

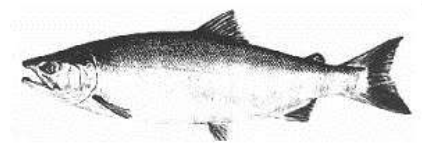
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Travis Elison, Naknek-Kvichak Manager
Paul Salomone, Egegik and Ugashik Manager
Tim Sands, Nushagak Manager
Matt Jones, Togiak Manager

King Salmon Office
P.O. Box 37 King Salmon, AK 99613
Phone: 246-3341 Fax: 246-3309
Dillingham Office
P.O. Box 230 Dillingham, AK 99576
Phone: 842-5227 Fax: 842-5937
Date Issued: 04/10/2015
Time: 4:00 p.m.

REVISED

BRISTOL BAY

2015 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL

SALMON FISHING

INTRODUCTION

This document is provided as a guide to fishermen, processors, and the public regarding the 2015 Bristol Bay salmon season. Included is a short narrative with general management framework for each of the five major districts and the 2015 salmon forecast.

During the season, Bristol Bay salmon fishery announcements are broadcast on marine VHF Channel 07A. Fishery announcements are also aired on local radio stations – KAKN and KDLG. As conditions in the fishery change, for the most current information, fishermen should stand by at regular announcement times: 9:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, 3:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., and 8:00 p.m., unless otherwise stated. Information is also available via telephone; for east-side fisheries (Naknek-Kvichak, Egegik, and Ugashik), dial 246-INFO (4636), for west-side fisheries (Nushagak and Togiak) dial 842-5226. Fishermen are asked to note office hours at the Dillingham Fish and Game office will be 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday from June 2–June 19, and again after July 17. From June 20–July 13 weekday office hours will be the same as above, but weekend office hours will be from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon.

Regarding blue and green district registration cards, set gillnet permit holders are only required to fill out and return green cards if they fish in the Nushagak District. Drift gillnet permit holders that fish in the Nushagak and Togiak districts must fill out and return blue district registration cards prior to commercial fishing. Drift gillnet permit holders that fish in the Ugashik, Egegik, and Naknek-Kvichak districts will not need to fill out and return a blue card prior to June 25. Blue and green permit district registration cards will be available at the Anchorage, King Salmon, and Dillingham offices beginning May 1. In addition, PDF files of blue and green district registration cards are

posted on the Bristol Bay homepage and can be printed, completed, mailed to the address on the printout, or submitted to Anchorage, King Salmon, or Dillingham office personnel. Drift gillnet district registration can also be accomplished through the online registration application. During the 2015 season, catch, escapement, and announcements will be available at the same site at:

(<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.salmon>)

Fishermen and processors should be aware of the reporting requirements in **5 AAC 06.377 (b)** that state **“Each commercial fisherman shall report, on an ADF&G fish ticket, at the time of landing, the number of Chinook and coho salmon taken but not sold.”**

2015 Regulatory Changes

At the March 2015 Board of Fisheries (board) meeting in Anchorage the board adopted a proposal to change the Naknek-Kvichak District boundary line near Graveyard Point to correspond with the historical location. The adopted boundary line is defined as a “point near Graveyard Point at 58° 52.07’ N. lat., 157° 00.89’ W. long. to a point on the northwest shore of Kvichak Bay at 58° 53.37’ N. lat., 157° 04.26’ W. long.”

As part of the three year regulatory cycle the department is tasked with reviewing, evaluating and recommending adjustments to escapement goals for all species within Bristol Bay commercial districts. At the 2012 board meeting in Naknek, escapement goal adjustments were recommended for most of the large river systems in Bristol Bay commercial fishing districts. At the recommendation of the board, implementation of the department goals was postponed and a subcommittee was formed to 1) provide an independent analysis of department recommendations and 2) examine alternative goals. The deadline for the conclusion of the analysis was given as spring 2015. The subcommittee was composed of members of Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute, sitting and ex-board members, processor representatives and members of the community. Draft reports are available at this website www.bbedc.com. Based on recommendations of the subcommittee the board opted not to adopt OEGs therefore the department’s SEGs will be implemented as follows:

	Old Goal	New Goal
Ugashik River	500,000–1,200,000	500,000–1,400,000
Egegik River	800,000–1,400,000	800,000–2,000,000
Naknek River	800,000–1,400,000	800,000–2,000,000
Wood River	700,000–1,500,000	700,000–1,800,000
Nushagak River	370,000–840,000	370,000–900,000
Igushik River	150,000–300,000	150,000–400,000

Note: there were no recommended changes to the Kvichak, Alagnak, or Togiak River goals.

