

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



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**Kuskokwim River Salmon Fishery Update #4
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 July 6, is 628 Chinook; 1,160 sockeye; 4,308 chum; and 7 for coho salmon. The cumulative Chinook value is higher than 4 of the last five years, and indicate it is likely we will achieve escapement goals. The decreasing daily values are indicating the Chinook salmon run is coming to an end. Chum salmon cumulative CPUE is also higher than four of the past five years indicating an above average run, and the daily values indicate there are still a lot of chum salmon entering the river. Sockeye salmon cumulative CPUE is higher than three of the past five years, indicating an average size run, and the recent decreases in daily CPUE indicate the run may have peaked. This is the earliest a coho salmon has been caught in the test fishery in the past five years, and we will continue to monitor if this is a signal of an early or a strong coho salmon run.

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 July 6, the crew has tagged 87 Chinook salmon. Catches have been decreasing steadily, and this will likely be the last week of tagging.

Preliminary results indicate tags have successfully moved upriver in the mainstem Kuskokwim River, and have been located in the Kwethluk River. Travel speed was about 3 days on average from Johnson River to Bethel.

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 July 5, the crew has tagged 286 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. As of July 6, the crew has counted 1,578 Chinook; 1,585 sockeye; and 2,482 chum salmon. Chinook salmon escapement is ahead of other years at this time, but that may be associated with the early run. It is anticipated that the Chinook salmon escapement goal will be achieved; however it is early to project with certainty.

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 became operational on June 30, which is a few days later than the past few years. As of July 6, the crew has counted 176 Chinook; 29 sockeye; and 641 chum salmon. Chinook salmon escapement is much higher than the past five years as of this date, and the total to date is nearly that of the 2013 end of season count.

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, and has had continuous operations. As of July 6, the crew has counted 456 Chinook; and 358 chum salmon.

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 had continuous operations. As of July 6, the crew has counted 999 Chinook; 3 sockeye; and 1,456 chum salmon. The Chinook salmon count is over half of the escapement goal at this point, and it is expected that the escapement goal will be achieved.

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. As of July 6, the crew has counted 1,274 Chinook; and 1,586 chum salmon.

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 had continuous operations. As of July 6, the crew has counted 494 Chinook; 40 sockeye; and 1,689 chum salmon. The Chinook salmon count is higher on this day than in any of the past five years, but it is too early at this project to estimate if the escapement goal will be achieved.

Summary

Escapement is starting to show at the weirs, it looks like Chinook salmon conservation measures had the desired effect of increased escapements at this point, because many of the projects have seen more Chinook salmon at this point in time than in the past five years. Early run timing is making it difficult to estimate the likelihood of achieving escapement goals.

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.