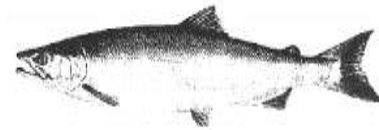


ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES  
NEWS RELEASE



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner  
Jeff Regnart, Director*



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Contact:  
Pat Shields, Area Management Biologist  
Aaron Dupuis, Assistant Area Management Biologist  
Phone: (907) 262-9368  
Fax: (907) 262-4709

Soldotna ADF&G  
43961 Kalifornsky Beach Rd.  
Suite B  
Soldotna, AK 99669  
Date Issued: 4/19/2013

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**UPPER COOK INLET  
2013 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHING**

**SOCKEYE SALMON**

A run of 6.7 million sockeye salmon is forecasted to return to Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) in 2013, with a harvest by all user groups of 4.9 million. The forecasted harvest in 2013 is 1.1 million fish above the 20-year average harvest of 3.8 million by all user groups.

The run forecast for the Kenai River is approximately 4.4 million fish, or 13% greater than the 20-year average run of 3.8 million. Age-1.3 salmon typically comprise about 56% of the Kenai River run. A sibling model was used to forecast age-1.3 adults because the 10-year Mean Absolute Percent Error (MAPE) was lower for the sibling model (26%) than the fry model (53%). A fry-smolt model was used to predict a return of 1.5 million age-2.3 salmon, 194% greater than the 20-year average return for this age class. Age-2.3 salmon typically comprise about 20% of the Kenai River run. The predominant age classes of the 2013 Kenai River run are projected to be age 1.3 (45%), age 1.2 (9%), and age 2.3 (34%). The 10-year MAPE for the set of models used for the 2013 Kenai sockeye salmon run forecast was 23%.

The Kasilof River sockeye salmon run forecast is 903,000 and is 5% less than the 20-year average run of 947,300. Age-1.3 salmon typically comprise about 34% of the Kasilof River run and are forecast to be 274,000 fish, which is 15% less than the 20-year average return (322,000). Age-1.2 salmon typically comprise about 30% of the run. The age-1.2 salmon forecast is 248,000 and is 13% less than the 20-year average return (285,000) for this age class. Age-2.2 salmon typically comprise about 24% of the run and is forecast to be 307,000 fish, which is 34% greater than the 20-year average return (228,000) for this age class. The predominant age classes of the 2013 run are projected to be age 1.2 (27%), age 1.3 (30%), and age 2.2 (34%). The 10-year MAPE for the set of models used for the 2013 Kasilof sockeye salmon run forecast was 21%.

The Susitna River sockeye salmon run forecast is estimated at 363,000, 20% less than the 6-year average of 452,000. This forecast was derived using mean return per spawner by age class for

brood years 2006–2007 and mark–recapture estimates of spawner abundance in 2007–2009. Sonar and age composition catch allocation models were not used because mark–recapture studies have shown that the Yentna sonar project underestimated sockeye salmon escapement, causing estimates of adult returns to also be underestimated. The 6-year (2006–2011) average run was calculated using mark–recapture estimates of inriver run and genetic estimates of commercial harvests.

The Fish Creek sockeye salmon run forecast is 61,000, 52% less than the 20-year average run of 127,000. Age-1.2 and -1.3 salmon typically comprise 72% of the Fish Creek run. Age-1.2 are forecast to be 12% less than the 20-year average return (60,000) while age-1.3 are forecast to be 80% less than the 20-year average return (31,000) for this age class. Predominant age classes of the 2013 run are projected to be age 1.2 (76%) and age 1.3 (10%).

The Crescent River sockeye salmon run forecast is 110,000 and is equal to the 20-year average. Age-1.3 and -2.3 salmon typically comprise 63% of the Crescent River run. The predominant age classes of the 2013 run are projected to be age 1.3 (54%) and age 2.3 (26%).

Forecast runs to individual freshwater systems are as follows:

System	Run	Goals <sup>a</sup>
Crescent River	110,000	30,000–70,000
Fish Creek	61,000	20,000–70,000
Kasilof River <sup>b,c</sup>	903,000	160,000–340,000
Kenai River <sup>b,d</sup>	4,374,000	1,000,000–1,200,000
Susitna River	363,000	
Larson Lake	N/A	15,000–50,000
Chelatna Lake	N/A	20,000–65,000
Judd Lake	N/A	25,000–55,000
Unmonitored Systems <sup>e</sup>	872,000	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,683,000</b>	

<sup>a</sup> Goals listed here are as follows, Crescent River: BEG; Fish Creek: SEG; Kasilof River: BEG; Kenai River: Inriver; and Susitna River: SEG (weir goals).

