

CAMF Comments on Proposal 197

This proposal by the Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee was intended to address their concern for pass-through of sockeye salmon, a concern that has been addressed through agreement of the parties and board action. In Committee B, the discussion of this proposal did not focus on sockeye but centered on chinook salmon, in particular the run to the Meshik River.

Escapements of chinook into the Meshik River have not been affected by allowing fishing for sockeye in the Outer Port Heiden (OPH) section. During the years, 1996-2006, chinook escapements into the Meshik ranged from 800 – 13,700 fish.¹ During the years 2007-2011, chinook escapements ranged from 1,010 – 11,020.

The observed escapement of chinook into the Meshik in 2012 was 41 fish.² The department reported that due to survey conditions and timing, this escapement observation likely did not reflect the total escapement.³

By regulation, the OPH section cannot open until June 20. In 2012, the OPH section did not open to fishing until June 28, near the end of the chinook run.

In 2012, the fleet made 601 landings in the OPH section.⁴ The total number of chinook landed in the OPH section in 2012 was 292 – approximately one half fish per landing. The 2012 sockeye harvest in the OPH section was 268,226 fish – an average of 446 fish per landing.

CAMF believes there is no justification or need to shallow our nets due to concerns for chinook salmon, especially on the basis of an incomplete and inconclusive survey of Meshik River escapement in 2012.

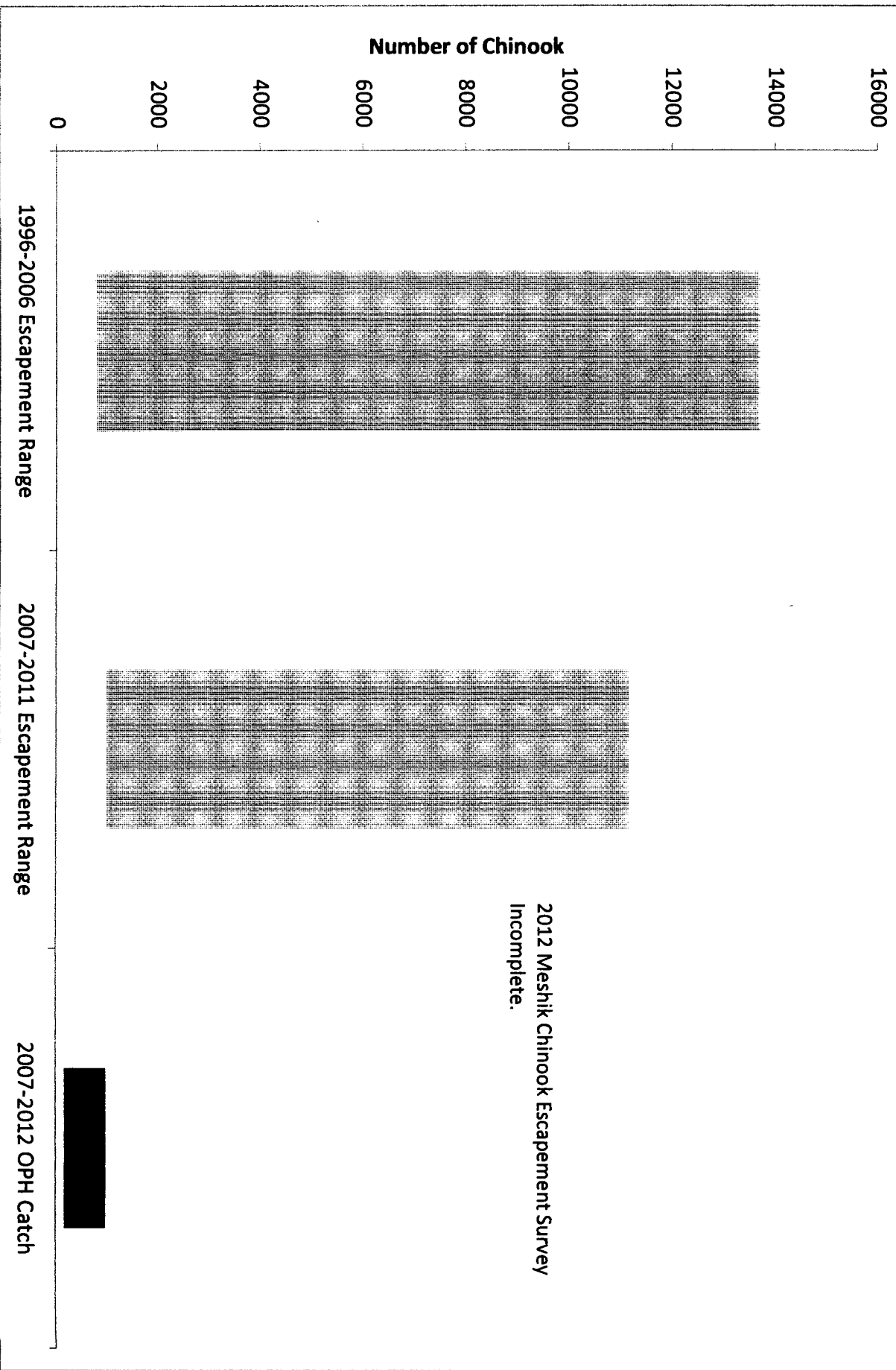
¹ Fishery Management Report No. 12-51, "North Alaska Peninsula Commercial Salmon Annual Management Report, 2012" (Wilburn and Murphy, 2012), at 27-28 (Table 3, pp. 5-6).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.* at 5.

