

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



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Date Issued: September 17, 2019

2019 BRISTOL BAY SALMON SEASON SUMMARY

The following is an overview of the 2019 Bristol Bay commercial salmon season. All data are preliminary.

The 2019 inshore Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run of 56.5 million fish is the fourth largest and was 45% above the 39.0 million average run for the latest 20-year time period. It was the fifth consecutive year that inshore sockeye salmon runs exceeded 50 million fish. 2019 was the second highest harvest of all species of salmon combined, and the highest exvessel value of all time.

The 2019 Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run was 46% above the preseason inshore forecast of 38.7 million fish. Runs to all districts, except Ugashik, were larger than the preseason forecast. The commercial harvest of 43.0 million sockeye salmon was 65% above the 26.1 million preseason forecast and is the second largest harvest on record. All sockeye salmon escapement goals were met or exceeded, with a total bay-wide escapement of 13.4 million fish. The preliminary harvests for other species are 30,579 Chinook, 1,379,169 chum, 75,517 coho, and 5,680 pink salmon.

EXVESSEL VALUE

The 2019 Bristol Bay preliminary exvessel value of \$306.5 million of all salmon species ranks first in the history of the fishery and was 248% of the 20-year average of \$124 million. The 44.5 million harvest of all salmon species was the second largest in the history of the fishery behind the 45.4 million fish harvest in 1995. The sockeye salmon harvest of 43.0 million ranks second behind the 44.2 million fish harvest of 1995. The weight, harvest, and price of each species were used to estimate exvessel value (Table 1). Prices are an average of post-season processor final operations reports and do not include future price adjustments for icing, bleeding, or production bonuses.

Table 1.—Average price, weight, harvest, and value of salmon harvest in Bristol Bay, 2019.

| Species | Price/lb. | Avg. weight (lb.) | Number of fish | Total weight | Value |
|---------|-----------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Sockeye | \$1.35 | 5.2 | 42,967,737 | 225,108,917 | \$303,897,039 |
| Chinook | \$0.50 | 11.4 | 30,579 | 347,449 | \$173,725 |
| Chum | \$0.25 | 6.5 | 1,379,169 | 9,002,884 | \$2,250,721 |
| Pink | \$0.05 | 3.8 | 5,680 | 21,588 | \$1,079 |
| Coho | \$0.55 | 6.0 | 75,517 | 455,885 | \$250,737 |
| Totals | | | 44,492,853 | 234,936,724 | \$306,573,300 |

ALLOCATION

Bristol Bay fisheries are managed to achieve allocation between drift and set gillnet gear groups in four of five districts (Table 2). Togiak District is excluded from the allocation plan. Strategies used to achieve allocation between gear groups included varying the amount of fishing time and providing separate gear group openings.

Table 2.—Allocation of Bristol Bay drift and set gillnet harvest, 2019.

| District | Drift gillnet percent of harvest allocated /caught | District set gillnet percent of harvest allocated /caught | Section set gillnet percent of harvest allocated /caught |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| Naknek/Kvichak | 84% / 77% | 16% / 23% | Naknek: 8% / 13% Kvichak: 8% / 10% |
| Egegik | 86% / 82% | 14% / 18% | Not applicable |
| Ugashik | 90% / 71% | 10% / 29% | Not applicable |
| Nushagak ^a | 74% / 77% | 26% / 23% | Nushagak: 20% / 18% Igushik: 6% / 3% |

^a Wood River Special Harvest Area harvest was all set net and is included in the 23% listed above.

SPECIES PERFORMANCE

Sockeye Salmon

This year's Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run was 46% above the preseason inshore forecast of 38.7 million fish (Table 3). The 2019 harvest of 43.0 million fish was 76% higher than the recent 20-year average for all districts (Table 4). Sockeye salmon escapement goals were met on Kvichak, Alagnak, Nushagak, and Igushik rivers. All other systems exceeded their respective escapement goal ranges (Table 5). Naknek-Kvichak, Egegik, and Ugashik districts (east side) observed relatively late run timing this season. Due to the disparity in run timing between the Nushagak and the east side districts, the processing sector was, for the most part, able to keep pace with the run. The Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run was dominated by fish with one year of freshwater residence (1.2s and 1.3s). Fish with two years of freshwater residence (2.2s and 2.3s) were below preseason expectations, particularly in the Egegik and Kvichak rivers. There were two trends observed in sockeye salmon weights in the 2019 season; fish that had three years of saltwater residence were closer to long-term average weights (5.5 to 6 lbs.), while fish with two years of saltwater residence were smaller than long-term average weights (3.5 to 4.5 lbs.).

Table 3.—Difference of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon actual inshore run versus forecast, 2019.

| District | Inshore forecast | Inshore run | % Above/below forecast |
|----------------|------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Naknek-Kvichak | 15,530,000 | 17,455,107 | 13% Above |
| Egegik | 8,740,000 | 17,144,222 | 98% Above |
| Ugashik | 3,330,000 | 2,569,898 | 22% Below |
| Nushagak | 9,990,000 | 17,818,485 | 78% Above |
| Togiak | 1,100,000 | 1,361,698 | 18% Above |
| Totals | 38,700,000 | 56,349,410 | 46% Above |

Table 4.—2019 preliminary commercial sockeye salmon harvests and 20-year averages by district.

| District | 1999–2018 Average sockeye harvest | 2019 Sockeye salmon harvest |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Naknek-Kvichak | 8,329,291 | 11,351,937 |
| Egegik | 6,826,207 | 14,804,012 |
| Ugashik | 2,932,709 | 1,022,150 |
| Nushagak | 7,486,901 | 14,779,786 |
| Togiak | 591,716 | 1,009,852 |
| Totals | 26,249,871 | 42,967,737 |