<sup>b</sup> Kasilof and Kenai rivers escapement goals are now DIDSON-based.

<sup>c</sup> Kasilof River optimal escapement goal is 160,000 to 390,000 sockeye salmon.

<sup>d</sup> Kenai River optimal escapement goal is 700,000 to 1,400,000.

<sup>e</sup> Unmonitored systems are estimated to be 15% of monitored systems.

## **REGULATIONS AND FISHING STRATEGY**

In October 2012, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) formed the UCI king salmon task force. The mission of the task force was to identify a set of recommended adjustments to the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.359) that would provide all users opportunity to fish during periods of low king salmon abundance while still achieving king salmon escapement objectives. The task force met three times during the winter of 2012–2013 and developed a list of discussion points for the full board to address at the March 2013 Statewide Finfish board meeting. After much deliberation, the board voted to keep the king salmon

management plan unchanged, other than accepting the new escapement goal developed by the department. The new Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) for Kenai River Late-Run king salmon will be 15,000–30,000 fish.

The following summary is for informational purposes only and is not a comprehensive review. Regulation booklets covering the UCI commercial fishery are currently available at the Anchorage, Soldotna, and Homer ADF&G offices.

### **Northern District Set Gillnet**

- Management strategies implemented by the board in 2011 and actions taken by ADF&G through emergency orders during the 2012 fishing season to reduce king salmon harvest in Northern Cook Inlet were insufficient to achieve minimum escapement objectives. Therefore, additional harvest reductions are necessary in both sport and commercial fisheries in order to increase king salmon escapement throughout the region. In the directed king salmon commercial set gillnet fishery, the first period of the 2013 season, which occurs on Monday, May 27, will be closed. In addition, that area of beach from a point at the wood chip dock to the Susitna River remains closed to commercial king salmon fishing for 2013. Finally, the remaining four commercial king salmon fishing periods scheduled in 2013 will be reduced in duration from 12 hours per fishing period to 6 hours per period, and will be from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. These fishing periods will occur on June 3, 10, 17, and 24. All of the Northern District will return to a regular fishing schedule beginning on Thursday, June 27.
- Susitna River sockeye salmon remain a stock of yield concern. As a result of this designation, restrictive actions to fisheries that harvest this stock were identified and placed into regulation. *The Northern District Salmon Management Plan* permits the department to reduce the legal complement of gear in the Northern District set gillnet fishery to no more than one net per permit from July 20 through August 6. At the 2011 board meeting, this provision was modified, allowing that portion of the General Subdistrict south of the Susitna River to fish with no more than two nets per permit after July 30. All areas in the Northern District return to a full complement of gear after August 6.

### **Central District Fisheries**

#### **Upper Subdistrict Set Gillnet Fishery – Overview**

The 2013 Kenai River late-run king salmon forecast projects a total run of approximately 29,000 fish. If realized, the 2013 run would rank 27<sup>th</sup> out of 28 years and be similar in abundance to the runs of 2009–2012, and would be approximately one-half the 1986–2012 average run of approximately 58,000 fish. Recent genetic stock identification analyses from commercial king salmon harvests suggest the average annual harvest rate on Kenai River stocks by the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is approximately 13%. When combined with all other harvesters of Kenai River king salmon, the average annual harvest rate is approximately 39%. The management strategy for 2013 will be designed to allow fishing opportunity and ensure adequate escapement relative to the SEG of 15,000–30,000 late-run Kenai River king salmon. If needed, restrictions to the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may include one or more of the following:

- Reduce allowable fishing time (by first limiting use of additional EO hours followed by restriction of regular fishing periods).
- Limit fishing within one-half mile of shore or closer in the Kasilof Section.
- Utilize drift gillnet fishermen if the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is not open.
- If the inriver sport fishery closes, the following actions are triggered automatically by regulation:
  - The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery closes; and
  - The commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District closes within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the River and within one and one-half miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline south of the Kenai River.

