

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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P.O. Box 1467
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Date Issued: July 3, 2014
Time: 10:15 a.m.

2014 Kuskokwim Bay Salmon Fishery Update #1

This is an announcement from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at Bethel for commercial salmon fisherman in the Kuskokwim Area.

2014 KUSKOKWIM BAY COMMERCIAL OUTLOOK

The Kuskokwim Bay has no formal forecast for salmon returns. Broad expectations are developed based on parent-year escapements and recent year trends. It is expected that king and sockeye salmon harvest in 2014 will be lower than in 2013 due to king salmon conservation measures. Anticipated available surpluses for commercial harvest are expected to range from 0 to 3,000 king; 40,000 to 100,000 sockeye; 60,000 to 130,000 chum; and 40,000 to 80,000 coho salmon. Harvest may be affected by salmon abundance, participation, market conditions, and processor capacity.

2014 KUSKOKWIM BAY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Subsistence Fishery

District W-4, Quinhagak

ADF&G met with fishermen from the village of Quinhagak on May 30 to discuss subsistence and commercial fishing as well as king salmon conservation. Subsistence salmon fishing was closed from 12:01 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. on the following Sundays: June 8, 15, 22, and 29, in order to meet escapement goals. Preliminary harvest reports suggest that the harvest of king salmon appear to be slightly slower than average.

District W-5, Goodnews Bay

ADF&G met with fishermen from the village of Goodnews on May 29 to discuss subsistence and commercial fishing as well as king salmon conservation. Subsistence salmon fishing with gillnets was restricted to the use of 6-inch or less mesh size not exceeding 50-fathoms in length; effective 12:01 a.m. Monday, June 2 until further notice. ADF&G understands that most fishermen use smaller mesh gillnets and we are requesting subsistence fishermen in this area still avoid targeting Chinook salmon and target more numerous chum and sockeye salmon.

Commercial Fishery

King Salmon Conservation

In 2013, king salmon abundance within the Kuskokwim Region was poor. The escapements in the Goodnews and Kanektok river drainages were below the established escapement goals. The king salmon returns in the Kanektok and Goodnews River drainages are expected to be poor again in 2014. With poor run performance in recent years, king salmon conservation is warranted in the District 4 (Quinhagak) and District 5 (Goodnews Bay) commercial fisheries.

Districts 4

ADF&G intended to provide limited opportunity in early July with a closed waters box at the mouth of the Kanektok River, to allow fisherman to harvest abundant sockeye and chum salmon and help conserve the king salmon. Due to the unavailability of a processor at this time, commercial salmon fishing will likely open around July 10. The District 4 commercial fishery will be managed in accordance with the *District 4 Salmon Management Plan 5 ACC 07.367*. A coho salmon directed fishery is anticipated to occur, late July through August given adequate run strength.

District 5

ADF&G intended to provide limited opportunity in early July with the half district openings similar to those in 2013, to help conserve king salmon. Due to the unavailability of a processor at this time, commercial salmon fishing will likely open around July 10. A coho salmon directed fishery is anticipated to occur, late July through August given adequate run strength.

Sport Fishery

Sport fishing for king salmon closed on May 1, 2014, by Emergency Order 3-KS-01-14, in all waters draining into Kuskokwim Bay south of the south bank of Warehouse Creek and north of Cape Newenham. In addition anglers may use only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure. The Kuskokwim Bay king salmon sport-fishing season will close by regulation on July 26.

Inseason Assessment and Research

The Kanektok River weir has been in operation since June 26. As of July 1, total passage is 64 king; 23,175 sockeye; and 485 chum salmon. King and chum salmon escapements are average, while the escapement of sockeye salmon is above average for this time. ADF&G intends to fly an aerial survey in the coming weeks, weather permitting, to get an idea of how many fish are in the river below the weir site.

The Middle Fork Goodnews River weir has been in operation since June 25. As of July 1, there have been 69 king; 15,101 sockeye; and 718 chum salmon passed through the weir. The king salmon passage is well below average. Sockeye escapement is the second highest on record and chum salmon escapement is average at this time.

Inseason indicators of salmon run strength include weir escapement projects, verbal subsistence catch reports, commercial catch statistics, and aerial escapement surveys. Weirs are being operated on the Kanektok and the Middle Fork Goodnews rivers to monitor salmon escapements and collect biological data. The Kanektok River Weir will cease operations in mid-August to address operational concerns caused by high water events common in August and September.

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