

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



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**Kuskokwim River Salmon Fishery Update #2
Kuskokwim River Inseason Assessment and Run Status**

This is an announcement from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Bethel for subsistence salmon fishermen in the Kuskokwim River Drainage.

All Bethel Test Fishery and escapement numbers can be found online at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.salmon#/fishcounts>

Bethel Test Fishery

Bethel Test Fishery continues to operate on schedule. The cumulative Catch Per Unit Effort as of June 24, 2014 is 513 which is higher than the recent five year average for this date of 273. Daily numbers continue to be around ~20 (Except for single tide days) indicating the Chinook salmon run is continuing to arrive in the lower Kuskokwim River.

Summary

- Bethel Test Fishery numbers in 2014 are not directly comparable to previous years.
- Because our primary goal is to meet escapement, fishery managers have been cautious in drawing conclusions about the overall strength of this year's Chinook salmon run.
- Increasing numbers of chum and sockeye relative to Chinook salmon over the last week have allowed us to hold two limited 6"-mesh openings over the last week.

- Based on BTF data and information about the recent subsistence harvest, state and federal managers are cautiously optimistic that the drainage-wide escapement goal will be achieved.

Lower Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Tagging

In an effort to understand the migration speed of Chinook salmon through the lower Kuskokwim River, ADF&G is conducting a new pilot project below Johnson River. This project uses 7.5” & 8” drift gillnets to capture and live release Chinook salmon with tags attached to monitor their migration upriver. As of June 24th, the crew has tagged 65 Chinook salmon.

Preliminary results of 15 tagged Chinook salmon, suggest these fish take about 3 days to migrate from the Johnson River area, past Bethel. Some fish took as long as 7 days to make the trip. Aerial telemetry was conducted on June 24th to monitor fish movement upriver. Tags were successfully located in the mainstem Kuskokwim River past Kalskag, and in the Kwethluk River.

These fish are identifiable by a plastic tag attached to their back, and a metal antennae coming out of their mouth. If you find one of these tagged fish, please call the number on the plastic tag, and you will be entered into a monthly cash drawing of \$200, and a seasonal cash drawing of \$500.

Kalskag Area Fish Wheel /Drift Gillnet Tagging; ADF&G, KNA

Similar to other years this project has operated, we cooperating with Kuskokwim Native Association to tag Chinook salmon using fish wheels and drift gillnets near Kalskag. Tagged fish that are later recovered at weir projects, allow for ADF&G to estimate the total abundance of Chinook salmon in the middle and upper Kuskokwim River. As of June 23nd, the crew has tagged 182 Chinook salmon.

These fish are identifiable by a plastic tag attached to their back, and a metal antennae coming out of their mouth. If you find one of these tagged fish, please call the number on the plastic tag, and you will be entered into a monthly cash drawing of \$200, and a seasonal cash drawing of \$500.

Kuskokwim River Sonar Investigation

In early July, ADF&G staff will survey the lower Kuskokwim River from the Kwethluk “Y” to Johnson River looking for potential sites for a main stem sonar site. We will identify possible sites, and briefly test sonar systems in these locations to see if the technology is able to work.

Kwethluk River Salmon Monitoring; USFWS

This monitoring station is located on the Kwethluk River and monitors salmon passage to spawning areas, as well as serving as a recapture site for tagged Chinook salmon. This weir is currently being installed. High waters continue to delay installation, and operations are expected to start once water levels recede.

Tuluksak River Salmon Monitoring; USFWS

This monitoring station is located in the Tuluksak River drainage and monitors salmon passage to spawning areas, as well as serving as a recapture site for tagged Chinook salmon. This project will be installed towards the end of June.

Salmon River Weir; ADF&G, KNA

This weir is located in the Aniak River drainage and monitors salmon passage to spawning areas, as well as serving as a recapture site for tagged Chinook salmon. This project is currently being installed and is expected to start operations around the 27th.

George River Weir; ADF&G, KNA

This weir is located in the George River drainage and monitors salmon passage to spawning areas, as well as serving as a recapture site for tagged Chinook salmon. This weir began operations on June 16th, and has counted 4 Chinook salmon through June 24, which is lower than the recent five year average of 15. There have also been 11 chum salmon counted past the weir.

Tatlawiksuk River Weir; ADF&G, KNA

This weir is located in the Tatlawiksuk River drainage and monitors salmon passage to spawning areas, as well as serving as a recapture site for tagged Chinook salmon. This weir began operations on June 14th, and has counted 25 Chinook salmon through June 23rd when the weir became non-operational because of high water; it will commence operations once water levels have receded. This count of Chinook salmon is still higher than the recent five year average of 4 for the 24th. There have also been 57 chum salmon counted past the weir.

Kogrukluk River Weir; ADF&G

This weir is located in the Holitna River drainage and monitors salmon passage to spawning areas, as well as serving as a recapture site for tagged Chinook salmon. This weir began operations on June 20th, and has counted 5 Chinook salmon through June 23. This project has only operated this early in 1 of the last 5 years, and in 2011 the count was 0 for this day. There have also been 60 chum salmon counted past the weir.

Summary

Escapement is starting to show at the weirs, but it is too early to give indication of the expected escapement from these projects. We will continue to monitor escapement throughout the year, and hope weather conditions allow for continuous operation.

For additional information concerning this news release:

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