In addition, new regulatory language was adopted that describes how the department is to manage based on run size as follows:

5 AAC 06.355 (d) (1) Achieve adequate escapement from all segments of the run by spacing openings throughout the run **and, to the extent practicable, manage for escapements within the lower or upper portions of the escapement goals proportional to the run size based on the preseason forecast and inseason assessment of run size.**

In general, this means that in years with small runs managers will be expected to “land” the escapement in the lower half of the escapement goal range. In years of large run managers will be expected to land the escapement in the upper half of the escapement goal range.

For example, the 2015 Egegik run has a large preseason forecast of 12.5 million fish and the department will manage for the upper half of the escapement goal range. If inseason assessment suggests the run is as large as forecast the expected management target will be an escapement goal range of 1.4 to 2.0 million fish. However, management of the fishery relies heavily on inseason assessment of run strength and adjusts accordingly.

Alaska Wildlife Troopers – Summer 2015 Outlook – Bristol Bay

Enforcement Priorities:

- Continued strong focus on fishing district lines and open period enforcement, particularly in the Naknek-Kvichak and Egegik districts using all available assets to include aircraft, rotorcraft, large and small enforcement vessels and undercover fishing vessels.
- Routine boardings of drift gillnet and processor vessels to verify licensing and permitting regulations are met. Fishermen and processors are reminded that at the time of delivery of fish, a fish ticket must be generated and must include the signature of a company representative and the full name and signature of the CFEC permit holder. The permit holder must be present at the time of delivery in order to sign the fish ticket. Crew members cannot sign fish tickets for permit holders.
- Increased enforcement of state boating safety laws in cooperation with the US Coast Guard.
- Increased Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) presence in the Ugashik and Togiak Districts.

SALMON OUTLOOK

BAYWIDE

The 2015 Bristol Bay sockeye salmon forecast is approximately 54.0 million fish. Based on the forecast and newly adopted escapement goal ranges, 37.6 million fish are potentially available for commercial harvest (Table 1). The department manages fisheries based on inseason information regarding abundance. The inseason management approach uses a suite of tools to provide information on abundance in each district as each run develops and that information is used by the department to determine fishing opportunity.

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opens June 1 by regulation. Fishing in eastside districts will be allowed using a weekly schedule that will vary by district. The schedules are in place to balance fishing opportunity with escapement in the early part of the season (particularly for Chinook salmon). As each run develops and sockeye salmon run characteristics become defined within individual districts, fishing time will be adjusted accordingly. In the Nushagak District, management of the Chinook salmon fishery will govern fishing time in the early part of the season, followed by directed sockeye salmon management as abundance dictates.

NAKNEK-KVICHAK DISTRICT

An inshore run of approximately 28.8 million sockeye salmon is expected for the Naknek-Kvichak District in 2015. Based on the forecast, the projected harvest in the Naknek-Kvichak District is approximately 18.0 million sockeye salmon: 7.1 million from the Kvichak River,

580,000 from the Alagnak River and 10.3 million from the Naknek River. The 2015 Kvichak River escapement goal will be 7.7 million. If the run is greater or less than the forecast, the inseason point goal will be adjusted to reflect the actual inseason total run. The Naknek River escapement goal range is 800,000 to 2.0 million. Sockeye salmon returning to the Naknek-Kvichak District are predicted to be 33% age-1.3, 23% age-1.2, 38% age-2.2, and 5% age-2.3 fish.

Beginning June 1, only the Naknek Section will be open to drift gillnet gear, and the entire Naknek-Kvichak District will be open to set gillnet gear. Fishing time during the first 2 weeks of June will be 4 days a week from 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday, beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday, June 1 and ending 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 12.

During the week of June 15, set gillnet fishing will be open in the Naknek-Kvichak District from 9:00 a.m. Monday until 9:00 a.m. Friday. Drift gillnet fishing in the Naknek Section will be opened with the following schedule:

11:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Monday June 15, a 7.0-hour period;
12:30 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. Tuesday June 16, an 8.5 hour period;
12:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. Tuesday June 16, a 7.0-hour period;
1:00 a.m. until 9:30 a.m. Wednesday June 17, an 8.5 hour period;
1:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Wednesday June 17, a 7.0-hour period;
2:00 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. Thursday June 18, an 8.5 hour period;
2:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. Thursday June 18, a 7.0-hour period;
3:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. Friday June 19, an 8.5-hour period.

