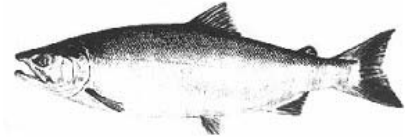


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES  
NEWS RELEASE**



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner  
Jeff Regnart, Director*



---

Slim Morstad, Naknek-Kvichak Manager  
Paul Salomone, Egegik and Ugashik Manager  
Tim Sands, Nushagak Manager  
Matt Jones, Togiak Manager

King Salmon Office  
P.O. Box 37 King Salmon, AK 99613  
Ph: (907) 246-3341 Fax: 246-3309  
Dillingham Office  
P.O. Box 230 Dillingham, AK 99576  
Ph: (907) 842-5227 Fax: 842-5937  
Date Issued: 04/03/2012  
Time: 1:00 p.m.

**BRISTOL BAY  
2012 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL  
SALMON FISHING**

**INTRODUCTION**

This document is provided as a guide to fishermen, processors, and the public. The intent of this document is to provide the reader with general information regarding the 2012 Bristol Bay salmon season. Included is a short narrative regarding general framework for management of each of the five major districts, the 2012 salmon forecast, and a brief summary of regulation changes adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) in March 2012.

During the season, Bristol Bay salmon announcements are broadcast on marine VHF Channel 07A and 2509 MHz SSB. Current fishing announcements are aired on local radio stations – KAKN and KDLG. Regular announcement times that may be utilized are 9:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, 3:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., and 8:00 p.m., unless otherwise stated. Information is also available via telephone; for east side fisheries (Naknek-Kvichak, Egegik, and Ugashik), dial **246-INFO (4636)**, for west side fisheries (Nushagak and Togiak) dial **842-5226**. The direct line from the Dillingham boat harbor will be operational in late April and is located on the west end of the harbormaster's house.

The blue and green permit district registration cards will be available at the Anchorage, King Salmon, and Dillingham offices beginning May 1. In addition, PDF files of blue and green district registration cards are posted on the Bristol Bay homepage and can be printed, completed, mailed to the address on the printout, or submitted to Anchorage, King Salmon, or Dillingham office personnel. Permit holders fishing dual must register with the Department prior to fishing, but do not have to declare a district prior to June 25. Registration can be done online or in person at the King Salmon or Dillingham Fish and

Game offices. During the 2012 season, catch, escapement, and announcements will be available at the same site. (<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.salmon>)

**At the March 2012 BOF meeting a proposal to allow dual drift registration (D boats) and drift district registration (blue cards) online was adopted. A permit holder or authorized agent can drop blue cards off in person at the Dillingham or King Salmon ADF&G office during open hours OR they can now register online.**

Fishermen and processors should be aware of the reporting requirements in 5 AAC 06.377 (b) that state

**“Each commercial fisherman shall report, on an ADF&G fish ticket, at the time of landing, the number of Chinook and coho salmon taken but not sold.”**

### **Alaska Wildlife Troopers – Summer 2012 Outlook – Bristol Bay**

Enforcement Priorities:

- Continued strong focus on fishing district lines and open period enforcement, particularly in the Naknek/Kvichak and Egegik districts using all available assets to include aircraft, rotorcraft, large and small enforcement vessels and undercover fishing vessels.
- Routine boardings of drift gillnet and processor vessels to verify licensing and permitting regulations are met.
- Increased enforcement of state boating safety laws in cooperation with the US Coast Guard.
- Increase Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) presence in the Ugashik and Togiak Districts.

Regulation changes/concerns:

No significant regulation changes were adopted by the BOF over the past year that would affect AWT enforcement strategies. Those that may be of concern include;

