishing for Chinook salmon will be closed until further notice. 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.

Subdistrict 4: Norton Bay

The Norton Bay Subdistrict encompasses all waters eastward from Bald Head south to Point Dexter. Effective June 9, all Norton Bay marine waters, including all marine waters from Point Dexter west to Cape Denbigh, and all waters of the Inglutalik River and Ungalik River drainages, will close to subsistence salmon fishing by emergency order. Koyuk River subsistence salmon fishing will not be affected by this action and will remain open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Beginning Monday, June 16, the department will reopen the Ungalik and Inglutalik Rivers and the Norton Bay marine waters to subsistence salmon fishing for one 48-hour period per week during more favorable weather events. Subsistence openings for each week will be announced on Mondays. On July 1, the department will begin increasing subsistence fishing time in Norton Bay Subdistrict. Additionally, commercial pink and chum salmon openings could begin as early as June 20 in Norton Bay and will coincide with subsistence salmon fishing openings.

Subdistricts 5 and 6: Shaktoolik and Unalakleet

Shaktoolik Subdistrict, Subdistrict 5, consists of all waters from the tip of Cape Denbigh south to the terminus of Junction Creek. Subdistrict 6, the Unalakleet Subdistrict encompasses all waters from Junction Creek south to Black Point. Effective Monday, June 9, all marine and fresh waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6, including the Shaktoolik, Egavik, Unalakleet, and Golsovia River drainages will close to subsistence salmon fishing.

Beginning the week of Monday, June 16, the Subdistricts 5 and 6 marine waters will reopen for one 24-hour subsistence fishing period per week allowing gillnets with a mesh size of 6 inches or less. These chum salmon directed subsistence openings will be announced every Monday and will be timed to coincide with more favorable fishing weather. For freshwater areas such as the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Rivers, the department will announce one 36-hour beach seine subsistence opening per week beginning the week of Monday, June 23. Any Chinook salmon incidentally captured in beach seines while targeting other salmon must be immediately returned to the water alive.

Other Southern Norton Sound Waters

Effectively Monday, June 9, all marine waters from Black Point south to Wood Point, east of St. Michael will close to subsistence salmon fishing through June 30. On July 1, subsistence salmon fishing in these marine waters will revert back to 24 hours a day 7 days a week. For all waters from Wood Point to Point Romanoff, subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days a week but subsistence fishermen are requested to use set gillnets with a mesh size of 6 inches or less to minimize incidental harvests of Chinook salmon.

The department will evaluate Chinook salmon assessment project data daily to determine if additional subsistence opportunities can be provided without jeopardizing Chinook salmon escapement needs. Restrictions on subsistence fishing are expected to be incrementally relaxed beginning in early July to provide additional opportunities to utilize chum and pink salmon surpluses.

If you have any questions regarding these restrictions throughout Norton Sound please contact Fish and Game at 1-800-560-2271 or 443-5167, or the Unalakleet field office at 624-3921.