### **Upper Subdistrict Set Gillnet Fishery – Management**

#### **Kasilof Section Prior to July 8**

- The Kasilof Section opens on the first regular period on or after June 25, unless the department estimates that 50,000 sockeye salmon are in the Kasilof River prior to that date, at which time the commissioner may open the fishery, by Emergency Order (EO); however, the fishery may not open earlier than June 20.
- From June 25 through July 7, the department may not allow more than 48 hours of additional fishing time per week (Sunday through Saturday) and must close the fishery for 36 consecutive hours per week, which will begin between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday.
- The Kasilof Section will be managed in concert with the Kenai and East Forelands Sections after these areas open for the season, which occurs on or after July 8.

#### **Kenai, Kasilof and East Forelands Sections**

The Kenai and East Forelands Sections fishing season opens on the first regular period on or after July 8. Once open, the following fishing scenarios are possible depending on Kenai River sockeye salmon run strength. For 2013, the Kenai River projection is 4.4 million sockeye salmon. Therefore, the season will be managed following guidelines outlined below for runs between 2.3 and 4.6 million fish. The Kenai River sockeye salmon run will be reassessed after July 20 to verify inseason run strength.

- If the inseason assessment shows the run to be **less than 2.3 million Kenai River sockeye salmon**, there will be no more than 24 hours of additional fishing time per week in the Upper Subdistrict and there are no mandatory window closures. If the Kenai and East Forelands Sections are not fished during regular or additional openings, the department may limit regular and additional periods in the Kasilof Section to within one-half mile of shore. If Kasilof escapement is projected to exceed 390,000 fish, 24-hours of additional fishing time per week is available after July 15 within one-half mile of shore in the Kasilof Section.
- If the inseason assessment is **between 2.3 and 4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon**, the department may allow up to 51 hours of additional fishing time per week and will close the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery for a 36-hour period per week, which will begin between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday. In addition, there will be a second 24-hour closed period per week on Tuesday. If the Kenai and East Forelands Sections are not fished, the

department may limit regular and extra periods in the Kasilof Section to within one-half mile of shore.

- If the inseason assessment changes to a run of **more than 4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon**, the department may allow up to 84 hours of additional fishing time per week and will close the Upper Subdistrict for a 36-hour closed period each week, which will begin between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday. There are no other mandatory windows at this run strength. If the Kenai and East Forelands Sections are not fished, the department may limit regular and extra periods in the Kasilof Section to within one-half mile of shore.
- The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will close no later than August 15 and all restrictions and additional time regulations from July carry over into August, except that the fishery is restricted to regular periods only from August 11–15. However, the season will close any time after July 31, if during two consecutive fishing periods (defined as a calendar day) the sockeye salmon harvest is less than 1% of the season total.

### **Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery – Overview**

ADF&G manages the UCI drift gillnet fleet primarily under the guidance of 5 AAC 21.353, *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan*. The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into the Northern District drainages and to provide management guidelines to ADF&G. To meet these directives, there are two timeframes in July when drift fleet restrictions are implemented to pass fish through the Central District. First, from July 9–15, fishing during the first regular fishing period is restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections (corridor fishing); fishing during the second regular fishing period is restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Gillnet Area 1 (southern half of the Central District). From July 16–31, drift fleet restrictions are dependent upon the estimated size of the Kenai River sockeye salmon run, which is forecasted for a return of 4.4 million fish in 2013. For runs of this size, the drift management plan states that fishing during one regular 12-hour fishing period per week, from July 16–31, will be restricted to either the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections, or to Drift Gillnet Area 1.

During this timeframe, coho salmon also move through the Central District to their natal streams in northern Cook Inlet drainages. ADF&G is very cognizant of recent coho salmon escapement shortages and subsequent restrictions on various fisheries that harvest this stock. ADF&G will closely monitor inseason coho salmon assessment data in 2013 and will be prepared to take additional commercial fisheries restrictions to ensure adequate escapement. Examples of additional commercial fisheries restrictions include limiting the drift fleet to less fishing area and/or reducing the amount of drift fishing time.

### **Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery – Management**

- The drift gillnet fishery opens the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later.
- From July 9 through July 15:
  - Drift gillnet fishing is restricted for the first regular fishing period to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections (Figure 1) described below.
  - Drift gillnet fishing is restricted for the second regular fishing period to the Kenai and Kasilof Sections (Figure 2) and Drift Area One (Figure 3) described below.