- Definition of the outer SW corner of the Naknek Section. This is of no concern to AWT, as this point was already being used to form the southern Naknek Section line per ADF&G emergency orders.
- Allowing a set net permit holder to hold two permits and fish dual gear will not affect enforcement strategies. If a dual permit holder has one set of gear in violation, they will receive 1 citation; with a second set of gear in violation they will receive 2 citations as if it were 2 different permit holders.
- Proposal 42 allows more potential opportunity to fish in the Wood River SHA. AWT will continue aggressive enforcement of regulations pertaining to minimum distances between gear, fishery boundary lines and length/depth of nets.
- Tow Lines – Commercial fishermen are advised that if any portion of fishing gear, including the vessel, is outside the open fishing district; Alaska Wildlife Troopers have grounds to take enforcement action. To maintain a constant and fair application of these rules, it will therefore NOT be acceptable for a vessel to be outside of an open fishing district attached via a length of tow line to a net that is inside a district. If a vessel is 100 feet over the line towing a net that is in open waters, that vessel is still commercial

fishing in closed waters and is subject to enforcement action. AWT has determined this is the best way to maintain equal and fair fishing opportunity for all vessels fishing near the district boundary lines and prevents a select group of vessels from preventing others from setting out nets along a boundary line. If there are any questions about this issue, fishermen are encouraged to contact AWT offices in King Salmon or Dillingham.

## SALMON OUTLOOKS

### **BAYWIDE**

The forecasted Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run for 2012 is approximately 32.3 million fish. Based on the forecast, approximately 21.7 million fish are potentially available for commercial harvest (Table 1). Due to the projected surplus, fishermen should expect significant amounts of fishing time. However, run timing will be the key factor as to when fishing will occur. The department manages fisheries based on inseason information regarding abundance. The inseason management approach uses a suite of tools to provide information on abundance in each district as each run develops and that information is used by the department to determine fishing opportunity.

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opens June 1 by regulation. The eastside districts will be on a weekly schedule that will vary by district, beginning June 1. The schedules are in place to balance fishing opportunity with escapement in the early part of the season (particularly for Chinook salmon). As each run develops and sockeye salmon run characteristics become defined within individual districts, fishing time will be adjusted accordingly. In the Nushagak District, management of the Chinook fishery will dictate fishing time in the early part of the season, followed by directed sockeye salmon management as abundance dictates.

### **NAKNEK/KVICHAK DISTRICT**

An inshore run of approximately 15.0 million sockeye salmon is expected for the Naknek/Kvichak District in 2012. Based on the forecast, the projected harvest in the Naknek/Kvichak District is approximately 9.0 million sockeye salmon; 3.2 million from the Kvichak River, 900,000 from the Alagnak River and 4.9 million from the Naknek River. The 2012 Kvichak River escapement goal will be 3.4 million. If the run is greater than the forecast, the **inseason** point goal will be adjusted to reflect the actual inseason total run. The Naknek River escapement goal range is 800,000 to 1.4 million. Sockeye salmon returning to the Naknek/Kvichak District are predicted to be 40% age-1.3, 23% age-1.2, 28% age-2.2, and 9% age-2.3 fish.

To begin the season, the Naknek Section only will be open to drift gillnet gear, and for set gillnet gear both the Naknek and Kvichak Sections will be open beginning June 4. Fishing time during the first 3 weeks of June will be 4 days a week from 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday, beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday, June 4 and ending 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 22. Permit holders participating in the Naknek/Kvichak District salmon fishery should be advised that once sufficient run strength appears in the district they may be put on short notice.

There is the possibility of escapement falling behind schedule in the Kvichak River. In order to reduce the harvest of Kvichak stocks, the department may restrict fishing to the flood portion of the tide only, from the 7-foot level to high water slack.

With limited information and low abundance over the past 5 years, special attention will be given to Chinook salmon run strength and effort levels. A mesh size restriction of 5.5 inches or less will be

in effect beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday, June 4 until 9:00 a.m. Friday, July 20, to help in the conservation of Chinook salmon.

During closures, there may be extensive use of district test fishing boats. Additional volunteer test boats might be needed because of this increase in test fishing. Permit holders interested in district test fishing in the Naknek-Kvichak District should contact Slim Morstad at (907) 246-3341 in King Salmon.

### **EGEGIK DISTRICT**

A forecasted run of approximately 6.7 million sockeye salmon is expected for the Egegik River in 2012. The escapement goal range is 800,000 to 1.4 million sockeye. Based on the forecast, the expected surplus potentially available for harvest is approximately 5.4 million fish. Approximately 43% of the run is expected to be age-2.2 fish, followed by age-2.3 (32%), age-1.3 (17%) and age 1.2 (8%).

