

Regional Information Report No. 1J26-07

2026 Yakutat Set Gillnet Fishery Management Plan

by

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Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Division of Commercial Fisheries



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Weights and measures (metric)		General		Mathematics, statistics	
centimeter	cm	Alaska Administrative Code	AAC	<i>all standard mathematical signs, symbols and abbreviations</i>	
deciliter	dL	all commonly accepted abbreviations	e.g., Mr., Mrs., AM, PM, etc.	alternate hypothesis	H _A
gram	g			base of natural logarithm	e
hectare	ha			catch per unit effort	CPUE
kilogram	kg	all commonly accepted professional titles	e.g., Dr., Ph.D., R.N., etc.	coefficient of variation	CV
kilometer	km			common test statistics	(F, t, χ^2 , etc.)
liter	L	at	@	confidence interval	CI
meter	m	compass directions:		correlation coefficient	
milliliter	mL	east	E	(multiple)	R
millimeter	mm	north	N	correlation coefficient	
		south	S	(simple)	r
Weights and measures (English)		west	W	covariance	cov
cubic feet per second	ft ³ /s	copyright	©	degree (angular)	°
foot	ft	corporate suffixes:		degrees of freedom	df
gallon	gal	Company	Co.	expected value	E
inch	in	Corporation	Corp.	greater than	>
mile	mi	Incorporated	Inc.	greater than or equal to	≥
nautical mile	nmi	Limited	Ltd.	harvest per unit effort	HPUE
ounce	oz	District of Columbia	D.C.	less than	<
pound	lb	et alii (and others)	et al.	less than or equal to	≤
quart	qt	et cetera (and so forth)	etc.	logarithm (natural)	ln
yard	yd	exempli gratia (for example)	e.g.	logarithm (base 10)	log
		Federal Information Code	FIC	logarithm (specify base)	log ₂ , etc.
Time and temperature		id est (that is)	i.e.	minute (angular)	'
day	d	latitude or longitude	lat or long	not significant	NS
degrees Celsius	°C	monetary symbols (U.S.)	\$, ¢	null hypothesis	H ₀
degrees Fahrenheit	°F	months (tables and figures): first three letters	Jan, ..., Dec	percent	%
degrees kelvin	K	registered trademark	®	probability	P
hour	h	trademark	™	probability of a type I error (rejection of the null hypothesis when true)	α
minute	min	United States (adjective)	U.S.	probability of a type II error (acceptance of the null hypothesis when false)	β
second	s	United States of America (noun)	USA	second (angular)	"
		U.S.C.	United States Code	standard deviation	SD
Physics and chemistry		U.S. state	use two-letter abbreviations (e.g., AK, WA)	standard error	SE
all atomic symbols				variance	
alternating current	AC			population sample	Var
ampere	A			sample	var
calorie	cal				
direct current	DC				
hertz	Hz				
horsepower	hp				
hydrogen ion activity (negative log of)	pH				
parts per million	ppm				
parts per thousand	ppt, ‰				
volts	V				
watts	W				

REGIONAL INFORMANTION REPORT NO. 1J26-07

2026 YAKUTAT SET GILLNET FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

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ABSTRACT

This management plan provides an overview of the expected salmon runs, spawning escapement goals, harvest projections, and management measures for the 2026 Yakutat commercial set gillnet fisheries. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game only develops a formal preseason forecast for the Situk River Chinook salmon run and is forecasting a total run of 900 large (3-ocean age and older) fish. Canada develops preseason forecasts for Klukshu River Chinook and sockeye salmon runs and is forecasting a total run of 1,700 Chinook salmon and 17,000 sockeye salmon. Other Yakutat Area sockeye and coho salmon runs are expected to be average to above average based on parent-year harvests and escapements. The Yakutat set gillnet fishery will open by regulation as described in 5 AAC 30.310, 5 AAC 30.320, and by emergency order. Set gillnet fisheries are managed by adjusting fishing time and area in response to inseason assessments of run strength. Management emphasis will focus on sockeye *Oncorhynchus nerka* and Chinook salmon *O. tshawytscha* in June and July, and transition to coho salmon beginning the first Sunday in August. Continued poor productivity of Chinook salmon stocks warrants conservative fishery management during June and July.

Keywords: Yakutat, Yakutat Management Area (YMA), Yakataga District, commercial set gillnet, fishing seasons, fishing periods, Chinook, sockeye, coho, pink and chum salmon, Biological Escapement Goals (BEGs), Sustainable Escapement Goals (SEGs), fishery management plan, preseason run expectations, forecasts, 2026.

INTRODUCTION

This management plan provides an overview of salmon run outlooks, spawning escapement goals, harvest projections, and expected management measures to be used during the 2026 Yakutat commercial set gillnet fisheries. Average, unless defined otherwise, refers to the most recent 10-year average (2016–2025). Harvest, escapement, and run forecasts and outlooks, unless otherwise indicated, are in numbers of fish.

The Yakutat Management Area (YMA) encompasses the waters of Alaska between Cape Suckling and Cape Fairweather. The area is divided into 2 fishing districts: the Yakutat District between Cape Fairweather and Icy Cape, and Yakataga District between Icy Cape and Cape Suckling. All species of salmon are harvested in the Yakutat Area; this includes coho *Oncorhynchus kisutch*, sockeye *O. nerka*, pink *O. gorbuscha*, Chinook *O. tshawytscha*, and chum salmon *O. keta* in order of total harvest.

