

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



*Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Scott Kelley, Director*



Contact:
Jim Menard, Area Management Biologist
Scott Kent, Assistant Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 443-5167
Fax: (907) 443-5893

Norton Sound Area Office
Pouch 1148
Nome, AK, 99762
Date Issued: June 4, 2016
Time: 5:45 p.m.

EASTERN NORTON SOUND SUBSISTENCE SALMON OPENINGS

Chinook salmon and chum salmon are reported as being harvested in small numbers in recent days. As salmon have been to enter the coastal waters of Norton Sound, the department will now begin implementation of subsistence fishing restrictions and closures with the overall goal of providing limited harvest opportunities while ensuring that adequate numbers of Chinook salmon reach spawning areas in eastern Norton Sound drainages.

Specific strategies vary for each subdistrict depending on expected fishing effort and recent harvest patterns, the preferred management option chosen by residents in each community, and expected run abundance of Chinook salmon. Fishing times and restrictions for each subdistrict are as follows:

Norton Bay Subdistrict

Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, June 6, all flowing waters draining the Inglutalik and Ungalik Rivers, and all marine waters of the Norton Bay Subdistrict, will be placed on a subsistence gillnet fishing schedule of two 48-hour periods per week. Periods will be from 6:00 p.m. Mondays to 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays, and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays to 6:00 p.m. Sundays. During the Monday to Wednesday period, subsistence users will be restricted to set gillnets with a stretched measure size of 6 inches or less. For weekend 48-hour openings from Fridays to Sundays, there will be no restrictions on mesh size. This schedule will remain in place until midnight Sunday evening, July 3. The Koyuk River drainage is not affected by this action and will remain open to subsistence fishing with no restrictions in place. Additionally, the use of beach seines, dipnets, and cast nets is open continuously by regulation in all waters of Norton Bay Subdistrict, but any Chinook salmon incidentally captured in these gear types must be immediately released alive and unharmed.

Shaktoolik Subdistrict

Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, June 6, all marine waters and freshwaters of Norton Sound Subdistrict 5, the Shaktoolik Subdistrict, will close. At 6:00 p.m. Monday, June 6, the marine waters of Subdistrict 6 will reopen to subsistence salmon fishing with set gillnets with no mesh size restrictions for 24 hours. After 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 7, the marine waters will close to subsistence salmon fishing until the following week when additional periods are set. This

opening has been timed so subsistence users can take advantage of good drying weather and favorable surf conditions. This brief period with the remainder of the week closed should allow some utilization of Chinook salmon harvest surplus while not jeopardizing escapements of Chinook salmon to the Shaktoolik River drainage. The Shaktoolik River drainage will remain closed to subsistence salmon fishing until further notice. Gillnets used to target trout and whitefish in the Shaktoolik River and all other freshwater areas of Subdistrict 5 must have a mesh size no greater than 4 inches.

Unalakleet Subdistrict

Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, June 6, all marine waters and all freshwaters of Norton Sound Subdistrict 6, the Unalakleet Subdistrict will close to subsistence salmon fishing. At 6:00 p.m. Monday, June 6, the marine waters of Subdistrict 6, from Junction Creek south to Black Point will reopen for 48 hours to the use of set gillnets with a mesh size of 6 inches or less. At 6:00 p.m. Wednesday June 8, the Unalakleet Subdistrict marine waters will close to subsistence salmon fishing until the department announces the next periods the following week. This opening has been timed so subsistence users can take advantage of good drying weather and favorable surf conditions. This brief period with restricted mesh and the remainder of the week closed should allow some utilization of Chinook and chum salmon harvest surpluses but not have an adverse impact on escapements of Chinook salmon to the Unalakleet River drainage.

A reminder to Subdistricts 5 and 6 subsistence users that dipnets and castnets are now designated legal subsistence gear for salmon throughout Norton Sound. However, subsistence fishers in freshwater areas of Subdistricts 5 and 6 are prohibited from retaining any Chinook salmon incidentally captured in dipnets or cast nets. Any Chinook salmon incidentally captured in dipnets or cast nets must be immediately released alive and unharmed back into the water.

Other Eastern Norton Sound Coastal Waters

As a reminder, all waters from Wood Point west to Point Romanof, subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days a week. However, all marine waters from the western tip of Cape Denbigh east to Point Dexter and all marine waters from Black Point south to Wood Point, east of St. Michael remain closed to subsistence salmon fishing through June 30. On July 1, subsistence salmon fishing in these marine waters will revert back to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with no restrictions.

The department will evaluate early season run timing and abundance of Chinook salmon using ground based escapement indices and fishermen reports from the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts. Inseason assessments of Chinook salmon run abundance may indicate the need for additional conservation measures or that run abundance warrants a relaxation of subsistence fishing restrictions. The department will also consider setting fishing periods allowing the use of beach seines to target other salmon species in freshwater areas.