The proportion of harvest for set and drift gillnets (during the allocation period) in 2011 was approximately 17% and 83% respectively; the sockeye salmon allocation plan specifies 14% and 86%. In 2012, separate gear openings and extensions will be used to adjust harvest in an attempt to achieve allocation percentages. At the January 2001 BOF meeting, a regulation was adopted that directs the department to avoid “to the extent practicable”, continuous fishing with set gillnet gear in the Egegik District. Therefore, set gillnet fishermen in Egegik should expect breaks in fishing.

Based on the Kvichak River sockeye forecast, fishing will begin in the full Egegik District. The season will start with a 3 day per week schedule that will be in effect through June 15. The primary reason for returning to the 3 day per week schedule is to provide for Chinook salmon escapement. By emergency order, commercial fishing will be allowed in the Egegik District from 9:00 a.m. Monday, until 9:00 a.m. Wednesday and from 9:00 a.m. Thursday until 9:00 a.m. Friday. This schedule will be in effect beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday June 4 through 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 15. After June 15, fishing will be scheduled according to sockeye salmon run strength. As in previous years, some openings could occur on short notice. Periods will be adjusted to allocate harvest between drift and set gillnet gear groups.

The 2008 parent-year escapement for coho salmon was assessed using aerial surveys and produced an index count of 6,100 coho, but weather conditions precluded a complete survey. The commercial harvest in 2008 was approximately 29,700 coho, close to the recent 20-year average of 30,000. In 2012, management of the fall coho fishery will be based on fishery performance and run strength indicators.

District test fishing for inseason management may be conducted periodically depending on run characteristics. Permit holders interested in test fishing in the Egegik District should contact Paul Salomone at (907) 267-2229 (Anchorage) or 246-3341 (King Salmon after May 31).

### **UGASHIK DISTRICT**

The forecasted Ugashik River sockeye salmon run in 2012 is 3.1 million fish. The escapement goal range is 500,000 to 1.2 million sockeye salmon. Based on the forecast, approximately 2.1 million fish are potentially available for harvest. Approximately 36% of the run is expected to be age-2.2 fish, 28% age-1.3, 20% age-2.3, and 17% age-1.2 fish.

The allocation of the sockeye salmon harvest for set and drift gillnets (during the allocation period) in 2011 was approximately 13% and 87% respectively; the Ugashik District allocation plan specifies 10% and 90%. As in previous years separate gear openings and adjusting length of commercial periods will be used to address allocation between gear groups in 2012. With limited information and low abundance over the past 5 years, special attention will be given to Chinook salmon run strength and effort levels. A mesh size restriction of 5.5 inches or less will be in effect beginning Friday, June 1 until 9:00 a.m. Friday, July 22, to help in the conservation of Chinook salmon.

Beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday June 4, commercial fishing in the Ugashik District will be allowed on a 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday schedule through 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 15. With an expected run to the Kvichak that exceeds a 40% exploitation rate above the minimum escapement goal stipulated in regulation, fishing time after June 15 will be allowed under E.O. authority and will depend on fishery performance and run strength indicators. Permit holders should note that the regulation restricting opportunity to no more than 48 hours between June 16 and June 23 will not be in effect in 2012.

Parent-year coho salmon escapements in the Ugashik District were assessed by aerial surveys. The escapement index for Ugashik coho in 2008 was approximately 6,200. However, significant portions of the survey were done under conditions that prohibited a complete assessment of coho streams. Coho harvest in 2008 was 1,954. Recent effort for coho salmon within the Ugashik District has been low. Directed commercial openings for coho salmon in 2012 will depend on fishery performance and run strength indicators.

Area T permit holders who fish the Cinder River and Port Heiden sections prior to July 1 and deliver their catch in the Ugashik District are reminded to report the section of catch on the appropriate fish tickets. Only the inner Port Heiden Section and the Cinder River Lagoon have fishing periods available to Area T permit holders in June, the outside waters of the Cinder River section are open after August 1. In addition, permit holders fishing Ugashik after August 1 should be aware of a change to the fall schedule adopted during the 2009 Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting. Beginning August 1, the fall schedule will be 9:00 a.m. Thursday to 9:00 a.m. Monday. There is a closed waters area southwest of Cape Meshik as defined by 5 AAC 09.350(1). Permit holders interested in test fishing in the Ugashik District should contact Paul Salomone at (907) 267-2229 (Anchorage) or 246-3341 (King Salmon after May 31).