Set gillnet gear is the only net gear permitted, and the set gillnet fishery is the primary commercial salmon fishery in the Yakutat Area. A troll fishery also occurs and is managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) out of the Sitka office. Approximately 160 commercial set gillnet limited entry permits are renewed annually and up to 91 permits have been actively fished in the past 10 years. Set gillnet permit holders do not have registered sites; they may fish in any open fishing area and may move among fishing areas during the season but only one area may be fished at a time.

There are 25 unique set gillnet fisheries in the YMA, although only about half have been actively fished in recent history (Figure 1). Most of these fisheries target sockeye salmon from June through July and coho salmon in August and September. Historically, Humpback Creek supported a commercial pink salmon fishery but directed harvest has not occurred since 1996. With the high variability of the pink salmon run and low commercial value of pink salmon, fishermen targeted other species of higher commercial value. The Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet hosts the most productive fishery in the YMA and normally has the largest concentration of fishing effort (up to 80 permits during the past 10-years). Set gillnet fisheries in the Yakataga District predominantly harvest coho salmon. The primary fisheries for coho salmon occur in the Situk, Tsiu and Kaliakh Rivers. The

commercial fishing effort on the Tsiu River has declined in recent years due to dramatic geological changes that have decreased the fishable area.

There are no directed set gillnet fisheries for Chinook salmon in the YMA. Chinook salmon are harvested incidentally in the sockeye salmon set gillnet fisheries. The Alsek River, Manby Shore Outside Waters, and Yakutat Bay fisheries are the principal harvesters of Chinook salmon.

2026 SALMON RUN EXPECTATIONS

ADF&G only produces an annual run forecast for Situk River Chinook salmon in the YMA. Harvest projections or outlooks are produced by the Yakutat Area Management Biologist and are included in this management plan. These outlooks are more qualitative—with reference to brood year escapements, trends in the commercial harvest, rearing conditions, and information on year class strength—and should not be considered official department forecasts. Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) produces run forecasts for Alsek and Klukshu Rivers sockeye and Chinook salmon. Overall, Yakutat Area salmon runs are expected to be average to above average in 2026.

SOCKEYE SALMON

Alsek River

The Alsek River sockeye salmon run is expected to be 73,900 fish. This estimate is below the recent average run size estimate of 87,100 sockeye salmon. Principal contributing brood years are 2021 (Klukshu River escapement of 25,700 sockeye salmon) and 2022 (Klukshu River escapement of 29,600 sockeye salmon); average Klukshu River sockeye salmon escapement is approximately 13,100 fish. The expected harvest from the drainage on a run of this size is 3,000 to 7,000 fish (TTC *In Prep*).

East River

The East River sockeye salmon escapement is expected to be average in 2026. The 2022 parent-year sockeye salmon had no commercial harvest and had a peak escapement count of 23,800 fish. Commercial harvest was below average and escapement was above average. The fishery will open once the lower bound of the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) is observed. If the run returns as expected, a harvest of 3,000 to 5,000 fish is anticipated.

Akwe River

Sockeye salmon escapement is expected to be average to above average for 2026. The fishery will not open until desired levels of escapement are observed. The Akwe River 2022 parent-year sockeye salmon run had commercial harvest and there was no peak escapement observed.

Italio River

The Italio River sockeye salmon run is expected to be average in 2026. Even though the run is expected to be average based on parent-year escapements, directed sockeye salmon fishing is not anticipated in 2026 due to poor run performance in recent years. The department will monitor the run and may open the fishery if adequate escapement levels are observed.

Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet

The Situk River 2022 parent-year sockeye salmon commercial harvest was 28,500 fish with an escapement of 90,400 sockeye salmon. This escapement was above the upper end of the BEG

range of 30,000 to 70,000 fish. Based on past escapement and recent harvest trends, 2026 escapement is expected to be achieved and harvest is anticipated to be 20,000 to 40,000 fish. Higher harvest levels could be achieved depending on management actions needed to conserve Situk River Chinook salmon.

COHO SALMON

Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet

The primary brood year (2023) for Situk River coho salmon was expected to be average with commercial harvest of 72,200 fish with a peak escapement of 9,800 coho salmon, above the upper end of the SEG range of 3,800 to 9,600 fish. Based on recent trends in harvest and escapement, a harvest of 60,000 to 90,000 fish is anticipated for the Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet in 2026.

Tsiu–Tsiwat River

The primary brood year (2023) for the Tsiu–Tsiwat River coho salmon was expected to be average with no commercial harvest. No peak escapement information is available, but given recent trends, it is likely that the SEG range of 10,000 to 29,000 fish was met. If there is commercial effort in 2026, there could be a commercial harvest of over 20,000 coho salmon from the Tsiu River.

Kaliakh River

The Kaliakh River has not had an aerial survey since 1998 and prior to 2018 had not been fished since 2010. The 2018–2025 average coho salmon harvest has been 10,100 fish. If there is once again effort in 2026, a harvest of 5,000 to 10,000 coho salmon is expected.

Areawide

Parent-year escapements were average in most systems. Based on recent trends in the fishery harvests, coho salmon runs are expected to be average to above average in 2026. The areawide set gillnet harvest is expected to be 90,000 to 140,000 coho salmon. Effort distribution and corresponding harvest throughout the region will be dependent on coho salmon abundance in individual fishing areas and the ability to transport fish to market.

