

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



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EASTERN NORTON SOUND SUBSISTENCE FISHING CLOSURES

The king salmon run is again expected to be below average in Norton Sound. King salmon have been designated a stock of concern by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts and as a result the department will have additional subsistence fishing restrictions and closures with the overall goal of providing limited harvest opportunities while ensuring that adequate numbers of king salmon reach spawning areas in eastern Norton Sound drainages.

Specific strategies vary for each subdistrict depending on expected fishing effort and recent harvest patterns based on the expected run size of king salmon. Fishing times and restrictions for each subdistrict are as follows:

Norton Bay Subdistrict

Effective the evening of June 14 at midnight, all flowing waters draining the Inglutalik and Ungalik rivers, and all marine waters of the Norton Bay Subdistrict, will be placed on a subsistence gillnet fishing schedule of two 36-hour periods per week. Periods will be from 6:00 a.m. Mondays to 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays, and from 6:00 a.m. Saturdays to 6:00 p.m. Sundays. During the openings from Mondays to Tuesdays, subsistence users will be restricted to set gillnets with a stretched mesh size of 6 inches or smaller. For weekend openings from Saturdays to Sundays, there will be no restrictions on mesh size. This schedule will remain in place until July 1. The Koyuk River drainage is not affected by this action and will remain open to subsistence fishing with no restrictions in place. Additionally, the use of beach seines, dip nets, and cast nets is open continuously by regulation in all waters of Norton Bay Subdistrict, but any king salmon incidentally captured in these gear types must be immediately released alive and unharmed.

Shaktoolik Subdistrict

Effective the evening of June 14 at midnight, all marine waters and freshwaters of Norton Sound Subdistrict 5, the Shaktoolik Subdistrict, will close to subsistence salmon fishing. Next week the department plans to have a subsistence fishing period in the marine waters with gillnet mesh size restricted to 6 inches or smaller during favorable weather conditions. The Shaktoolik River drainage will remain closed to subsistence salmon fishing until further notice. Gillnets used to target trout and whitefish in the Shaktoolik River and all other freshwater areas of Subdistrict 5 must have a mesh size no greater than 4 inches. Dip nets and cast nets may also be used, but any king salmon captured must be immediately released.

Unalakleet Subdistrict

Effective the evening of June 14 at midnight, all marine waters and freshwaters of Norton Sound Subdistrict 6, the Unalakleet Subdistrict, will close to subsistence salmon fishing. The North River and the Unalakleet River drainage downstream of the North River including the marine waters within 500 yards of the Unalakleet River is closed to all net fishing. However, dip nets and cast nets may be used, but any king salmon captured must be immediately released. Next week the department plans to have a subsistence fishing period in the marine waters during favorable weather conditions with gillnet mesh size restricted to 6 inches or smaller.

For Other Eastern Norton Sound Coastal Waters

All marine waters from the western tip of Cape Denbigh east to Point Dexter and all marine waters from Black Point south to Wood Point, east of St. Michael will close to subsistence salmon fishing effective the evening of June 14 at midnight. However, in all waters from Wood Point west to Point Romanof, subsistence salmon fishing will remain open 7 days a week.

The department will evaluate early season run timing and abundance of king salmon using ground based escapement indices and fishermen reports from the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts. Inseason assessments of king salmon run abundance may indicate the need for additional conservation measures or that run abundance warrants a relaxation of subsistence fishing restrictions. The department will also consider setting fishing periods allowing the use of beach seines to target other salmon species in freshwater areas.