- In runs of over 2.3 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, there may be one additional 12-hour period in the Kenai and Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict and in Drift Area One.
- From July 16 through July 31,
  - In runs of less than 2.3 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, there will be one regular 12-hour fishing period restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict.
  - In runs of between 2.3 and 4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, there will be one regular 12-hour fishing period per week restricted to either or both the Expanded Kenai or the Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict, or the fishery will be restricted to Drift Area One. Drifting may not occur in both Drift Area One and the Expanded corridors together during this restricted fishing period.
  - In runs of greater than 4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, there are no mandatory restrictions.
- From August 16 until closed by emergency order,
  - Drift Areas Three & Four (Figure 4) are open for regular periods.
  - Chinitna Bay may be opened by emergency order if chum salmon escapement objectives are achieved in Clearwater Creek.

### **Drift Gillnet Fishing Areas**

- 1.) Expanded Kenai Section: all waters enclosed by a line from a point located on the shore at 60° 40.35' N. lat., 151° 23.00' W. long. then west to a point located at 60° 40.35' W. long., south to a point at the latitude of the Blanchard line located at 60° 27.10' N. lat., 151° 33.76' W. long. east to a point on the beach at 60° 27.10' N. lat., 151° 16.94' W. long.
- 2.) Expanded Kasilof Section: all waters enclosed by a line from a point on the beach at 60° 27.10' N. lat., 151° 16.94' W. long., west to a point at the Blanchard line located at 60° 27.10' N. lat., 151° 33.76' W. long., south to a point located at 60° 04.02' N. lat., 151° 46.60' W. long., east to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at 60° 04.02' N. lat., 151° 38.90' W. long.

### **Other regulations include:**

- Set gillnet permit stacking is allowed in all of UCI.
- After July 8, the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area may be fished up to 48 hours, followed by a 24-hour closure, without an escapement trigger, if fish are present in sufficient numbers.
- The sockeye salmon escapement trigger to open the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area to commercial fishing without limitation is 365,000 fish.
- In the Kasilof Section, beginning on July 8, if further restrictions beyond the one-half mile fishery are necessary to aid in achieving the lower end of the Kenai River

- escapement goal, this area may be further restricted to fishing within 600 feet of the high tide mark in the Kasilof Section.
- The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may close after July 31 based on the 1% rule. A fishing period is defined as a time period open to commercial fishing not to exceed 24-hours per calendar day.

### **SET NET REGISTRATION AND BUOY STICKERS**

*All Cook Inlet setnet fishermen* are required to register prior to fishing for one of three areas of Cook Inlet: 1) the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District; 2) the Northern District; or, 3) all remaining areas of Cook Inlet (Greater Cook Inlet). Once registered for one of these three areas, fishermen may fish only in the area for which they are registered for the remainder of the year. No transfers will be permitted. Set gillnet permit holders fishing in the Northern District or the Greater Cook Inlet area can register at ADF&G offices in Soldotna, Homer, or Anchorage or by mail. Forms are available at area offices or on the department's homepage at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon#/management>.

Fishermen wishing to register in the Upper Subdistrict must register in the **Soldotna ADF&G office only** and must purchase buoy stickers at the time of registering.

### **SEASON OPENING DATES**

Season opening dates in 2013 for the various fisheries around the inlet are as follows:

