

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



Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Scott Kelley, Director



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UPPER COOK INLET COMMERCIAL FISHING ANNOUNCEMENT No. 24
EMERGENCY ORDER NUMBER 2S-24-18

Upper Cook Inlet Commercial Fishing Announcement No. 24 closes commercial salmon fishing with set gillnets in the Upper Subdistrict of Upper Cook Inlet from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. on Monday, August 6, 2018. This announcement also closes drift gillnetting in the Central District of Upper Cook Inlet from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. on Monday, August 6, 2018.

Upper Cook Inlet Commercial Fishing Announcement No. 24 opens commercial salmon fishing with drift gillnets in Drift Gillnet Area 3 from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 7, 2018. Drift Gillnet Area 3 means those waters of the Central District within one mile of the mean lower low water (zero tide) south of a point on the West Foreland at 60° 42.70' N. lat., 151° 42.30' W. long.

The current Kenai River sockeye salmon cumulative passage estimate of 541,300 fish falls well below the minimum inriver goal for Kenai River sockeye salmon of 900,000. Based on this passage estimate, even late run-timing models project that the minimum inriver goal is not likely to be achieved without a significant reduction in the harvest of this stock. The biological escapement goal (BEG) for Kasilof River sockeye salmon is 160,000–340,000 fish, while the optimal escapement goal (OEG) is 160,000–390,000 fish. Per 5 AAC 21.365(b) *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan*, achieving the lower end of the Kenai River sockeye salmon escapement goal shall take priority over not exceeding the upper end of the Kasilof River OEG. The most current sockeye salmon passage estimate in the Kasilof River through August 4 does not project that the OEG for this stock will be exceeded.

5 AAC 21.320(b)(1) states that salmon may be taken in the Central District drift gillnet fishery from 7:00 a.m. Monday until 7:00 p.m. Monday and from 7:00 a.m. Thursday until 7:00 p.m. Thursday. According to 5 AAC 21.353(e) there are no mandatory restrictions to regular fishing periods in the Central District drift gillnet fishery from August 1 through August 15, unless the drift fishery is restricted or closed by one-percent rules. This announcement is moving the regular drift gillnet fishing period scheduled for Monday, August 6, 2018 to Tuesday, August 7, 2018, but restricting the fishing period to only those waters of Drift Gillnet Area 3.

A UCI marine tagging project conducted in 2002 showed that the majority of Western Upper Cook Inlet bound coho salmon have entered their natal streams by the first week of August. Therefore, restricting the drift gillnet fishery to Drift Gillnet Area 3 reduces the harvest of Kenai River sockeye salmon while minimizing the risk to Western Cook Inlet coho salmon stocks.

During this fishing period, drifters are reminded that salmon may not be taken on the west side of the Central District within one statute mile of the terminus, at mean high tide, of the Kustatan River and Drift River; or within one statute mile of the terminus, at mean lower low water, of Cannery Creek, nor within one statute mile of the Big River, nor within 500 yards of the terminus, at mean high tide, of any anadromous fish stream, nor within 900 feet of the stream bed or channel of any anadromous fish stream throughout the intertidal portion of that stream out to the lower low water mark.

The closure of the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is being implemented to reduce the harvest of Kenai River sockeye salmon.