CHINOOK SALMON

Alsek River

The Alsek River Chinook salmon terminal run size forecast is currently derived by expanding the Klukshu River (tributary to Alsek River) forecast. The Klukshu River preseason forecast is for an escapement of 1,700 Chinook salmon through the weir. This expands to a terminal run size forecast of 6,800 Chinook salmon to the entire Alsek River drainage. A forecast of this size is above average and at the upper end of the Alsek River BEG range of 3,500 to 5,300 fish (TTC *In Prep*).

Situk–Ahrnklin River

For the 2026 season, the Chinook salmon total run forecast is 900 large (3-ocean age and older) fish. If the run comes back as expected based on the 10-year average and no harvest occurs, then the Situk River Chinook salmon BEG escapement goal of 450 to 1,050 large Chinook salmon will be met. Commercial, sport, and subsistence Chinook salmon fisheries in the Situk River will remain closed unless the inseason escapement projections indicate the midpoint of the BEG range for Chinook salmon will be attained.

FISHERY MANAGEMENT

Set gillnet fisheries in the YMA are managed by adjusting fishing time and area in response to pre-season run forecasts and in-season assessments of run strength when they become available. During periods of poor production, managers often must curtail or even close fisheries to allow enough fish to reach the spawning grounds. In-season assessment methods include fishery performance in terms of catch per unit effort (CPUE) and escapement information. In glacial systems, fishery performance data is utilized for management because poor visibility prevents accurate observations of escapements. Formal escapement goals have been established for many major index systems and salmon species in the YMA (Table 1). Ground and aerial surveys are conducted annually on several drainages to monitor escapement and assure escapement goals are achieved. Fishing areas are expected to open by regulation as described in 5 AAC 30.310 and 5 AAC 30.320, or by emergency order (Table 2).

The Alek and Situk Rivers Chinook salmon stocks are 2 of the 6 Pacific Salmon Treaty (treaty) indicator stocks in Southeast Alaska (SEAK). The SEAK, Transboundary Rivers, and Northern British Columbia Chinook salmon stocks are experiencing unprecedented levels of poor production. This trend has led the department to restrict the retention of Chinook salmon throughout SEAK. Alek River and Situk River Chinook salmon stocks were 2 of the SEAK wild indicator stocks that achieved their BEG in 2025. The 2026 Chinook salmon forecasts indicate runs to SEAK systems will likely be below long-term averages. Management actions are being taken across all SEAK fisheries, including sport, commercial, personal use, and subsistence, to reduce harvest of wild Chinook salmon.

REGULATORY CHANGES

In February 2025, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) passed 2 proposals affecting the Yakutat commercial set gillnet fisheries. The first proposal modified the Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet and Lost River King Salmon Fisheries Management Plan to align with recent management actions for Chinook salmon conservation. The proposal removed the use of projections as guidance for when prescribed fishery actions should be taken and instituted the use of actual Chinook salmon escapement through the Situk River weir. The second proposal closed waters upstream of the outlet of Malaspina Lake above of a line from 59°48.26' N lat, 139°59.35' W long to 59°48.33' N lat, 139°59.24' W long to commercial fishing. These regulations are in effect for the 2026 season.

2026 SUMMER MANAGEMENT PLAN

This management plan provides information for the primary fisheries in the YMA. Information on areas that are fished only occasionally is available from the Yakutat Area management biologists listed at the end of this report. Most openings for sockeye salmon are from 6:00 A.M., Sunday, through 6:00 P.M., Tuesday, except for the Alek River which opens from 12:01 P.M., Sunday, through 12:00 noon, Monday, unless extended. The Alek River will open on the 1st Sunday in June (June 7), Yakutat Bay and Dangerous River will open on the 2nd Sunday in June (June 14), and the Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet and Manby Shore Outside Waters will open on the 3rd Sunday in June (June 21). By the 4th Sunday in June (June 28), all fisheries in the Yakutat District will be open by regulation, with the exceptions of the East Alek, Akwe, and the Italo Rivers, which will open by emergency order (Table 1).

ALSEK RIVER

The Alsek River set gillnet fishery average harvest is 5,400 sockeye, 160 Chinook, and 80 coho salmon. Canada's subsistence and sport harvest has averaged approximately 45 Chinook, 820 sockeye, and a small number of coho salmon during the same period. The 2025 Alsek River Chinook salmon harvest of 190 fish was above average, and the sockeye salmon harvest of 8,000 fish was above average.

Canada's First Nations' food fishery will be open in 2026 unless run size estimates indicate the escapement goal will not be achieved (*TTC In Prep*). The U.S. subsistence fishery will remain open as the U.S. subsistence harvests are relatively minor, harvesting a total of 200 salmon annually.

A variable proportion of the drainagewide escapement of Alsek River sockeye salmon stocks are enumerated at a counting weir on the Klukshu River operated by DFO Canada. Per the treaty, Alsek River sockeye salmon are managed for an escapement goal range of 24,000 to 33,500 fish—despite the department no longer having a formal escapement goal for Alsek River sockeye salmon. Alsek River escapement is based on the Klukshu River weir counts. The Klukshu River sockeye salmon BEG of 7,500 to 11,000 fish has been achieved in 7 of the past 10 years (2016–2025). Based on a stock–recruit model, the preseason forecast for 2026 is 16,900 fish, above the average run size of 13,000 fish. The principal contributing brood years are the 2021 Klukshu River escapement of 25,700 sockeye salmon and the 2022 Klukshu River escapement of 29,600 sockeye salmon.