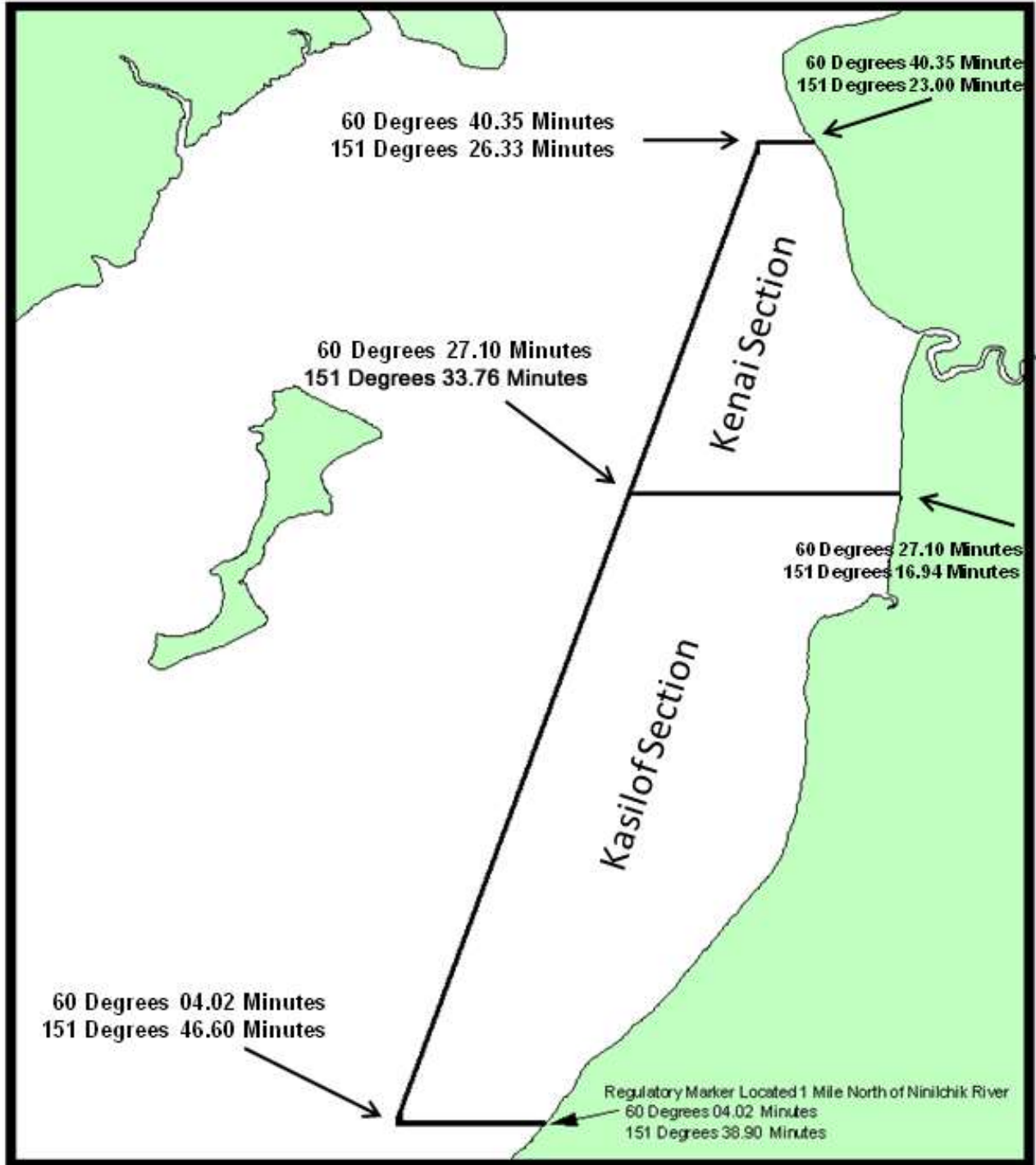
- *Big River Fishery*: June 3 and continuing through June 24, unless the 1,000 Chinook salmon harvest limit is reached prior to that date. Weekly fishing periods are Mondays, Wednesdays, and Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- *Northern District King Salmon Fishery*: June 3. As explained earlier in this document, the fishing period originally scheduled for Monday, May 27, will be closed in 2013 to reduce the harvest of king salmon throughout the Northern District. The remaining fishing periods for the 2013 season will occur on June 3, 10, 17, and 24. Each fishing period will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The area from a point at the wood chip dock to the Susitna River remains closed for the directed king salmon fishery in 2013.
- *Northern District Regular Season Salmon Fishery*: June 27.
- *Western Subdistrict Set Gillnet Fishery*: June 17.
- *All remaining set gillnet fisheries, except the Upper Subdistrict*: June 27.
- *Upper Subdistrict Set Gillnet Fishery*: June 27 for the Kasilof Section (that portion south of the Blanchard Line), unless opened earlier by EO (based on an inriver estimate of 50,000 Kasilof River sockeye salmon before the June 27 opener), but will not open before June 20. The Kenai and East Forelands Sections (that portion of the Upper Subdistrict north of the Blanchard Line) will open July 8. All Sections of the Upper Subdistrict will close for the season on or before August 15.
- *Drift Gillnet Fishery*: June 20.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The UCI commercial fisheries information line will again be available by calling 262-9611. The most recent emergency order announcement is always available on the recorded message line and catch, escapement and test fishing information is included whenever possible. All emergency order announcements are also faxed or emailed to processors as quickly as possible and posted to the UCI web page at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon>. For very general information, we invite you to visit the Commercial Fisheries web page on the Internet at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingCommercial.main>.