With limited information and low abundance over the past 5 years, special attention will be given to Chinook salmon run strength and effort levels. A mesh size restriction of 5.5 inches or less will be in effect beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday, June 1 until 9:00 a.m. Friday, July 24, to help in the conservation of Chinook salmon.

During closures, there may be extensive use of district test fishing boats. Additional volunteer test boats might be needed because of this increase in test fishing. Permit holders interested in district test fishing in the Naknek-Kvichak District should contact Travis Elison in King Salmon at (907) 246-3341.

ELEGIK DISTRICT

A forecast of approximately 12.5 million sockeye salmon is expected for the Egegik River in 2015. The escapement goal range is 800,000 to 2.0 million sockeye. Based on the forecast, the expected surplus potentially available for harvest is 10.6 million fish. Approximately 41% of the run is expected to be age-2.2 fish, followed by age-2.3 (25%), age-1.3 (13%) and age 1.2 (21%).

In 2015, separate gear openings and extensions will be used to adjust harvest in an attempt to achieve allocation percentages. Fishermen are reminded that regulation directs the department to avoid “to the extent practicable”, continuous fishing with set gillnet gear in the Egegik District, therefore Egegik set gillnet fishermen should expect breaks in fishing.

Based on the Kvichak River sockeye salmon forecast, fishing will begin in the full Egegik District. The season will start with a 3 day per week schedule that will be in effect through June 12. The primary reason for returning to the 3 day per week schedule is to provide for Chinook salmon escapement. By emergency order (E.O.), commercial fishing will be allowed in

the Egegik District from 9:00 a.m. Monday, until 9:00 a.m. Wednesday and from 9:00 a.m. Thursday until 9:00 a.m. Friday. This schedule will be in effect beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday June 1 and run through 9:00 a.m. Friday June 12 for drift and set gillnet gear. For the week beginning June 15: commercial fishing with set gillnet gear will be permitted from 9:00 a.m. Monday June 15 until 9:00 a.m. Wednesday June 17. Commercial fishing with drift gillnet gear will be permitted for 5 hours from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Monday June 15. After June 15, additional fishing time for the drift gillnet group will be based on inseason indicators of abundance, and after June 17, fishing for both gear groups will be scheduled according to sockeye salmon run strength. As in previous years, some openings could occur on short notice.

In addition, subsistence fishing will be permitted in the waters of the Egegik commercial district from 12:01 a.m. June 1 until 11:59 p.m. Wednesday June 17. The department will consider additional directed subsistence openings, but will wait until inseason to announce the timing of those openings.

The department does not produce forecasts of the coho salmon run to the Egegik River. The parent year for the 2015 coho run was the 2011 escapement, however, because of weather conditions surveys were not flown so no assessment of coho escapement for that year is available. In 2015, management of the fall coho fishery will be based on fishery performance and run strength indicators.

UGASHIK DISTRICT

The 2015 Ugashik River sockeye salmon forecast is 3.7 million fish. The escapement goal range is 500,000 to 1.4 million sockeye. Based on the forecast, 2.6 million fish are potentially available for harvest. Approximately 55% of the run is expected to be age-1.2 fish, 26% age-1.3, 14% age-2.2, and 4% age-2.3 fish.

The Ugashik District allocation plan specifies 10% set gillnet and 90% for the drift gillnet group. As in previous years separate gear openings and adjusting length of commercial periods will be used to address allocation between gear groups in 2015. With limited information and low abundance over the past 5 years, special attention will be given to Chinook salmon run strength and effort levels. A mesh size restriction of 5.5 inches or less will be in effect beginning 12:01 a.m. Monday June 1 until 11:59 p.m. Wednesday July 22, to help in the conservation of Chinook salmon.

Beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday June 1, commercial fishing in the Ugashik District will be allowed on a 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday schedule through 9:00 a.m. Friday June 12. With an expected run to the Kvichak River that exceeds the minimum escapement goal stipulated in regulation, fishing will begin in the full Ugashik District. Additional fishing time after June 12 will be allowed under E.O. authority and will depend on fishery performance and run strength indicators. Permit holders should note that the regulation restricting opportunity to no more than 48 hours between June 16 and June 23 will not be in effect in 2015.

In addition, subsistence fishing will be permitted in the waters of the Ugashik commercial district from 12:01 a.m. June 1 until 11:59 p.m. Wednesday June 17. The department will consider additional directed subsistence openings but will wait until inseason to announce the timing of those openings.

