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Advisory Announcement

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Kuskokwim River Salmon Fishery Announcement #8

2025 Preliminary Kuskokwim Management Area Season Summary

This is an announcement from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) for fishers in the Kuskokwim Management Area.

Kuskokwim Area Management

Kuskokwim River salmon fisheries were managed according to the *Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 07.365). The Kuskokwim Bay salmon fisheries were managed according to the *Districts 4 and 5 Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 07.367).

Kuskokwim River

Preseason Forecast

The 2025 Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon forecast was for a range of 136,000 to 217,000 fish. The drainage-wide Chinook salmon escapement goal is 65,000–120,000 fish. If the run came back as projected, the drainage-wide and tributary escapement goals were expected to be achieved while providing for subsistence fishing opportunity. Preseason and inseason management decisions were made with input from the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group). It was the intent of the department to manage all Kuskokwim River salmon stocks in a conservative manner, consistent with the *Policy for the Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries* under 5 AAC 39.222, to meet escapement goals and the subsistence priority.

In-season Subsistence Management

Beginning in 2011 federal special actions (FSA) have been approved by the Federal Subsistence Board, which have allowed for United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to manage subsistence fisheries within the navigable waters adjacent to the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). In 2025, the federal inseason manager requested and was granted a temporary Federal Special Action (FSA) which allowed for up to 90 days of fisheries management for Chinook, chum, and coho salmon runs. Inseason management decisions were made in consultation with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Between June 1 and August 7, fishing for Chinook, chum, and coho salmon was restricted to federally qualified users. Fishing for sockeye salmon was restricted to selective gears for all fishers. USFWS will publish reports detailing their inseason management decisions.

The Kuskokwim River Subsistence Sections 1-3 were managed by the department until May 31 and then again after the FSA was lifted on August 7. Sections 4 and 5 were managed by the department at all times of the year, as were the rivers in Kuskokwim Bay (Districts 4 and 5). The department uses the regulations determined by the Alaska Board of Fisheries and the public process to guide management decisions. "Front-end closures", designed to ensure escapement of early season upriver-bound Chinook salmon from

harvest, began June 9 in Sections 4 and 5 and consisted of restricting mainstem fishing to selective gears to allow for non-salmon harvest (primarily sheefish and whitefish). With the gillnet closure came additional restrictions, including mandatory release of Chinook salmon caught in selective gears, and tributary closures. Subsequently, at 12:01 a.m. June 12, fishing with gillnets was opened in Sections 4 and 5, with gillnets restricted 6-inch or less mesh size and no longer than 25 fathoms. Retention of all species was then allowed with selective gear in state waters.

Chinook salmon remained a conservation concern in 2025, therefore Kuskokwim Bay management also restricted mesh size to 6-inch or less. Additionally, there is a regulation in District 4 that restricts fishing on Sundays between June 1 and July 15 and limits gear to 1 50-fathom net per boat, not exceeding 45 meshes in depth. District 5 had no restrictions.

On August 7 at 11:59 a.m., the USFWS rescinded the FSA and returned management of Sections 1-3 to the department. Cumulative coho salmon passage at the sonar on August 7th was 249,000 fish which was the highest passage observed at this date. On average 100% of the Chinook and sockeye salmon runs, along with 99% of the chum salmon run, have passed through the Bethel area by mid-August. The sonar data indicated that the coho salmon escapement goals at the Kwethluk River and Kogrukluk River weirs would likely be met. Working Group members reported that subsistence fishing efforts would be low at this time of year. Based on this in-season run assessment data, the department determined that allowing unrestricted subsistence fishing in the Kuskokwim River and its tributaries was warranted. Subsequently, on August 7 at 12:00 p.m., the department opened subsistence fishing with all gears until further notice from the mouth of the Kuskokwim River upstream to its headwaters (subsistence sections 1-5).

Post-season subsistence harvest surveys, conducted by the department's Subsistence Division are presently being conducted. An assessment of subsistence salmon harvest in 2025 will not be available until Spring 2026 after postseason harvest surveys have been completed, data have been analyzed, and preliminary harvest estimates are produced.

2025 District 1 Commercial Fishery

There were no commercial buyers or processors operating in the Kuskokwim River districts. Therefore, commercial fishing opportunities were limited to individuals registered with the department as catcher/sellers who had secured their own markets. A total of six commercial gillnet fishing periods directed at coho salmon were provided in District 1 of the Kuskokwim River between August 8–18. As of August 19th, the sonar passage of coho salmon was 369,000 fish, subsistence fishers were reporting satisfaction with their salmon harvest, and minimal commercial harvest was reported. Therefore, daily 6-hour commercial opportunities were provided from August 20–30th with no closures to subsistence fishing. When there are fewer than three commercial fishers, the department's confidentiality requirements prohibit release of the harvest data; however, the 2025 commercial coho salmon harvest was well below the historical average.