## **NUSHAGAK DISTRICT**

The variable escapement goal adopted for the Nushagak River is contained in the Wood River Special Harvest Area (WRSHA) Management Plan. This plan directs the department to achieve sockeye salmon escapements within the escapement goal range of 340,000 to 760,000 when the preseason forecast is greater than 1 million fish. If the preseason forecast is below 1 million fish, then an Optimum Escapement Goal (OEG) minimum of 235,000 sockeye salmon is in effect when the ratio of Wood River to Nushagak River sockeye salmon is projected to exceed 3:1. Beginning the first week of July, the department assesses Nushagak River sockeye salmon run strength through July 1 and adjusts the escapement goal based on that assessment. If the sockeye salmon forecast for the Wood and Nushagak Rivers for 2012, 6.5 million and 1.6 million respectively, is accurate, the likelihood of fishing in the WRSHA is increased.

In 2010, the Chinook salmon escapement was the lowest since sonar counting began in 1980 and the sport fishery on the Nushagak River was completely closed while subsistence fishing was

restricted. In 2011, escapement was below desired levels all season with no directed Chinook salmon commercial openings. Nushagak River Chinook salmon are managed according to the Nushagak/Mulchatna Chinook Salmon Management Plan. This plan directs the commercial fishery to be managed for an inriver goal of 75,000 Chinook salmon. Based on the poor performance of Chinook salmon statewide, and poor runs to the Nushagak in 2010 and 2011, a Chinook salmon directed opening is unlikely. However, if inseason assessment of escapement past the Nushagak sonar indicates a larger than expected run, a directed Chinook salmon opening could occur.

The 2012 forecast for sockeye salmon in the Nushagak District is 6.76 million fish, 1.88 million for escapement and the remaining 4.65 million for harvest. The total run by river system is: Wood River 4.64 million (escapement goal range of 700,000 to 1.5 million), Igushik River 0.72 million (escapement goal range of 150,000 to 300,000), and the Nushagak River 1.4 million (escapement goal range of 340,000 to 760,000). Approximately 24% of the forecasted run is age-1.2 sockeye salmon, < 4% age-2.2, 70% age-1.3, and < 3% age-2.3 fish.

Management strategies for 2012 include: 1) directed Chinook salmon openings only if warranted by escapement. 2) Igushik Section sockeye salmon openings are likely beginning in the third week of June and will likely be set gillnet only until escapement or strong harvests dictate otherwise, and 3) begin fishing in the regular district in late June with short openings. Openings will be scheduled based on sockeye salmon escapement levels in the Nushagak and Wood rivers. Mesh size will be limited to 5.5 inches or smaller unless Chinook salmon escapement is above expectations. If the Nushagak sockeye salmon escapement falls below the expected 340,000 fish curve, then a strong movement of sockeye salmon into the Wood River will precipitate openings in the WRSHA. Commercial openings in the district would follow as allowed by escapement levels in the Nushagak River.

Igushik River sockeye salmon will be managed independently of the Nushagak/Wood sockeye salmon stocks. Set gillnet fishing will begin in the Igushik Section when there is a market available. Initial openings will be 8 hours per day and additional time will be added if large harvests or escapement information indicate more time is warranted. Drift gillnet openings in the Igushik Section will be added as needed to control sockeye salmon escapement. Management will incorporate a readiness to respond with increasing early set gillnet openings, and an attempt to maintain the 6% sockeye harvest allocated to the Igushik Section set gillnet permit holders by only adding drift gillnet openings as needed.