Chinook salmon runs to the Klukshu River have been variable with signs of poor productivity. The Klukshu River Chinook salmon BEG range is 800–1,200 fish and the Alsek River drainage Chinook salmon BEG range is 3,500–5,300 fish. Escapement has been achieved 8 of the last 10 years (2016–2025) for the Klukshu River and 7 of the last 10 years for the Alsek River drainage. The Klukshu River Chinook salmon escapement for 2021 was 1,400 fish and for 2022 was 900 fish. Based on these primary brood year escapements, the preseason run forecast for 2026 is 1,700 Klukshu River Chinook salmon; above the average of 1,200 fish and above the BEG range. The Alsek River drainage preseason forecast is approximately 6,100 Chinook salmon, a figure derived from expanding Klukshu River preseason forecast. This forecast is above the average run size of 4,500 Chinook salmon.

The Alsek River set gillnet sockeye salmon fishery traditionally opens for a 24-hour period at noon on the first Sunday in June by regulation. For 2026, the fishery will open June 7 in statistical week (SW) 24. Initial weekly openings will be 2 days. Time and area may be adjusted for subsequent weeks based on comparisons of current year's CPUE to historical CPUE levels and Chinook salmon harvest levels. Preseason run size forecasts are also considered when determining the weekly fishing periods, especially early in the season. A 6-inch maximum mesh size restriction will be implemented through July 15 and the department will request that all live and healthy Chinook salmon caught be released. Restrictions on fishing time will be enacted if inseason information suggests they are necessary.

The Alsek River surf fishing area will be open during the same periods as the inriver fishery. The surf fishing area includes a half mile of shoreline on each side of the river mouth seaward to the outermost bar at mean low tide.

Beginning in mid-August, management of the set gillnet fishery will be based on run strength of coho salmon. Inseason management will be based on evaluation of fishery harvest trends, fishing effort, and CPUE relative to historical levels—similar to the management of sockeye salmon. Recent years have seen a decline in fishing effort during the coho salmon season on the Alsek River, primarily due to economic struggles (low prices and high cost of processing fish) and lack of aircraft to transport fish to town. It is anticipated that there will be minimal to no fishing effort for coho salmon in 2026.

EAST ALSEK RIVER

The East Alsek River is located on the Alsek River flood plain approximately 56 miles (90 km) southeast of Yakutat. In 2018, the combined East Alsek–Doame Rivers BEG range of 13,000 to 26,000 fish was eliminated by the escapement goal review committee. This BEG was replaced with a SEG range of 9,000 to 24,000 sockeye salmon for only the East Alsek River. Basing the escapement goal on just the dominant East Alsek River sockeye salmon run simplifies management of the set gillnet fishery in this area. Escapement will be closely monitored throughout the run and the East Alsek River will open by emergency order when the lower bound of the SEG range is attained. The length of weekly openings will be dependent on sockeye salmon run strength. If the fishery is opened, weekly openings are expected to be from 12:01 p.m., Sunday, through 12:00 p.m., Wednesday. The East Alsek River surf fishing area will be open for the same time periods as the East Alsek River. The East Alsek River will be managed for sockeye salmon abundance until September.

AKWE RIVER

The Akwe River is a clear river system located about 35 miles south of Yakutat. The lower 7 miles of the river are wide and shallow and flow parallel to the beach before entering the ocean. The Akwe River had a BEG range of 600 to 1,500 sockeye salmon but the BEG was eliminated in 2006 due to the inability to adequately assess escapement. There were closures during the sockeye salmon fishery due to low escapement from 2018–2021 and 2023–2024.

The sockeye salmon run to the Akwe River is expected to be average to above average in 2026 given recent trends in sockeye salmon production in the surrounding area.

In 2026, the sockeye salmon fishery will not open until an adequate level of escapement is observed. If a commercial fishery is announced, subsequent fishing time will be based on fishery performance and observations of escapement. Reductions in the normal 1.5-days weekly fishing period may be necessary to ensure adequate escapement. The Akwe River fishery will take place upstream of regulatory markers located approximately 500 yards upstream from the New Italo River confluence to the upper markers located 2.5 miles downstream from the westernmost extent of the sand dunes, about 3.5 river miles.

NEW ITALIO RIVER

In the winter of 1986–1987, the Italo River changed course to empty into the Akwe River near its outlet into the Gulf of Alaska. This new course became what is called the *New Italo River* and supports runs of sockeye and coho salmon. Determination of either Akwe or Italo Rivers' run strengths based on fishery performance below the confluence is not possible. Therefore, to protect New Italo River stocks, the set gillnet fishery will be closed from the mouth of the Akwe River to 500 yards upstream from the confluence.

The Italo River sockeye salmon fishery has not been open since 1987. The Italo River historically had an escapement goal of 2,500 to 7,000 sockeye salmon. In 2002, the escapement review committee eliminated the escapement goal because directed fishing was no longer occurring and escapement information was not reliable. The department has continued to conduct aerial surveys of the New Italo River and based on those surveys, the sockeye salmon stocks appear to be stable at new levels. Aerial surveys will be conducted throughout the 2026 season to monitor run strength. The set gillnet fishery may open if adequate escapement is observed.

