

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Contact:

Aaron Poetter, Area Management Biologist
Aaron Tiernan, Asst. Area Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 543-2433
Toll Free: 855-933-2433
Fax: (907) 543-2021

Kuskokwim Area Office
P.O. Box 1467
Bethel, AK 99559
Date Issued: July 1, 2014
Time: 1:30 p.m.

Kuskokwim River Salmon Fishery Update #3 **Kuskokwim River Inseason Assessment and Run Status**

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

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 30, 2014 is 579 which is higher than the recent five year average for this date of 378. Daily numbers continue to decline, indicating the Chinook salmon run is coming to an end.

Summary

- Bethel Test Fishery numbers in 2014 are not directly comparable to previous years.
- Increasing numbers of chum and sockeye relative to Chinook salmon over the last week have allowed us to open more opportunity with <6"-mesh.
- 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 30, the crew has tagged 74 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 are 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 30, the crew has tagged 260 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 project became operational on the evening of June 25, which is earlier than 3 of the past five years. The crew has counted 270 Chinook salmon through June 30, which is higher than the recent five year average of 19. There have also been 68 sockeye, and 160 chum salmon counted.

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. The first full day of counts was June 30.

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 became operational on the evening of June 26, which is earlier than recent years when Chinook arrived. The crew has counted 68 Chinook salmon through June 30, which is higher than any other year to date. There have also been 45 chum salmon counted.

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 43 Chinook salmon through June 30, which is lower than the recent five year average of 64 for this date. There have also been 196 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, with 3.5 days of no operation due to high water. The crew has counted 184 Chinook salmon through June 30, which is higher than the recent five year average of 19 for this date. There have also been 174 chum salmon counted past the weir.

Kogruklu 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 118 Chinook salmon through June 30. This project has only operated this early in 1 of the last 5 years, and in 2011 the cumulative count was 23 for this day. There have also been 4 sockeye and 385 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.

Further announcements will be made from the Bethel Fish and Game office, on the State of Alaska web site (<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>), and local radio stations. News releases will be faxed to area villages and local fish processing companies. For additional information or questions regarding Kuskokwim Area fisheries, contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game office in the Bethel at 543-2433 or toll free at 1-855-933-2433.