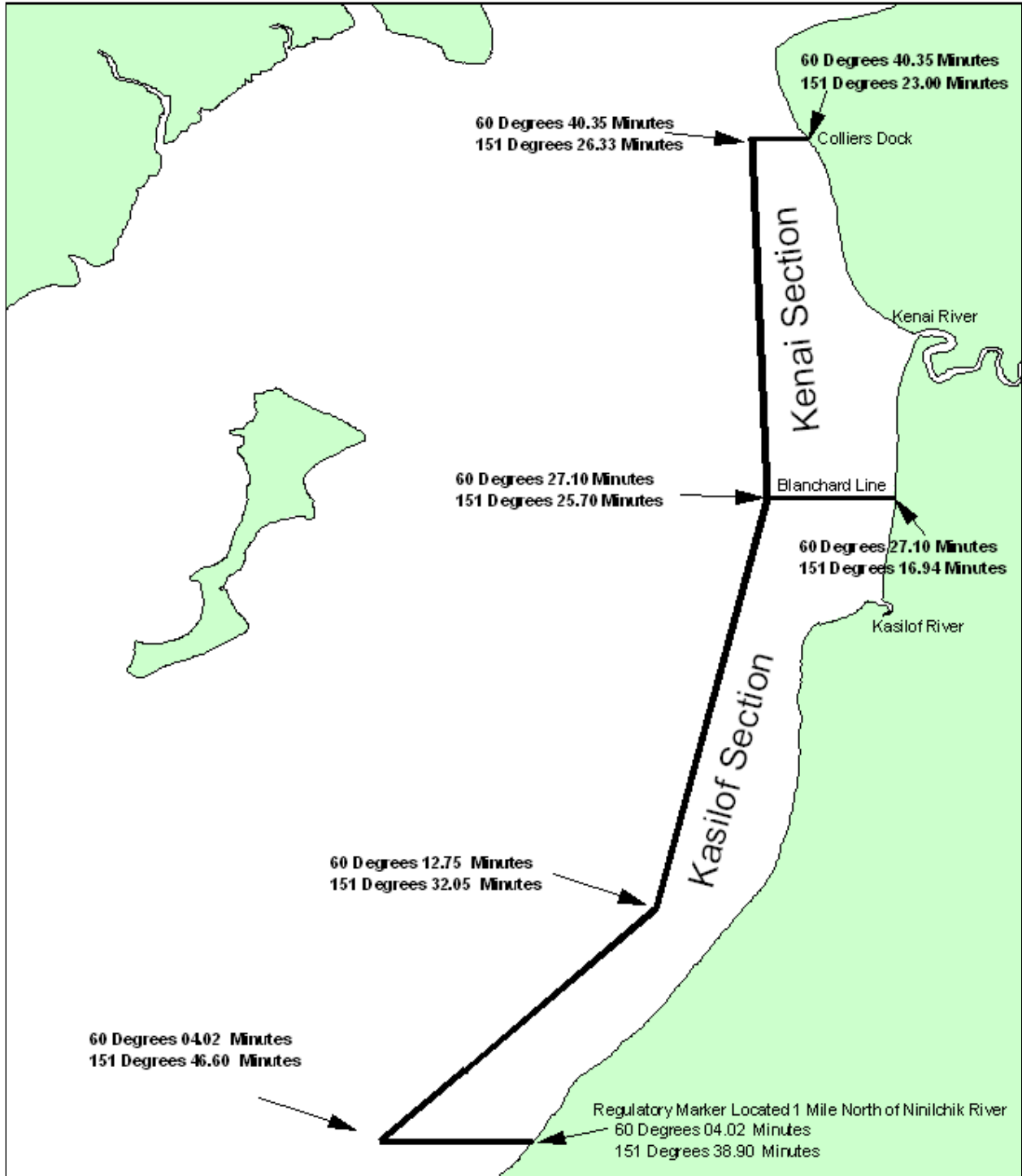
If, during the summer, fishermen have information or questions concerning the commercial fishery, the Soldotna Division of Commercial Fisheries staff can be reached by phone at 262-9368, by fax at 262-4709, or by mail at 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Road, Suite B, Soldotna, 99669.