DANGEROUS RIVER

The Dangerous River will open downstream of the Dangerous River Bridge beginning June 14. Weekly openings will be from 6:00 A.M., Sunday, through 6:00 P.M., Tuesday, until closed by emergency order. Fishing effort and corresponding harvest data for this system has been sporadic during the last 10 years (2016–2025) and during the last 5 years (2021–2025) less than 3 permits fished a year. Marine waters adjacent to the river mouth will be open for the same fishing periods as the Dangerous River.

SITUK–AHRNKLIN INLET

The Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet is located approximately 9 miles by road from Yakutat and is the oldest and historically most productive fishery in the YMA. The fishery occurs primarily in the inlet, although some fishing occurs in the surf area. Sockeye salmon typically comprise the majority of the harvest during the summer season. The Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet commercial setnet fishery has been closed to the retention of Chinook salmon from 2010 through 2020 due to poor run strength. In 2021, 2022 and 2025, the commercial set gillnet fishery was opened to retention of Chinook salmon after inseason projections indicated escapement would be made. Harvests have averaged 14 Chinook, 26,700 sockeye, 84,600 coho, 23,100 pink, and 60 chum salmon over the prior 10 years (2016–2025).

The 2022 sockeye salmon parent-year escapement was 90,400 fish; above the BEG range of 30,000 to 70,000 fish. Based on this strong parent-year escapement and recent harvest trends, a harvest of 20,000 to 40,000 fish with an escapement of approximately 70,000 fish is expected for 2026. The Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet will open by regulation on June 21, for a 60-hour period (2.5 days). Future fishing periods will be based on escapement through the Situk River weir. Escapements of sockeye salmon through the weir serve as the primary inseason indicator of run strength and adjustments to the Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet commercial set gillnet fisheries may be made on the basis of these counts. A run-timing model will be used to estimate the total Situk River sockeye salmon run after several weeks of harvest and escapement data are available.

Chinook salmon commercial, subsistence, and sport fisheries in the Situk River drainage are managed under the guidelines of the *Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet and Lost River King Salmon Fisheries Management Plan* (5 AAC 30.365) to achieve a BEG range of 450 to 1,050 large (3-ocean age and older) Chinook salmon. The Division of Commercial Fisheries annually develops a Chinook salmon run size forecast which is used to set various management actions per the management plan. The 2026 Situk River Chinook preseason run forecast is for 900 large fish.

Situk River Chinook salmon runs in recent years have been erratic. In response, management restrictions in all fisheries have been implemented since 2010. Despite these restrictions, the Situk River BEG has been achieved in only 7 of the last 10 years (2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2024,

2025). Expected management measures in 2026 for Chinook salmon conservation during the sockeye salmon fishery include the following:

- a) The regulatory closure around the mouth of the Situk River will be enlarged to encompass the area of high Chinook salmon abundance. Commercial and subsistence fisheries will be prohibited within the regulatory markers located at southeast end of Johnson Slough (59°26.27' N lat, 139°32.62' W long) to a regulatory marker directly across the Inlet on Black Sand Spit (59°25.77' N lat, 139°33.18' W long) to a regulatory marker westward along the beach of Black Sand Spit (59°26.49' N lat, 139°35.01' W long) to a regulatory marker west of the Yakutat Seafoods buying station (59°26.72' N lat, 139°34.61' W long).
- b) Chinook salmon may not be sold or retained for personal use in the commercial fishery. Dead Chinook salmon may be delivered to the buying stations at the time of sockeye salmon delivery for distribution to the Yakutat Senior Center and those in the community who are blind, disabled, or 65 years of age or older.
- c) The department requests permit holders closely attend their gear and release all live, healthy Chinook salmon. The department has no regulatory authority to enforce this measure, but the alternative may be a closure of the sockeye salmon fishery.
- d) Retention of Chinook salmon in the subsistence fishery will be prohibited until the Situk River Chinook salmon BEG is attained. All subsistence permit holders in the Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet must closely attend their gear at all times when it is being used to take salmon (5 AAC 01.670[c]).

The Situk River pink salmon run has traditionally supported the largest pink salmon harvest in the YMA. Pink salmon have been counted annually at the Situk River weir since 1976 and more sporadically during boat surveys. In 1995, ADF&G established BEG ranges for even-year returns of 42,000 to 105,000 fish and odd-year returns of 54,000 to 200,000 fish, (Clark 1995). However, weir counts do not capture full escapements in all years because the weir is removed before the pink salmon run peaks in late August to early September (Piston and Heintz 2020). In 2012, ADF&G adopted a lower bound SEG of 33,000 pink salmon counted at the weir through August 5 in an effort to provide a consistent early season index of abundance and to maintain a goal for fisheries management (Piston and Heintz 2020). After 7 years, the escapement goal did not provide a consistent early season index of abundance, as pink salmon escapements counts in early August were highly variable from year to year. In January 2018, given the limited utility of available escapement information and the low harvest rates on the pink salmon stock, the escapement goal review committee eliminated the Situk River pink salmon escapement goal.

Pink salmon harvest in 2026 is expected to be minimal. In recent years, the low value of pink salmon has provided little economic incentive to target pink salmon. In addition, pink salmon management options for maximizing harvest are limited due to the overlap in run timing with sockeye and coho salmon.