⁴ *Id.* at 92 (Table 29).

Range of Chinook Escapement In Meshik River Before and After the Opening of OPH, and The Range of Chinook Catch in OPH.



The 2012 North Alaska Peninsula estimated total sockeye salmon escapement of 747,090 fish, which included weir and aerial survey counts, was below the 2003-2012 average estimated escapement of 1,081,421 fish (Table 1; Figure 6). The combined North Alaska Peninsula escapement goal range is 531,400-1,023,800 sockeye salmon for systems with established goals

SOCKEYE SALMON

The 2012 North Alaska Peninsula estimated total Chinook salmon escapement of 3,574 fish was well below the 2003-2012 average of 20,252 fish (Table 1). The 2012 Nelson River Chinook salmon escapement of 992 fish was below the BEG range of 2,400-4,400 fish (Honold et al. 2007; Table 10 and Appendix A1). Nelson River is the only river on the North Alaska Peninsula with a Chinook salmon escapement goal. The combined King Salmon, Bear, and Sandy rivers (Bear River Section) estimated Chinook salmon escapement was 1,400 fish, which was less than the 2003-2012 average of 2,642 fish (Table 3). The Bear and Sandy river weir counts (Tables 11 and 12) do not accurately reflect the total escapement of Chinook salmon because most of the fish spawn below the weir sites or in other downstream tributaries. A total of one Chinook salmon passed the Ilirik River weir in 2012 (Table 13). The Chinook salmon escapement of 41 fish into the Inner Port Heiden Section (the Meshik River and its tributaries) was below the 10-year average of 6,240 fish (Table 3; Appendix A1). It should be noted however, that the Chinook salmon were documented during an aerial survey on July 24, and were still in the main stem section of the Meshik River. Typically, Chinook salmon are moving into the much smaller tributaries at this time of year where visibility is better. As a result, it is likely that the observed Chinook salmon escapement in the Meshik River does not reflect the total escapement for 2012. In the Cinder River Section, 440 Chinook salmon were documented, which was below the 2003-2012 average of 4,509 fish (Table 3; Appendix A1).

CHINOOK SALMON

ESCAPEMENT BY SPECIES

The 2012 North Alaska Peninsula chum salmon *O. keta* harvest of 283,035 fish was well above the 2003-2012 average harvest of 152,822 fish and well above the projected harvest of 125,000 fish (Table 1). In the Northern District, the harvest of 95,434 fish was above the 2003-2012 average of 62,177 fish (Table 8). The majority of the harvest in the Northern District was caught in the Black Hills Section (73,941 fish; Table 2) in August, when the fleet targeted chum salmon due to area closures in the traditional sockeye salmon fishing areas at that time of year. The remainder of the chum salmon harvest in the Northern District occurred incidental to sockeye salmon fishing. The Northwestem District chum salmon harvest of 187,601 fish was also above the 10-year average of 90,644 fish (Table 9). The majority of the chum salmon harvest in the Northwestem District occurred in the Izembek-Moffet Bay section with 177,270 fish (Table 9).

CHUM SALMON

The 2012 North Alaska Peninsula pink salmon *O. gorbuscha* harvest of 1,173 fish was well below the 2003-2012 even-year average harvest of 22,035 fish (Table 1). Pink salmon harvested in the Northern District are caught incidental to fisheries for other salmon species. The majority of the pink salmon harvest in 2012 occurred in the Northwestem District (894 fish) and was well below the 2003-2012 even-year average harvest of 18,467 fish (Table 7).

