

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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NORTON SOUND COMMERCIAL FISHING OPENS THURSDAY

Commercial salmon fishing will be open for 48 hours in Norton Sound Subdistricts 2—6, Golovin, Elim, Norton Bay, Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts, from 6 p.m. Thursday until 6 p.m. Saturday. In Nome Subdistrict commercial salmon fishing will be open for 72 hours from 9 p.m. Thursday until 9 p.m. Sunday. Permit holders are limited to 100 fathoms of net in aggregate length and gillnets must have a mesh size of 6 inches or smaller.

The department forecast was for a well above average chum salmon run in 2019 but catches so far have been weaker than expected. Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts first fishing period began on July 1, but weather has slowed fishing effort. In northern Norton Sound stormier weather has affected the fleet keeping most from fishing for nearly a week.

High water is preventing northern Norton Sound escapement counting projects from beginning operations although the Kwiniuk River tower crew in Elim Subdistrict was able to get the counting tower operational on July 2. Both the Eldorado and Bonanza River weirs in Nome Subdistrict had short-lived operational periods before being knocked out by high water. A combination of a large lingering snowpack and rainy weather is expected to keep most northern Norton Sound projects from being operational for a least another week and the department is using harvest-based management until the escapement counting projects are operational. Harvest based management compares the catch from a fishing period with catches from previous years during similar dates and takes into consideration fishing effort and weather conditions.

Here are the escapement counts from operational projects:

Unalakleet River: 3,900 kings, 7,000 chums, 11 sockeyes, 43,000 pinks*

North River: 1,000 kings, 1,000 chums, 57,000 pinks

Shaktoolik River: 1,900 kings, 2,900 chums, 69,000 pinks

Inglutalik River: 100 kings, 1,200 chums, 300 pinks

Kwiniuk River: 100 chums

* Picket spacing at Unalakleet weir allows most pinks to pass through without being counted.