



# KUSKOKWIM AREA NEWS RELEASE



## **ALASKA DEPT. OF FISH & GAME**

Department of Fish and Game  
Division of Commercial Fisheries  
Denby S. Lloyd, Commissioner  
John R. Hilsinger, Director

## **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR**

Fish and Wildlife Service  
Federal Subsistence Board  
Peter Probasco, Asst. Regional Dir. Subsistence

Kuskokwim Area Office  
Jeff Estensen, Area Management Biologist  
Travis Elison, Asst. Area Management Biologist  
P. O. Box 1467  
Bethel, AK 99559  
(907) 543-2433

Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge  
Gene Peltola Kuskokwim Area Inseason Manager  
P.O. Box 346  
Bethel, AK 99559  
(907) 543-3151

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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## **2010 Kuskokwim Area Salmon Fishery News Release #1 2010 Kuskokwim Area Salmon Outlook and Management Strategy**

### **KUSKOKWIM RIVER**

#### **2010 KUSKOKWIM RIVER SALMON OUTLOOK**

The Kuskokwim Area has no formal forecast for salmon returns. Broad expectations are developed based on parent-year escapements and recent year trends. The 2010 Chinook, chum, coho, and sockeye salmon returns are expected to be similar in abundance to 2009 when there were harvestable surpluses beyond what was needed for escapement and subsistence use. Anticipated available surpluses for commercial harvest will range from 5,000 to 7,000 Chinook, 20,000 to 30,000 sockeye, 70,000 to 150,000 chum, and 100,000 to 150,000 coho salmon. Markets and processor capacity may limit actual harvest.

#### **2010 KUSKOKWIM RIVER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

State and federal fishery management staff will continue to follow guidelines outlined in the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan **5 ACC 07.365**, to the extent possible, achieve escapement goals, provide for subsistence use, and allow commercial fishing on available harvestable surpluses. A subsistence-fishing schedule will not be in effect at the start of the 2010 season and will only be implemented if inseason salmon runs assessments are weaker than expected and management action is required to insure escapement goals are met. It is anticipated that a commercial salmon fishery directed at the harvest of Chinook, sockeye, and chum salmon will be initiated in late June, dependent on run timing and salmon abundance. A coho salmon directed commercial fishery is anticipated to occur in August.

#### **Subsistence Fishery**

Subsistence fishing is anticipated to be open 7 days per week with the exception of closures 6 hours before, during, and 3 hours after each commercial fishing period. In District 1, when one subdistrict is open to commercial fishing, subsistence fishing will be allowed in the majority of the other subdistrict. During subsistence closures, all nets within the closed area with a mesh size greater than 4 inches must be removed from the water. During closed periods subsistence fishing

for fish other than salmon will be allowed with gillnets not exceeding 60 feet in length and a mesh size of 4 inches or less.

Subsistence angler fishing for any species of salmon will be allowed 7 days per week. Bag and possession limits for Aniak River upstream of Doestock Creek are 10 fish per day. Of those fish, the daily bag and possession limit for salmon is 3 of which 2 can be Chinook salmon 20 inches or greater in length.

### **Commercial Fishery**

As directed by the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan, a commercial fishery will be prosecuted in June and July if salmon abundance is above the amounts necessary to meet escapement goals and subsistence use. It is anticipated this criteria will be met resulting in a commercial Chinook, sockeye, and chum salmon fishery occurring in mid- to late June. Improved chum salmon markets and increased processing capacity at the Platinum processing plant should result in commercial openings occurring from mid-to late June through July, provided salmon abundance is adequate and subsistence needs are being met. However, processing capacity may limit commercial openings in District 1 to Subdistrict 1-B (below Bethel) only. Commercial openings may be announced when no large scale buyers are available to provide opportunity for all permit holders operating as catcher/sellers or catcher/processors. Contact the ADF&G office in Bethel for more information about the catcher/seller or catcher/processor programs.

Although the use of gillnets with up to 8-inch mesh is allowed by regulation, it is expected that all commercial fishing periods will be limited to gillnets with 6-inch mesh or less. This will allow for the commercial harvest of sockeye and chum salmon while limiting impacts to Chinook salmon.

A commercial fishery directed at coho salmon is anticipated in late July and August. Most coho salmon commercial fishing periods are expected to occur as alternating subdistrict openings. However, limitations on alternating between subdistricts may occur because of market interest. As in 2009, there is the potential for opening the Lower Section of Subdistrict 1B for two additional hours than regularly scheduled commercial periods dependent on run abundance and processor capacity

### **Sport Fishery**

Within the management plan, the sport fisheries for Chinook and chum salmon are to be managed based on abundance. There is no expectation of preseason emergency orders further restricting the sport fishery since it is anticipated that Chinook and chum salmon abundance will provide a harvestable surplus.

The Kuskokwim River drainage Chinook salmon sport fishing season will close by regulation on July 26. In 2007, the Board of Fisheries rescinded the a regulation prohibiting the retention of chum salmon and regulations now allow for the harvest of sport caught chum salmon in the Aniak River drainage. However, existing Chinook salmon sport fishing regulations in the Aniak River drainage remain in effect, including the annual bag limit of two Chinook salmon greater than 20 inches per year. If necessary, additional inseason restrictions may be implemented in response to weaker than anticipated salmon runs.

