

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Stephanie Schmidt, Area Management Biologist
Sabrina Garcia, Asst. Area Management Biologist
Lower Yukon Area Office
P.O. Box 127
Emmonak, AK 99581
Phone: (907) 949-1320
Fax: (907) 949-1830

U.S. Department of Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Federal Subsistence Board
Geoffrey L. Haskett, Regional Director
Gene Peltola, Asst. Regional Director Subsistence
Fred Bue, Yukon Area Inseason Manager
Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office
101 12th Avenue, Rm 110
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone: (907) 455-1849 or 1-800-267-3997
Fax (907) 455-1853

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2015 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 4

Summer Announcement # 2, Coastal District and Districts 1, 2 and 3 Subsistence Fishing Schedules

Districts Affected: Lower Yukon Area

The first Chinook salmon harvested on the Yukon River was reported to have been caught on May 27. In the Lower Yukon Test Fishery, the first Chinook salmon was caught at a supplemental test fishery site located near Augilene Point in the South Mouth on May 28. Based on the ice out timing at Alakanuk and the Chinook salmon timing model that uses climate variables, it is anticipated that the 2015 Chinook salmon run will begin migrating upriver over the next few days.

A very conservative management approach is being taken early in the season to protect the 2015 Chinook salmon run, which is anticipated to be weak. Conservative management actions are being implemented in accordance with the preseason management plan discussed at the preseason planning meeting and outlined in the 2015 Yukon River Salmon Fisheries Outlook.

Effective 12:00 p.m. noon, Saturday, May 30, subsistence fishing for salmon will close in the Northern Portion of the Coastal District, and Districts 1 and 2. All gillnets greater than 4-inch mesh size must be removed from the water. The intent is to allow non-salmon species to be harvested using 4-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets not exceeding 60-feet in length while avoiding Chinook salmon. This opportunity to harvest non-salmon species will be reduced or discontinued if this gear is used to target Chinook salmon. Fishermen are strongly encouraged to avoid fishing where Chinook salmon may be encountered.

The closure is expected to be in place for most of the Chinook salmon run. Similar actions will be taken in the other Yukon River districts as Chinook salmon move into those areas in an effort to protect Chinook salmon all the way to the spawning grounds. Management strategies may change based on inseason run assessment information.

Subsistence fishing opportunities to harvest summer chum salmon with dip nets will be provided in Districts 1 and 2, when summer chum salmon abundance increases.

Following management actions already taken in the Coastal District and Districts 1 and 2, a precautionary management approach is also being taken early in the season in District 3 by restricting gillnets to 6-inch or smaller mesh size. The intent is to have a gear restriction already in place before Chinook salmon begin their spawning migration through this area while still providing an opportunity to fish for some early summer chum salmon and non-salmon species.

The 2015 season will undoubtedly be another challenging year for Yukon River fishermen. ADF&G and USFWS would like to extend thanks and appreciation to the fishermen of the Yukon River for their subsistence fishing reports and their continuing efforts to share in Chinook salmon conservation when these run sizes are well-below average.

Current Management

The current subsistence fishing schedules are as follows:

Coastal District: Subsistence fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

As in recent years, the Coastal District will be further subdivided into two management areas to allow for more management precision and flexibility.

Effective 12:00 p.m. noon Saturday May 30, in the **Northern Portion** of the Coastal District from 62 degrees North latitude to Point Romanof and including all state marine waters, subsistence salmon fishing will be closed until further notice. Management actions taken in the Northern Portion of the Coastal District are being coordinated with actions taken in District 1 to provide protection to Chinook salmon prior to entering the river. All gillnets greater than 4-inch mesh size must be removed from the water. Gillnets 4-inch or smaller mesh size may be used during the closure, but may not exceed 60-feet in length.

In the **Southern Portion** of the Coastal District, from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62° North latitude, the current subsistence salmon fishing schedule remains unaltered and is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

However, subsistence fishermen in the Southern Portion of the Coastal District should be prepared for management actions that could close subsistence salmon fishing if the incidental Chinook salmon catch is greater than expected in the coastal area.

District 1 (including Black River) and District 2: Subsistence fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

Effective 12:00 p.m. noon Saturday, May 30, subsistence fishing for salmon will close. All gillnets greater than 4-inch mesh size must be removed from the water. Gillnets 4-inch or smaller mesh size may be used during the closure, but may not exceed 60-feet in length.

District 3: Subsistence fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Effective 12:00 p.m. noon Saturday, May 30, subsistence fishing will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

Innoko River: Subsistence fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should be prepared for management actions that will close subsistence salmon fishing when the first pulse of Chinook salmon is expected to be migrating into the Innoko River.

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at **1-866-479-7387** (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call **(907) 459-7387**.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADF&G office in Emmonak at 949-1320 or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Fairbanks at 455-1849. The Emmonak ADF&G office is expected to be open by May 30.

This has been an announcement by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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