Steelhead kelts occasionally accumulate in the Situk River prior to emigrating to the ocean during the early part of the sockeye salmon fishery. When the emigration is late, there is potential for the Situk River set gillnet fishery to incidentally harvest emigrating steelhead kelts. The rate of emigration of steelhead kelts often increases following periods of heavy rainfall. If a major emigration is expected to occur during a scheduled gillnet fishing period, the opening may be delayed to reduce the incidental catch of steelhead kelts. Alternately, steelhead kelts may be held upstream from the weir for release during a commercial fishery closure.

LOST RIVER

In the winter of 1998–1999, the Lost River changed course to discharge into the Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet instead of the Gulf of Alaska. As a result, Lost River stocks have since been harvested incidentally in the Situk–Ahrnklin set gillnet fishery since 1999. The escapement goal review committee eliminated the Lost River sockeye salmon escapement goal in 2018. The goal was eliminated because survey methods were not standardized; the survey type (aerial, foot, boat), area (Tawah Creek, Ophir Creek, or Summit Lake, or combinations of multiple areas), and timing varied considerably over the decades. Prior to 2018, the Lost River was managed to achieve the SEG lower bound of 1,000 sockeye salmon. Although the sockeye salmon SEG was eliminated, the department continues to monitor and take actions to protect Lost River salmon stocks. No more than 1,000 sockeye salmon have been observed in the Lost River in any year during the past 10 years (2016–2025).

An area closure around the mouth of the Lost River has been implemented to reduce harvest of Lost River salmon stocks since 1999. The area closure includes an area from 100 to 500 yards on either side of the mouth of the Lost River. The regulatory closure (5 AAC 30.350 [a][7]) will be enlarged to 500 yards for the duration of the season. The intent of this closure is to protect Lost River sockeye salmon stocks and provide for normal weekly fishing periods in the Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet for Situk River salmon stocks.

While the 2022 sockeye salmon parent-year peak escapement was not observed due to high water events. Based on parent-year escapement and recent low productivity, the 2026 Lost River sockeye salmon run is expected to be below average.

YAKUTAT BAY AND MANBY SHORE OUTSIDE FISHERIES

Two separate set gillnet fisheries occur in Yakutat Bay. The Yakutat Bay fishery occurs in the ocean waters of Yakutat Bay south of 59°40' N lat and will open June 14 for 2.5 days. The Manby Shore Outside fishery encompasses the ocean waters of Yakutat Bay north of 59°40' N lat and will open June 21 for 2.5 days.

Both the Yakutat Bay and Manby Shore Outside fisheries harvest mixed stocks of sockeye salmon. Tag–recovery data collected in 1987 indicated that a major portion of the Yakutat Bay sockeye salmon harvest was of Situk River origin. Due to the high contribution of Situk River sockeye salmon to the Yakutat Bay and Manby Shore Outside fisheries, both fisheries will be managed with consideration of Situk River sockeye salmon escapement from the third week in June through the third week of July. Weekly fishing periods will be limited to a maximum of 4.5 days due to the mixed stock nature of the ocean fisheries and the potentially adverse impact on weaker local area stocks.

MANBY SHORE INSIDE FISHERY

The Manby Shore Inside fishery will open June 28 in streams along the northern shore of Yakutat Bay. Management of the Manby Shore Inside fishery (waters upstream of the mean high tide line) will be based on the abundance of local stocks. Sockeye salmon are primarily harvested from Manby and Sudden Streams. A 2.5 day per week fishing period can be expected during the initial opening period scheduled for June 28. Additional fishing periods will depend on fishery performance.

YAKATAGA DISTRICT

The Yakataga District is not expected to open during the sockeye salmon season in 2026. Openings are not expected to occur until early August and will be based on observations of coho salmon escapement.

2026 FALL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The fall fishing season generally begins on the first Sunday of August. At that time, the regulatory weekly fishing period changes in most areas to 12:01 P.M. opening and 12:00 noon closing times. During the fall season, set gillnet fishing occurs in both the Yakutat and Yakataga districts. In the Yakutat District, the fall coho salmon fishery occurs primarily in the same areas as the summer sockeye salmon fishery. In the Yakataga District, the coho salmon fishery is the only fishery that takes place.

Overall harvest and escapements of coho salmon in the YMA were average in the primary parent year (2023). The 2023 Situk River a peak escapement of 9,800 was observed, which is over the upper end of the SEG escapement goal. There was no escapement count of coho salmon in the Tsiu River in 2023. Also in 2023, there was no peak escapement count on Tawah Creek, but it is likely that the lower bound of the coho salmon SEG of 1,400 to 4,200 fish was achieved. The 2026 coho salmon run is expected to be average to above average areawide.

Potential concern regarding Yakutat Area coho salmon is based on both climatic and geological effects. The land is rising away from the water table due to some of the highest rates of isostatic rebound in the world. This rebound dramatically affects freshwater rearing habitat for coho salmon. Forest Highway 10 crosses many streams and tributaries of the Situk and Ahrnklin Rivers and of Seal Creek. At least 5 of these streams, although listed in the Anadromous Waters Catalog as important for both spawning and rearing of coho salmon, no longer exist. These streams have not had stream flows for almost 10 years. It is possible that these events will negatively impact coho salmon production in the Yakutat Area.