Table 5.—Bristol Bay sockeye salmon escapement goals and actual escapements, 2019.

| River system | Escapement goal range | Escapement |
|----------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Kvichak River | 2,000,000–10,000,000 | 2,371,242 |
| Naknek River | 800,000–2,000,000 | 2,911,470 |
| Alagnak River | 320,000 minimum | 820,458 |
| Egegik River | 800,000–2,000,000 | 2,340,210 |
| Ugashik River | 500,000–1,400,000 | 1,547,748 |
| Nushagak River | 370,000–900,000 | 709,349 |
| Wood River | 700,000–1,800,000 | 2,073,276 |
| Igushik River | 150,000–400,000 | 256,074 |
| Togiak River | 120,000–270,000 | 351,846 |
| Total | | 13,381,673 |

Chinook Salmon

Except in the Nushagak and Togiak districts, the 2019 Chinook salmon harvests in Bristol Bay were above average (Table 6). All Chinook salmon were caught during directed sockeye salmon periods in all commercial districts and a preliminary total of 30,579 fish were harvested; 30% below the 20-year average of 43,397 fish (Table 6). Chinook salmon escapement into the Nushagak River as enumerated at the sonar site was 46,763 and below the escapement goal range of 55,000–120,000 fish.

Table 6.–Chinook salmon preliminary harvest data and 20-year averages by district.

| District | 1999–2018 Average Chinook salmon harvest | 2019 Chinook salmon harvest |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Naknek/Kvichak | 1,662 | 1,803 |
| Egegik | 672 | 2,564 |
| Ugashik | 953 | 1,796 |
| Nushagak | 34,367 | 20,783 |
| Togiak | 5,743 | 3,633 |
| Totals | 43,397 | 30,579 |

Chum Salmon

The 2019 preliminary Bristol Bay chum salmon harvest was 1,379,169 fish, which was above the latest 20-year average (1999–2018) of 1,070,746 fish (Table 7). The Nushagak District was the largest producer of chum salmon, where 851,199 fish were harvested.

Pink Salmon

Pink salmon return to Bristol Bay in even years. There were not significant amounts of pink salmon present in Bristol Bay in 2019.

Coho Salmon

The preliminary coho salmon harvest in 2019 was 75,517 fish, which was below the latest 20-year average of 93,339 fish (Table 7). The Nushagak District is typically the largest producer of coho salmon but was closed due to poor escapement this season. Coho salmon harvest in the Nushagak District was 28,195 fish which was below the 20-year average of 63,771 fish. In 2019, the Togiak District produced its largest coho salmon harvest with 28,539 fish being harvested.

Acknowledgements

The department would like to thank the Bristol Bay Fisheries Collaborative (BBFC) for funding assistance in 2019. The BBFC began in 2016 and is an agreement between ADF&G and the Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute (BBSRI) to work together with stakeholders to restore a world class fisheries management system and raise funds to support and maintain it. This agreement is supported by ADF&G, drift and set gillnet fishermen, processors, municipalities, villages, support industries, and other stakeholders. A list of organizations that committed financial support to the BBFC in 2019, as well as additional information about this agreement can be found at <https://www.bbsri.org/bbfc>.

In 2019, BBSRI and the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association (BBRSDA) funded the deployment of a second test boat in the Port Moller Test Fishery. The use of a second test fishing vessel provided the opportunity to document the migratory path of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon well beyond the historically fished locations and better index the arrival timing and abundance of this year’s return than was possible with a single vessel.

Table 7.—Preliminary 2019 Bristol Bay salmon harvest and escapement by district and species.

| District | Sockeye | Chinook | Chum | Pink | Coho | TOTAL |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------|-----------|-------|--------|------------|
| Naknek-Kvichak catch | 11,351,937 | 1,803 | 111,086 | 310 | 1,151 | 11,466,287 |
| Escapement-Kvichak tower | 2,371,242 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | 2,371,242 |
| Naknek tower | 2,911,470 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | 2,911,470 |
| Alagnak tower | 820,458 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | 820,458 |
| Naknek-Kvichak subtotal | 17,455,107 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| Egegik catch | 14,804,012 | 2,564 | 161,625 | 27 | 17,351 | 14,985,579 |
| Escapement-Egegik tower | 2,340,210 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | 2,340,210 |
| Egegik subtotal | 17,144,222 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| Ugashik catch | 1,022,150 | 1,796 | 24,966 | 214 | 281 | 1,049,407 |
| Escapement-Ugashik tower | 1,547,748 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | 1,547,748 |
| Ugashik subtotal | 2,569,898 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| Nushagak catch | 14,779,786 | 20,783 | 851,199 | 1,523 | 28,195 | 15,681,486 |
| Escapement- Wood tower | 2,073,276 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | 2,073,276 |
| Igushik | 256,074 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | 256,074 |
| Nushagak sonar ^a | 709,349 | 46,763 | 651,164 | N.A. | 51,852 | 1,459,128 |
| Nushagak subtotal | 17,818,485 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| Togiak catch | 1,009,852 | 3,633 | 230,293 | 3,606 | 28,539 | 1,275,923 |
| Escapement - Togiak tower | 351,846 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | 351,846 |
| Togiak R. & trib. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | 0 |
| Kulukak | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | 0 |
| Togiak subtotal | 1,361,698 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| Bristol Bay catch | 42,967,737 | 30,579 | 1,379,169 | 5,680 | 75,517 | 44,458,682 |
| Bristol Bay escapement | 13,381,673 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| Bristol Bay total run | 56,349,410 | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |

^a Nushagak sonar enumerated Chinook, sockeye, chum and coho salmon in 2019.