Latitude and Longitude are based on the North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83), equivalent to the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS 84).

Figure 1. Map of the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections with waypoint descriptions.



Latitude and Longitude are based on the North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83), equivalent to the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS 84).

Figure 2. Map of the Kenai and Kasilof Sections with waypoint descriptions.

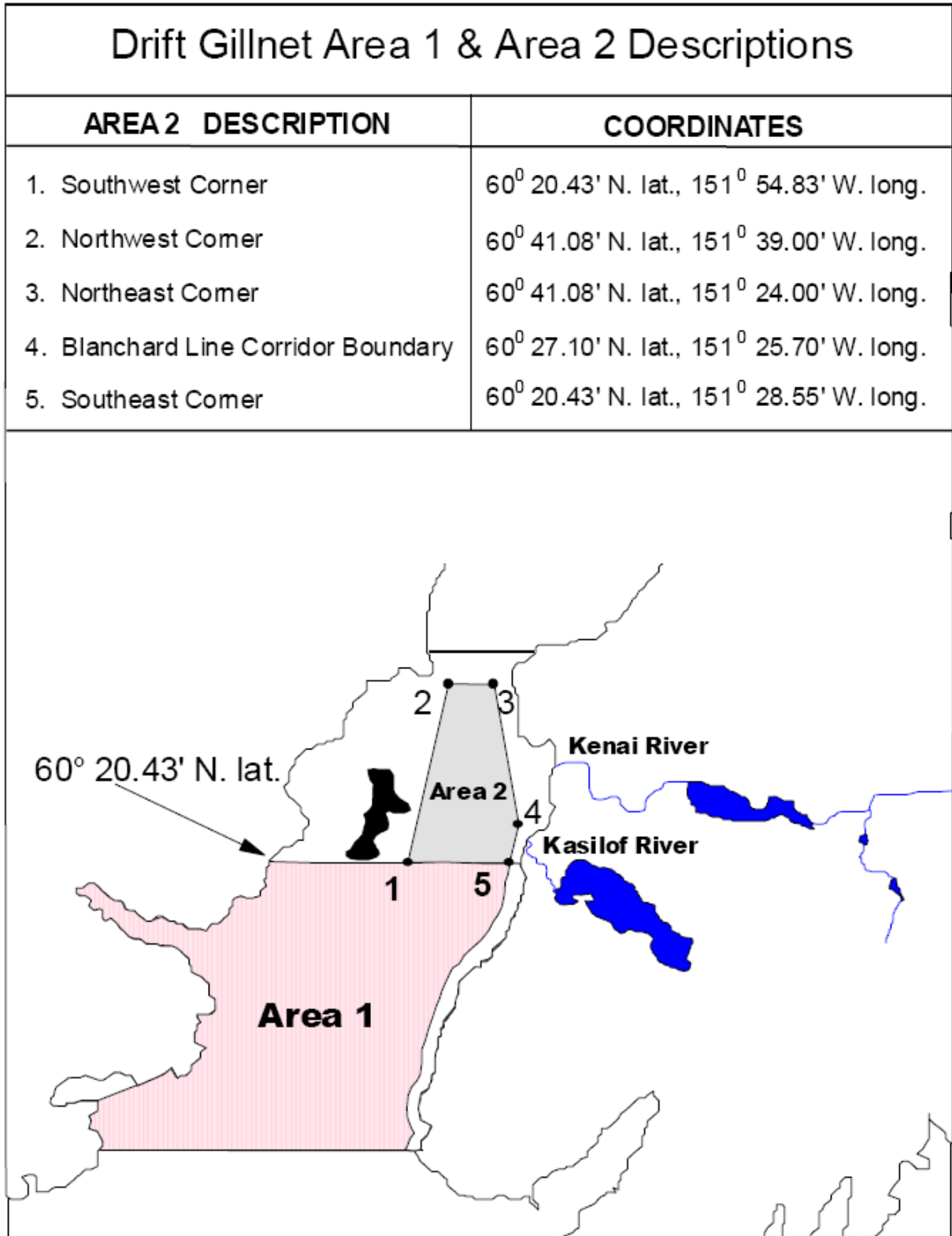


Figure 3. Map of drift gillnet fishing areas one and two.