There is no department forecast for coho or pink salmon runs to the Nushagak River. The department will switch to coho and pink salmon management around July 23 when sockeye salmon harvests decrease. The department will use subsistence information, aerial surveys and sport and commercial harvest information to determine what amount of fishing time is warranted for coho and pink salmon. We expect to start the season with a 5 day per week schedule with up to 8 hours fishing time per day. The mesh will be restricted to 4.75 inches or smaller several days per week to protect coho salmon. There will also be a day or two each week with no mesh restriction. The department will prioritize having openings occur during daylight hours with openings scheduled to start before the high tide. Although we expect to start the season with a 5 day per week fishing schedule, this is not a guarantee that this schedule will continue for the remainder of the season. The department may adjust fishing time as warranted by escapement and other run strength indicators.

District test fishing for inseason management may be conducted periodically depending on run characteristics. Permit holders interested in test fishing in the Nushagak District should contact Tim Sands in Dillingham at (907) 842-5227.

### **TOGIAK DISTRICT**

Commercial fisheries in the Togiak District are managed under the Togiak District Salmon Management Plan (TDSMP). The plan restricts permit holders from fishing in the Togiak District until July 27 if they have fished in any other district in Bristol Bay, and conversely, restricts permit holders from fishing in any other district until July 27 if they have fished in the Togiak District. The plan also increases the weekly fishing schedule in the Togiak River Section between July 1 and July 16, and restricts mesh size to 5.5 inches or smaller between June 15 and July 15 for the conservation of Chinook salmon.

Chinook salmon run strength in the Togiak River varies considerably, but adequate Chinook escapement in most years can be attributed to mesh size restrictions in late June and early July, as well as to reductions in the weekly fishing schedule during late June. Based on anticipated Chinook salmon run strength, reduction to the weekly fishing schedule is again likely for the 2012 season. These reductions will likely limit commercial fishing to between 48 and 72 hours of fishing time during each of the last two weeks of June.

The 2012 inshore run of sockeye salmon to the Togiak River is forecast at 780,000 fish. The TDSMP calls for sockeye salmon escapement of 150,000 fish past the counting towers located at the outlet of Togiak Lake. Based on the forecast, approximately 570,000 sockeye salmon will potentially be available for commercial harvest. Approximately 23% of the run is expected to be 2-ocean fish and 64% is expected to be 3-ocean fish. The Kulukak Section weekly fishing schedule, reduced to 60 hours at the 2009 Board of Fisheries meeting, is unlikely to be further reduced in 2012.

Coho salmon returns are not formally forecasted in the Togiak District due to lack of sufficient age class information and accurate escapement data. If a market for coho is present, a conservative harvest strategy will be utilized due to the lack of information about the returning coho salmon run.

Table 1.-Forecast of total run, escapement, and harvest of sockeye salmon returning to Bristol Bay River systems in 2012.

<b>Millions of Sockeye Salmon</b>							
<b>DISTRICT River</b>	<b>Total Run Forecast by Age Class</b>				<b>Total</b>	<b>Escapement</b>	<b>Total Harvest</b>
	1.2	2.2	1.3	2.3			
<b>NAKNEK-KVICHAK:</b>							
<b>Kvichak</b>	1.72	3.17	1.52	0.43	6.84	3.42	3.19
<b>Alagnak</b>	0.48	0.20	1.13	0.09	1.90	0.95	0.89
<b>Naknek</b>	1.20	0.88	3.31	0.83	6.22	1.10	4.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>5.96</b>	<b>1.35</b>	<b>14.96</b>	<b>5.47</b>	<b>8.99</b>
<b>EGEGIK</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>1.14</b>	<b>2.12</b>	<b>6.72</b>	<b>1.10</b>	<b>5.39</b>
<b>UGASHIK</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>1.10</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>3.09</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>2.14</b>
<b>NUSHAGAK</b>							
<b>Wood</b>	1.30	0.17	3.09	0.08	4.64	1.10	3.38
<b>Igushik</b>	0.11	0.03	0.56	0.03	0.72	0.23	0.47
<b>Nushagak</b>	0.18	0.02	1.09	0.03	1.40	0.55	0.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.59</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>4.74</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>6.76</b>	<b>1.88</b>	<b>4.65</b>
<b>TOGIAK</b>	<b>0.16</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>0.18</b>	<b>0.57</b>
<b>BRISTOL BAY</b>	<b>6.23</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>13.23</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>32.31</b>	<b>9.48</b>	<b>21.74</b>