

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



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**2013 NORTON SOUND SUBDISTRICTS 5 AND 6 CHINOOK SALMON
OUTLOOK AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

Chinook salmon runs to southeastern Norton Sound are expected to be very poor this season. Six-year old Chinook salmon returning from the 2007 brood year are expected to comprise the majority of the run in 2013. However, production in terms of fish numbers from this brood year has thus far been very weak. Additionally, contributions from the 2008 brood year are not expected to make up for this shortfall based on a record low escapement of 903 king salmon observed at North River in 2008. Chinook salmon escapement goals to the North River have not been achieved in three out of the last five years, and consecutive record-low Chinook salmon subsistence harvests have occurred since 2010 in Norton Sound Subdistricts 5 and 6 (Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts). The combined Subdistricts 5 and 6 Chinook salmon run is expected to range between 4,500–6,000 fish. This projected level of abundance is not sufficient to justify sport fishery harvests or support levels of Chinook salmon harvests observed in the subsistence fishery since 2010. Overall harvest rates by all Chinook salmon fisheries in the Unalakleet River have averaged 38% since 2010, with the subsistence fishery accounting for 81% of the harvest.

In order to meet Chinook salmon escapement needs in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet River drainages and provide for future returns, preemptive actions must be implemented at the start of season to ensure escapement goals are achieved. Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologists recently held meetings in Shaktoolik and Unalakleet to inform the public of the impending weak run and survey residents regarding their preference for specific management options to accomplish this objective. Survey results indicated Unalakleet fishermen preferred a restricted fishing schedule in the marine waters of two 24-hour fishing periods per week with no mesh size restrictions; under this option the Unalakleet River would have mesh size restrictions of 4 ½ inches or smaller on a schedule of two 36-hour periods per week. In contrast, Shaktoolik fishermen preferred mesh size restrictions of 6 inches or smaller in the marine waters on the existing schedule of two 48-hour periods per week. This preferred option also restricts the Shaktoolik River subsistence fishery to set gillnets with a mesh size of 4 ½ or less but fishing

would be allowed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The department will implement the options selected by each village as both should be effective at significantly reducing harvest rates of Chinook salmon and provide the greatest potential for meeting escapement needs.

Unalakleet Subdistrict and Unalakleet River Schedules

Effective Monday, June 17, the subsistence salmon fishery in the Unalakleet Subdistrict marine waters will be placed on a schedule of two 24-hour periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays, and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays to 6:00 p.m. Saturdays; gillnet mesh size will be unrestricted during this time in the marine waters. Also, on Monday, June 17, the Unalakleet River subsistence salmon fishery will be placed on a schedule of two 36-hour periods per week from 8:00 a.m. Mondays to 8:00 p.m. Tuesdays, and from 8:00 a.m. Fridays to 8:00 p.m. Saturdays. Only set gillnets with a mesh size of 4 ½ inches less may be used in the Unalakleet River drainage after June 17. By regulation on Monday, July 1, beach seines may be used to target salmon other than Chinook salmon in all waters of Subdistrict 6, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but seine mesh size is restricted to 4 ½ inches or less. This regulation also requires that Chinook salmon incidentally captured in beach seines be immediately released alive back into the water.

Shaktoolik Subdistrict and Shaktoolik River Restrictions

Effective Monday, June 17, the Shaktoolik Subdistrict marine waters will be restricted to a schedule of two 48-hour periods per week with fishing periods from 6:00 p.m. Mondays to 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Thursdays to 6:00 p.m. Saturdays. As June 17, set gillnets in the Shaktoolik Subdistrict marine waters will be restricted to 6 inches or less. Subsistence fishing for salmon may occur 7 days a week in the Shaktoolik River drainage, but effective Monday, June 17, gillnets must have a mesh size of 4 ½ inches or less. As with the Unalakleet River, beginning Monday, July 1, beach seines may be used to target salmon other than Chinook salmon in all waters of Subdistrict 5, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but seine mesh size is restricted to 4 ½ inches or less. However, Chinook salmon incidentally captured in beach seines be immediately released alive back into the water.

Sport Fishery Management of Chinook Salmon in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Rivers

Effective, Monday, June 17, Chinook salmon sport fisheries will be restricted to catch-and-release only in all fresh and marine waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6. This restriction also prohibits the use of bait in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet River drainages. Any Chinook salmon captured must be kept in the water and released immediately.

Inseason Management

Once the Chinook salmon run begins, inseason management will be based upon escapement counts and subsistence fishing reports. Fishing restrictions may be relaxed or further restrictions may be necessary depending on run assessment.

Flyers outlining subsistence fishing schedules and gear restrictions will be distributed in early June in the villages of Shaktoolik and Unalakleet, posted on the ADF&G, Division of Commercial Fisheries website, and announced over local radio stations. If you have any questions regarding these restrictions, please contact Fish and Game at 1-800-560-2271 or 443-5167.