The department does not produce forecasts of the coho salmon run to the Ugashik River. Assessment of the escapement is done with aerial surveys. The parent year for the 2015 coho run was the 2011 escapement, however, because of weather conditions surveys were not flown so no

assessment of the coho escapement for that year is available. In 2015, management of the fall coho fishery will be based on fishery performance and run strength indicators.

At the March 2013 meeting the board made changes to when Area T permit holders may fish in the inner portion of the Cinder River Section (river and lagoon) and Inner Port Heiden sections. The board adopted proposals that would allow Area T permit holders to fish within the inner portion of the Cinder River Section and Inner Port Heiden Section during all months when open by regulation. For further information contact ADF&G in Port Moller at 907-375-2716. Area T permit holders who fish the Cinder River and Port Heiden sections and deliver their catch in the Ugashik District are reminded to report the section of catch on the appropriate fish tickets and note that transporting fish from the sections mentioned above to deliver in the Ugashik District is not permitted during July.

NUSHAGAK DISTRICT

The variable escapement goal adopted for the Nushagak River is contained in the *Wood River Special Harvest Area (WRSHA) Management Plan (5 AAC 06.358)*. This plan directs the department to achieve sockeye salmon escapements within the escapement goal range of 370,000 to 900,000 when the preseason forecast is greater than 1 million fish. If the preseason forecast is below 1 million fish, then an Optimum Escapement Goal (OEG) minimum of 260,000 sockeye salmon is in effect when the ratio of Wood River to Nushagak River sockeye salmon is projected to exceed 3:1. During the first week of July, the department assesses Nushagak River sockeye salmon run strength through July 1 and adjusts the escapement goal based on that assessment. If the sockeye salmon runs to the Wood and Nushagak rivers for 2015 (5.6 million and 1.8 million respectively), are realized, the likelihood of fishing in the WRSHA is decreased.

Nushagak River Chinook salmon are managed according to the *Nushagak-Mulchatna King Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 06.361)*. This plan directs the commercial fishery to be managed for an inriver goal of 95,000 Chinook salmon. In 2014, escapement was sufficient to warrant several short directed Chinook salmon openings. The department will closely monitor Chinook salmon escapement and have openings if escapement warrants beginning as early as June 12.

The 2015 forecast for sockeye salmon in the Nushagak District is 8.4 million fish, 2.2 million for escapement and 5.9 million potentially available for harvest in the Nushagak commercial salmon fishery. The total run forecast by river system is Wood River 5.6 million (escapement goal range 700,000 to 1.8 million), Igushik River 1.0 million (escapement goal range 150,000 to 400,000), and Nushagak River 1.8 million (escapement goal range of 370,000 to 900,000). Approximately 26% of the forecasted run is expected to be age-1.2 sockeye salmon, < 3% age-2.2, 69% age-1.3, and < 2% age-2.3 fish.

Management strategies for 2015 include: 1) directed Chinook salmon openings when warranted by escapement. 2) Igushik Section sockeye salmon openings are likely to begin in the second week of June and will likely be set gillnet only until escapement or strong harvests dictate otherwise, and 3) begin fishing in the regular district in the third week of June with short openings. Openings will be scheduled based on sockeye salmon escapement levels in the Nushagak and Wood rivers. Mesh size will be limited to 5.5 inches or smaller unless Chinook salmon escapement is above expectations. If the Nushagak River sockeye salmon escapement decreases relative to expected escapements the department may first warn and then impose the 4.75 inch mesh restriction in the Nushagak District. Subsequently, if Nushagak River sockeye

salmon escapement falls below the expected 370,000 fish curve, then the department may utilize the WRSHA to protect Nushagak River sockeye salmon. Commercial openings in the district may follow as allowed by escapement levels in the Nushagak River. With the large forecast this year the department will try and provide opportunity sooner rather than later in the Nushagak District. Contingent upon sockeye and Chinook salmon escapement, the department plans to begin fishing once Wood River sockeye salmon escapement exceeds 30,000 fish. This is a notable change from previous years when the department waited to reach 100,000 fish escapement on the Wood River before opening directed sockeye fishing in the commercial district.

Permit holders are reminded that there were significant changes made to the WRSHA management plan at the December 2012 Board of Fisheries meeting. The changes require separate gear type openings, and allocation will be done by a ratio of openings (3:1) for the different gear types. Other changes include restrictions regarding where and how set gillnets may be fished and the amount of gear allowed on board set or drift gillnet vessels. Please be sure you understand all regulations before participating in any fishing activities.