YAKUTAT DISTRICT

Fall fishing for coho salmon will likely begin Sunday, August 2; however, sockeye management will continue in the East Alsek River through September and in the Alsek River until the end of SW 36 (August 30). The initial fishing periods for coho management are expected to be from 12:01 P.M., Sunday, through 12:00 noon, Wednesday. Inseason management of all Yakutat District fall fisheries will be based on fishery performance data and coho salmon escapement surveys.

BEGs were developed for 7 Yakutat Area coho salmon streams in 1994 based on stock–recruit analyses that contained several untested assumptions, including expansion factors for peak survey counts. Three of the systems have supported only minimal commercial fisheries in recent years and are no longer consistently surveyed for coho salmon escapements. The BEGs for Kaliakh, East Alsek, and Akwe Rivers have been eliminated and currently only 3 systems have escapement goals for coho salmon, one of which is in the Yakataga District. The 2 coho salmon stocks in the Yakutat District that have escapement goals are the Situk River with a SEG of 3,800 to 9,600 fish and Tawah Creek with a SEG of 1,400 to 4,200 fish.

Fishing time and area adjustments will be made for each river as needed. Closed areas can be expected in the Yahtse River to protect schools of milling coho salmon at tributary mouths. Actual closed areas will be based on inseason observations of coho salmon schooling behavior, which is

related to river flow conditions. Several small coho salmon streams are located along the forelands west of the Yahtse River to Cape Yakataga. Most of these streams have very small numbers of spawning coho salmon and cannot support inriver set gillnet fisheries. The area from the Yahtse River to Cape Yakataga will remain closed until harvestable surpluses are evident.

YAKATAGA DISTRICT

The major fisheries in the Yakataga District target coho salmon on the Kaliakh and Tsiu Rivers and are located about 125 miles northwest of Yakutat. The Tsiu River recorded minor effort in 2004 and supported a more normal fishery from 2005 through 2013. Fishing effort has substantially declined on the Tsiu River during the last 8 years due to changes in the river with fewer areas to fish and minimal air transportation. The Tsiu River has a 5-year average (2021–2025) harvest of 1,600 coho salmon and the Kaliakh River has 5-year average (2021–2025) harvest of 8,400 coho salmon. The Kaliakh River had only minor effort in 2004 and 2006–2010, and moderate effort in 2018–2025. Escapement surveys of the Kaliakh River have not been conducted since 2007. The Tsiu River parent-year (2023) escapement was not observed, but it is likely the SEG of 10,000 to 29,000 fish was achieved. The current Tsiu River coho salmon escapement goal was met or exceeded in every year surveyed since 1973 (some years surveys were not completed because of weather).

The 2026 coho salmon runs are expected to be average to above average in both the Tsiu and Kaliakh Rivers. The Tsiu River will open by emergency order and opening dates and fishing periods will be determined from observed escapements above and below the regulatory markers. Due to either extremely low water levels or major geological changes in the Tsiu River, the regulatory markers have been moved annually to ensure adequate escapement before opening the commercial fishery. In 2013, dramatic geological changes occurred altering existing channels and creating new channels which altered coho salmon migratory patterns. One of the overflow channels from the Tsiu River cuts across the sand flats inland of the Tsiu River and became a major tributary and new migration route for coho salmon. At the 2018 Alaska Board of Fisheries Southeast and Yakutat Finfish meeting, the department submitted a proposal to move the regulatory markers to a location that better reflected the current topography. The board amended 5 AAC 30.350(a)(12) and the new closed waters on the Tsiu/Tsiu Rivers are north of 60°5.34' N lat, and west of 143°3.66' W long.

The Kaliakh River will open on August 2. Weekly fishing periods will be 72 hours starting no earlier than 9:00 A.M., Sunday, and may be spread over the week. Market conditions and weather will determine if the Yakataga District is fished in 2026, as fish need to either be flown or boated to Yakutat or Cordova for processing. In 2025, the Tsiu River became a tributary to the Kaliakh River, and management actions were taken to ensure that the Tsiu River escapement goal was achieved. Several management actions were taken during the course of 2025 season before finally settling on closing the Tsiu River delta at the confluence of the Tsiu and Kaliakh Rivers. This measure was enacted by closing Tsiu River Delta and those waters extending 100 yards from the delta. The area around the Tsiu River Delta begins at but does not include the edge of the upriver extent of the delta and closes at the eastern bank of the Kaliakh River across from Tsiu River delta. These final management actions taken in 2025 will be implemented in 2026. Further modifications may be necessary to adjust for changes in river flows and fishing patterns to ensure that coho escapements are achieved.

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FISHERY CONTACTS

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1.–Yakutat Management Area commercial set gillnet fisheries 2026 opening dates.

Area	Opening date
Yakutat District	
Alsek River	7 June
Dangerous River	14 June
Yakutat Bay (south of 59°40' N lat)	14 June
Manby Shore Ocean	21 June
Situk–Ahrnklin Inlet	21 June
Lost River	by Emergency Order
East Alsek River	by Emergency Order
Akwe River	28 June or by Emergency Order
Manby Shore Inside	28 June
Remainder of the Yakutat District	28 June
Italio River	by Emergency Order
Yakataga District	
All areas	by Emergency Order
Kaliakh River	3 August
Tsiu River	by Emergency Order

Table 2.–Yakutat Management Area salmon escapement goals.