### **Inseason Assessment and Research**

Inseason indicators of salmon run strength include the Bethel Test Fishery, subsistence catch monitoring reports, and tributary escapement monitoring projects operated by an assortment of

partnerships between State, Federal, and Tribal organizations. Staff from Orutsararmiut Native Council will survey Bethel Area subsistence fishermen to assess salmon run timing and abundance. Salmon escapement will be further assessed by weir projects operated in the Kwethluk, Tuluksak, Salmon (Aniak R. drainage), George, Kogrukluk, Tatlawiksuk, and Takotna Rivers, and by a sonar project on the Aniak River, and by aerial survey of tributary streams.

## **KUSKOKWIM BAY**

### **2010 KUSKOKWIM BAY OUTLOOK**

The Kuskokwim Area has no formal forecast for salmon returns. Broad expectations are developed based on parent-year escapements and recent year trends. It is anticipated that the harvestable surplus of salmon available for Kuskokwim Bay commercial fisheries will range from 13,000 to 17,000 Chinook, 140,000 to 160,000 sockeye, 50,000 to 80,000 chum, and 50,000 to 60,000 coho salmon. Total harvest may be affected by low participation, market conditions, and limited processor capacity.

### **2010 KUSKOKWIM BAY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

#### **Subsistence Fishery**

Department staff will be in contact with Kuskokwim Bay subsistence fishermen to determine if subsistence needs are being met prior to initiating a commercial fishery. Subsistence fishing will be allowed 7 days per week prior to the commercial salmon season. Once the commercial fishing season begins subsistence fishery closures will occur 16 hours before, during, and 6 hours after each commercial fishing period. The duration of subsistence fishing closures around commercial openings may be reduced if additional commercial fishing periods are allowed to insure adequate opportunity for subsistence fishermen. Fishermen will be informed of subsistence fishing closures through news releases and radio announcement.

#### **Commercial Fishery**

ADF&G will work closely with buyers and fishermen to manage the Kuskokwim Bay commercial fisheries by timing harvests for fish quality and processor capacity to the extent possible. ADF&G has emergency order authority to increase gillnet length from 50 fathoms to 100 fathoms in both Districts 4 and 5 when fish abundance and processor capacity warrant.

#### District 4

The District 4 commercial fishery will be managed in accordance with the District 4 Salmon Management Plan **5 ACC 07.367**. By regulation, the first commercial fishing period in District 4 is to occur prior to June 16. District 4 will open under Chinook salmon directed management that allows a schedule of at least one 12-hour period per week provided there is adequate salmon run strength. Additional commercial fishing periods may be scheduled if salmon abundance warrants. Once sockeye salmon harvests compose more than 50% of the combined sockeye and Chinook salmon commercial harvest, the district will be managed based on sockeye salmon abundance. Sockeye salmon directed management allows a schedule of at least one 12-hour commercial fishing period per week given adequate abundance. Additional commercial fishing periods may be scheduled if salmon abundance warrants. A directed coho salmon fishery is anticipated to occur in August given adequate run abundance. Generally, coho salmon directed commercial periods allow a schedule of three 12-hour commercial fishing periods per week provided coho salmon abundance is adequate.

## District 5

It is anticipated the District 5 commercial fishery will open during the fourth week of June, given adequate run abundance and processor capacity. The Department intends to meet with Goodnews Bay area residents prior to the commercial fishing season to discuss the start of the commercial fishery. The commercial fishing schedule is anticipated to align with the District 4 commercial schedule from late June through July given adequate run abundance, market interest, and processor capacity. Fishing time may be reduced if such action is necessary to achieve salmon escapement objectives. A directed coho salmon fishery is anticipated to be implemented for the month of August given adequate run abundance and processor capacity.

## **Sport Fishery**

Within the District 4 Salmon Management Plan, sport fisheries are managed based on abundance and commercial fishery performance. If necessary, additional inseason restrictions will be implemented in accordance with District 4 Salmon Management Plan. Sport fishing daily bag and possession limits for Chinook salmon is 3 per day with only 2 over 28 inches. The Kuskokwim Bay Chinook salmon sport-fishing season will close by regulation July 26.

## **Inseason Assessment and Research**

Inseason indicators of salmon run strength include weir escapement projects, verbal subsistence catch reports, and commercial harvest statistics. Weirs will be operated on the Kanektok and the Middle Fork Goodnews rivers to monitor salmon escapements and collect biological data. It is anticipated that the Kanektok River weir will cease operations in mid-August to address operational concerns over the weir remaining in-river because of high water events common in August and September.

For more information contact:

### **ADF&G, Commercial Fisheries:**

Jeff Estensen (907) 543-2709 (Bethel), or (907) 267-2303 (Anchorage)  
Travis Elison (907) 543-2457 (Bethel), or (907) 267-2379 (Anchorage)  
Doug Bue (907) 543-2931 (Bethel)

### **ADF&G, Sport Fish Division:**

John Chythlook (907) 543-1677 (Bethel), or (907) 459-7361 (Fairbanks)

### **USFWS, Yukon Delta Refuge:**

Gene Peltola (907) 543-3151 (Bethel)  
Robert Sundown (907) 543-1007 (Bethel)