Igushik River sockeye salmon will be managed independently of the Nushagak-Wood River sockeye salmon stocks. Set gillnet fishing will begin in the Igushik Section when there is a market available. Initial openings will be 8 hours per day and additional time will be added if large harvests or escapement information indicate more time is warranted. Drift gillnet openings in the Igushik Section will be added as needed to control sockeye salmon escapement. Igushik River sockeye salmon returns can be quite variable relative to forecasted run strength. Management will incorporate a readiness to respond with increasing early set gillnet openings, and an attempt to maintain the 6% sockeye harvest allocated to the Igushik Section set gillnet group by only adding drift gillnet openings as needed.

In 2015, there is no forecast of the coho salmon run to the Nushagak River. The department will switch to coho salmon management around July 23 when sockeye salmon harvest decreases. Fishery performance and run strength indicators will be used to make management decisions regarding coho salmon fishing opportunity. District test fishing for inseason management may be conducted periodically depending on run characteristics. Permit holders interested in test fishing in the Nushagak District should contact Tim Sands in Dillingham at (907) 842-5227.

TOGIAC DISTRICT

The 2015 total run of Togiak River sockeye salmon is forecast to be 610,000 fish, a decrease from the 2014 forecast of 720,000. The *Togiak District Salmon Management Plan* (TDSMP, **5 AAC 06.369**) calls for sockeye salmon escapement of 150,000 fish past the counting towers located at the outlet of Togiak Lake. Based on the forecast, approximately 400,000 sockeye salmon will potentially be available for commercial harvest. Approximately 10% of the run is expected to be 2-ocean fish and 90% is expected to be 3-ocean fish.

Unlike other fishing districts in Bristol Bay that require emergency orders to announce fishing periods, Togiak District follows a regular weekly schedule that allows fishing in: Togiak Bay four days per week, fishing in Kulukak Section two and half days per week, and fishing in Matogak, Osviak, and Cape Peirce Sections five days per week. Following the TDSMP, permit holders are restricted from fishing in the Togiak District until July 27 if they have fished in any other district in Bristol Bay, and conversely, restricts permit holders from fishing in any other district until July 27 if they have fished in the Togiak District. Other regulation changes increase the weekly fishing schedule in the Togiak River Section between July 1 and July 16, prevent

drift gillnet fishing effort near the Togiak River mouth through July 15, and restrict mesh size to 5.5 inches or smaller between June 15 and July 15 for the conservation of Chinook salmon.

Chinook salmon run strength in the Togiak River has been considered below average for several years. Anticipating another poor Chinook salmon run, permit holders can expect emergency orders to reduce the weekly fishing schedule in the last two weeks of June and a mesh size restriction through all of July.

Coho, pink, and chum salmon returns are not formally forecast in the Togiak District due to a lack of sufficient age class information and accurate escapement data. If a market for coho salmon is present, a conservative harvest strategy will be utilized due to the lack of information about the returning coho salmon run.

Table 1.-Forecast of total run, escapement, and harvest of sockeye salmon (millions) returning to Bristol Bay River systems in 2015.

DISTRICT River	Total Run Forecast by Age Class				Total	Escapement	Total Harvest ^a
	1.2	2.2	1.3	2.3			
NAKNEK-KVICHAK:							
Kvichak	3.15	9.71	1.68	0.83	15.38	7.69	7.12
Alagnak	0.48	0.04	0.61	0.12	1.24	.62	0.58
Naknek	2.97	1.26	7.32	0.63	12.18	1.40	10.33
Total	6.60	11.01	9.60	1.58	28.80	9.71	18.03
EGEGIK	2.63	5.12	1.62	3.14	12.50	1.40	10.64
UGASHIK	2.05	0.52	0.97	0.16	3.70	0.95	2.61
NUSHAGAK							
Wood	1.93	0.17	3.36	0.09	5.35	1.25	4.09
Igushik	0.16	0.02	0.82	0.02	1.02	0.28	0.70
Nushagak	0.12	0.01	1.56	0.01	1.81	0.62	1.12
Total	2.20	0.20	5.74	0.11	8.37	2.15	5.91
TOGIAK	0.12	0.03	0.43	0.03	0.61	0.18	0.41
BRISTOL BAY	13.61	16.87	18.37	5.01	53.98	14.39	37.60

^a The projected harvest accounts for the inshore run of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon, excluding harvest in the South Peninsula commercial salmon fisheries. The South Peninsula harvest has averaged 3.7% of the total Bristol Bay sockeye production during the last five years and is forecasted to be 2.01 million in 2015.