Species	System	Escapement goal	Goal type	Year established	Assessment method
Chinook	Klukshu River ^{a,b,d} (Alsek)	800–1,200	Treaty	2013	Weir
	Alsek River (total) ^b	3,500–5,300	BEG	2013	MR
	Situk River	450–1,050	BEG	2003	Weir
Sockeye	East Alsek River	9,000–24,000	SEG	2018	HS, IE
	Alsek River	24,000–33,500	Treaty	2013	Expansion
	Klukshu River (Alsek)	7,500–11,000	BEG	2013	Weir
	Situk River	30,000–70,000	BEG	2003	Weir
Coho	Tawah Creek (Lost River)	1,400–4,200	SEG	2015	BS, IE
	Situk River	3,800–9,600	SEG	2022	BS, IE
	Tsiu/Tsivat Rivers	10,000–29,000	SEG	2018	AS, IE

Note: (BEG) biological escapement goal, (SEG) sustainable escapement goal, (HS) helicopter survey, (AS) aerial survey, (BS) boat survey, (IE) index escapement, (MR) Mark–recapture assessment.

^a Chinook salmon goals for Klukshu and Alsek rivers are for all fish; Situk River is for large fish (≥ 660 mm mid eye to fork length, or fish age 1.3 and older).

^b Escapement to the Alsek River is calculated through mark–recapture assessment project.

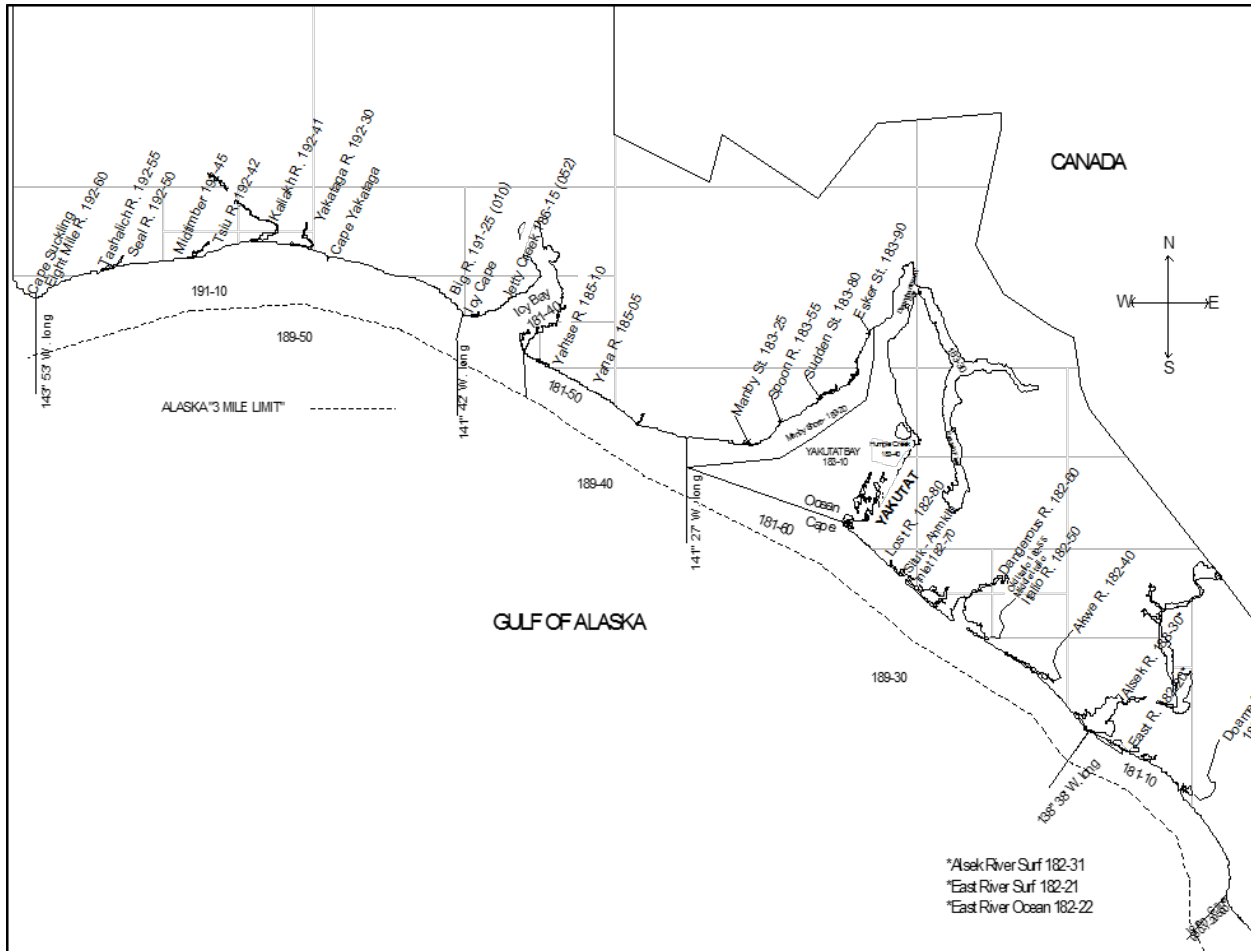


Figure 1.—Yakutat Management Area statistical reporting areas.