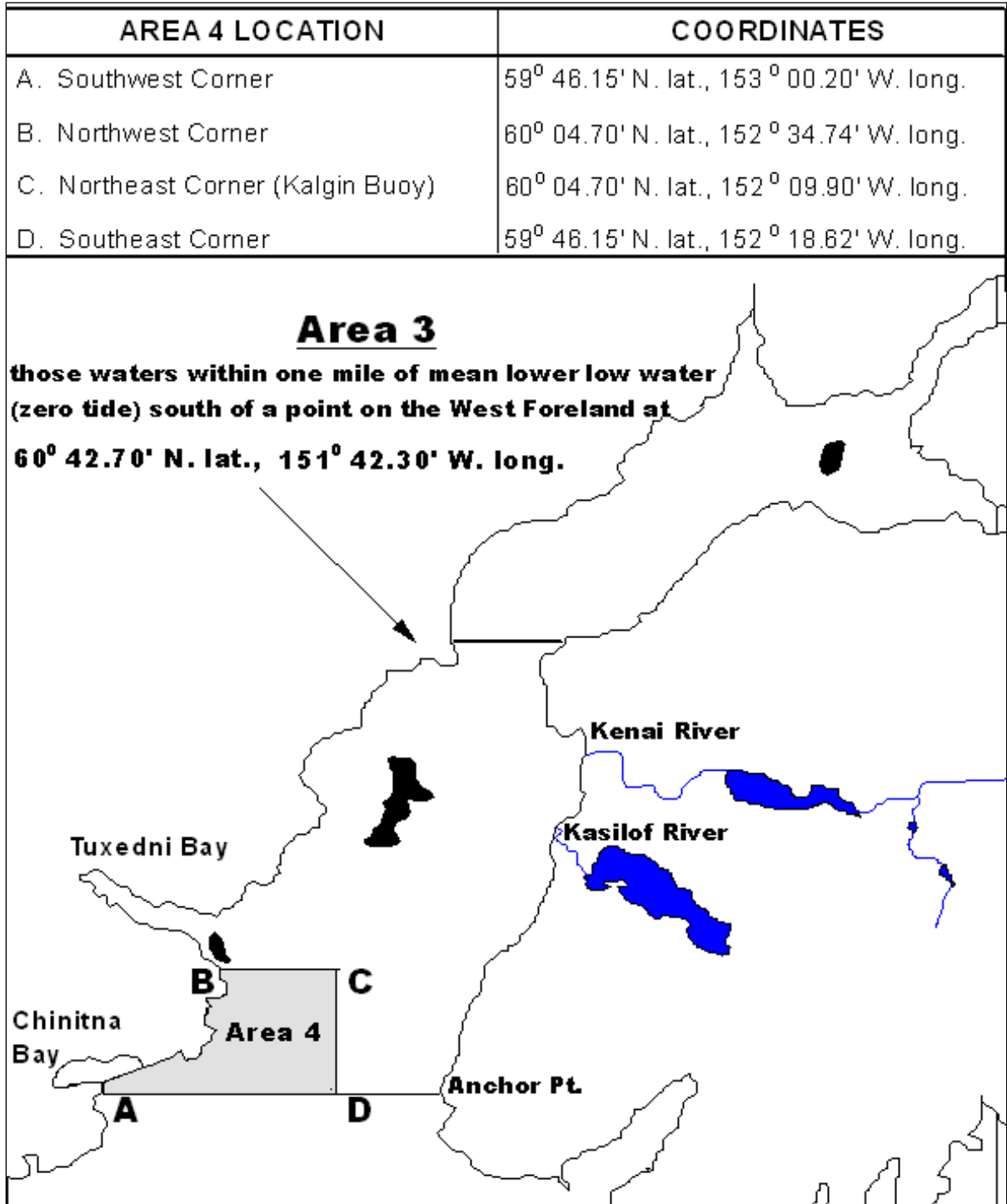


Figure 4. Map of the drift gillnet areas open beginning August 16.