

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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COMMERCIAL CHUM SALMON FISHING OPENINGS

Chum salmon catch and escapement indices improved this weekend in Norton Sound. Nearly 40,000 chum salmon have been harvested through July 4 and the harvest is on track to exceed the upper limit of the pre-season forecast of 80,000–110,000 chum salmon. The Kwiniuk River tower has already enumerated over 16,000 chum salmon and the NSEDC-operated Fish River tower has counted nearly 27,000 chum salmon. Kwiniuk River tower chum salmon escapement will easily exceed the upper bound of the escapement goal range and Fish River escapement of chum salmon is projected to easily provide for escapement and inriver subsistence uses. Norton Bay chum salmon escapement counts should be considered incomplete due to tidal events preventing some salmon from being enumerated. However, catch statistics from Norton Bay indicate average to above average chum salmon abundance based on historical catch statistics.

With chum salmon escapement and subsistence needs projected to be met and Chinook salmon incidental catches declining, commercial chum salmon fishing is warranted to utilize harvestable surpluses in Subdistricts 2–4. There will be another commercial index opening in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts to evaluate chum salmon run strength and incidental harvest rates of Chinook salmon. Permit holders in all subdistricts are limited to 100 fathoms of net in aggregate length and gillnets must have a mesh size of 6 inches or less. Fishing periods by subdistrict are as follows:

Norton Sound Subdistricts 2–4: Golovin, Elim, Norton Bay Subdistricts

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 7, the department will reopen commercial salmon fishing for 48 hours in the Golovin, Elim, and Norton Bay Subdistricts. Commercial fishing is permitted from 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 7 to 6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 9.

Norton Sound Subdistricts 5 and 6: Shaktoolik and Unalakelet Subdistricts

Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 6, the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts will reopen to commercial salmon fishing for 24 hours from 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 6 to 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 7. Subsistence fishing in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistrict marine waters will also be open concurrent with the commercial opening with fishermen restricted to set gillnets with a mesh size of 6 inches or less.