PINK SALMON

| Stream Date Observer | Location | Visi- bility | Species | | | | | Observer Remarks |
|---|--------------|--------------|---------|---------|------|------|-------|---|
| | | | Chinook | Sockeye | Coho | Pink | Chum | |
| Bear River, Branches and Lake, 315-1102 | | | | | | | | |
| 2012-07-28 Dawn Wilburn | Stream Mouth | G | 0 | 900 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Distance surveyed: confluence of Mad Sow to weir. |
| | Bay | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 2012-07-30 Dawn Wilburn | Stream Mouth | G | 0 | 900 | 0 | 0 | 0 | DISTANCE SURVEYED: confluence of Mad Sow to weir. |
| | Bay | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 2012-08-09 Dawn Wilburn | Stream Mouth | G | 0 | 1,800 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Distance surveyed: Weir to confluence of Mad Sow. |
| | Bay | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 2012-08-10 Bob Murphy | Stream Mouth | G | 0 | 1,800 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Distance surveyed: weir to Mad Sow. |
| | Bay | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 2012-08-12 Bob Murphy | Stream Mouth | G | 0 | 900 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Distance surveyed: Weir downstream to confluence of Mad Sow. |
| | Bay | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 127 | | | | | | | | |
| Notice Date | | | | | | | | |
| 2012-08-16 Dawn Wilburn, Bob Murphy | Stream Mouth | G | 500 | 2,300 | 0 | 0 | 1,000 | STREAM DISTRIBUTION: Stream C (Ridgerunner)-500 kings and 1,000 chums. Stream A- From confluence of the Mad Sow to weir 2300 sockeye. Fish appear to be holding in river and not travelling |
| | Bay | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Distance surveyed: Mad sow to weir. |
| 2012-08-24 Dawn Wilburn | Stream Mouth | G | 0 | 4,100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | Bay | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 2012-09-08 Bob Murphy | Stream Mouth | - | 0 | 3,000 | 400 | 0 | 0 | DISTRIBUTION: 3,000 Sockeye from Mad Sow to weir site. 400 coho in Ridgerunner Cr. |
| | Bay | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Sandy River and Lake, 315-1201 | | | | | | | | |
| Notice Date | | | | | | | | |
| 2012-08-12 Bob Murphy | Stream Mouth | G | 600 | 3,500 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Distance surveyed: Above Fish and Game cabin to below Sandy River Lodge. 3,500 sockeye spawning in river. |
| | Bay | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 2012-09-08 Bob Murphy | Stream Mouth | P | 0 | 0 | 500 | 0 | 0 | Very murky water. |
| | Bay | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |

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Table 29.-Outer Port Heiden Section salmon harvest by species and day, 2012.

| Catch | Number of Fish | | | | | Permits | Landings | Chinook | Sockeye | Coho | Pink | Chum |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----|-----|---------|----|---------|----------|---------|---------|------|------|-------|
| | Date | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prior to 19-Jun ^a | 73 | 80 | 43 | 31,070 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 682 |
| 20 Jun-27 Jun ^b | 73 | 82 | 58 | 33,850 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 485 |
| 28-Jun | 72 | 92 | 59 | 60,337 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 783 |
| 30-Jun | 72 | 92 | 59 | 60,337 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 783 |
| 1 Jul-4 Jul ^b | 54 | 66 | 33 | 44,063 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 845 |
| 5-Jul | 73 | 83 | 54 | 45,583 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1,027 |
| 6-Jul | 78 | 104 | 33 | 42,731 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 1,054 |
| 7-Jul | 64 | 67 | 5 | 5,206 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 590 |
| 8 Jul-12 Jul ^b | 15 | 17 | 4 | 3,278 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 431 |
| 13-Jul | 10 | 10 | 3 | 2,108 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 437 |
| 14-Jul | 111 | 601 | 292 | 268,226 | 10 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 6,334 |
| 15-Jul | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16-Jul ^c | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Note: Catch numbers do not include test fish harvest or fish retained for personal use.

^a Commercial salmon fishing season in the Outer Port Heiden Section is June 20 through September 30.

^b Fishery closed.

^c The Outer Port Heiden Section closed until further notice on July 16, 2012.