

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



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### **SILVER SALMON SEASON BEGINS AUGUST 1**

Silver salmon are making a strong early showing at ground-based escapement projects in southern Norton Sound. Additionally, the commercial harvest of silver salmon in Norton Sound is well above average for late July and tracking similar to the 2014 harvest, the fourth best on record. Current information suggests silver salmon runs will likely provide for escapement needs, subsistence uses, and commercial utilization throughout Norton Sound. The department will now switch to silver salmon management, and index commercial periods directed at silver salmon in all subdistricts will begin Saturday, August 1. These periods will allow for some commercial harvest and will also provide indices of silver salmon run strength. 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 times by subdistrict are as follows:

#### **Nome Subdistrict**

The entire Nome Subdistrict from Cape Rodney east to Topkok Head will reopen to commercial salmon fishing for one 48-hour period from 12:00 noon Saturday, August 1 to 12:00 noon Monday, August 3. Catches in the Nome Subdistrict continue to be dominated by chum salmon during the last week of July and this period will not jeopardize subsistence uses of silver salmon based on the expected minimal fishing effort and low catch rates of silvers. However, the department will hold off setting additional directed silver salmon periods for the Nome Subdistrict until run size projections indicate the subsistence priority and escapement needs are assured.

#### **Golovin, Elim, and Norton Bay Subdistricts**

Subdistricts 2–4 will reopen for two 48-hour periods from 6:00 p.m. Saturday, August 1 to 6:00 p.m. Monday, August 3, and from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 5 to 6:00 p.m. Friday, August 7. By August 7, the department should be able to determine if a commercial fishing schedule can be set or if fishing time needs to be restricted to increase escapements for in river subsistence uses. Silver salmon runs as indexed by commercial catch statistics are tracking similar to last season in Norton Sound Subdistricts 2–4 when Golovin Subdistrict had the second best commercial harvest on record and harvests in Elim and Norton Bay set new records. Initial tower counts of silver salmon at the Fish, Kwiniuk, and Inglutalik rivers are also similar to late July counts observed last season when escapement goals were easily exceeded.

#### **Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts**

Subdistricts 5 and 6 will reopen for two 48-hour periods from 6:00 p.m. Sunday, August 2 to 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 4, and from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 5 to 6:00 p.m. Friday,

August 7. Also, a reminder to subsistence salmon fishers, that fishing with set gillnets and beach seines is now open 24 hours a day, seven days a week in all waters of Subdistricts 5–6 for the remainder of the season. Any Chinook salmon incidentally captured in beach seines must be immediately released back into the water alive and unharmed. Silver salmon are making their best showing at the Unalakleet River weir since the project began in 2010 with nearly 7,800 silvers counted through July 29. Additionally, commercial catches of silver salmon in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts are well above average for late July and the department is hopeful this is an early indicator of a strong run of silvers to southern Norton Sound. Another week of index periods should help to confirm whether the run is just early or very good.

Good Luck and Good Fishing!