Kuskokwim River Sonar

The department utilized the Kuskokwim River sonar to inform in-season management decisions. The sonar operated from June 3–August 24 and provided timely information about the abundance of salmon and whitefish species as they migrated up the Kuskokwim River. A test fishery was operated for species apportionment using a series of 6 gillnet mesh sizes: 8 1/2", 7 1/2", 6 1/2", 5 1/4", 4", and 2 3/4" mesh. The sonar program generated daily species-specific passage estimates using species apportionment and sonar counts. The sonar did not provide total abundance, or escapement estimates since some spawning occurs below the sonar and harvest occurs both downriver and upriver from the sonar. In response to a widening river due to erosion, the department added a fourth sonar unit in 2025 to provide for more complete coverage of the river.

CPUE, Run Timing, and Passage Estimates

Chinook Salmon

The estimated midpoint of the Chinook salmon run was June 26 (3 days later than average). The cumulative Chinook salmon passage estimate at the sonar was approximately 120,000 fish (95% CI: 100,000–141,000).

Sockeye Salmon

The estimated midpoint of the sockeye salmon run was July 4 (5 days later than average). The cumulative sockeye salmon passage estimate at the sonar was approximately 921,000 fish (95% CI = 864,000–984,000).

Chum Salmon

The estimated midpoint of the chum salmon run was July 9 (3 days later than average). The cumulative chum salmon passage estimate at the sonar was approximately 158,000 fish (95% CI = 133,000–187,000).

Coho Salmon

The estimated midpoint of the coho salmon run was August 5 (4 days earlier than average). The final count of coho salmon past the sonar was approximately 392,000 (95% CI = 265,000–527,000).

Whitefish

Five species of whitefish were assessed at the Kuskokwim River sonar (least and Bering cisco, broad and humpback whitefish, and sheefish). The cumulative cisco (least and Bering) passage estimate at the sonar was approximately 875,000 fish (95% CI: 697,000–1,053,000). The cumulative broad whitefish passage estimate at the sonar was approximately 23,000 fish (95% CI: 7,000–39,000). The cumulative humpback whitefish passage estimate at the sonar was approximately 608,000 fish (95% CI: 525,000–692,000). The cumulative sheefish passage estimate at the sonar was approximately 25,000 fish (95% CI: 12,000–39,000).

Salmon Escapement – Kuskokwim River Drainage

Chinook Salmon

A run reconstruction model was used to estimate the Kuskokwim River preliminary total run and escapement for Chinook salmon in 2025. The preliminary total run estimate is 151,411 (95% CI: 135,017–170,811) and an estimated 105,808 (95% CI: 89,414–125,208) Chinook salmon escaped Kuskokwim River fisheries, which met the drainagewide Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) range of 65,000–120,000 fish. Chinook salmon escapement was estimated at 4 weirs in 2025 (Table 1). Escapement at the George River weir was 1,988 Chinook salmon, which fell within the SEG range of 1,800–3,300 fish. Escapement at the Kogrukluk River weir was 9,894 Chinook salmon, which exceeded the SEG range of 4,800–8,800 fish. Seven aerial surveys were carried out for Chinook salmon in 2025. The Chinook salmon aerial survey estimate at the Salmon (Pitka Fork) River was 1,189 fish, which fell within the SEG range of 470–1,600 fish. The results from the other aerial surveys can be found in Table 2.

Sockeye Salmon

Sockeye salmon escapement was estimated at 4 weirs in 2025 (Table 3). Escapement at the Kogrukluk River weir was 22,312 sockeye salmon, which exceeded the SEG range of 4,400–17,000 fish. Escapement at the Telaquana River weir was 117,652 sockeye salmon. No aerial surveys are conducted for sockeye salmon in the Kuskokwim River.

Chum Salmon

Chum salmon escapement was estimated at 4 weirs in 2025 (Table 4). Escapement at the Kogrukluk River weir was 29,426 chum salmon, which fell within the SEG range of 15,000–49,000 fish. No aerial surveys are conducted for chum salmon in the Kuskokwim River.

Coho Salmon

Coho salmon escapement was not estimated in 2025 due to extended periods of missed passage at the weir projects. Historical coho salmon escapement data can be found in (Table 5).

Kuskokwim Bay

District 4 (Quinhagak)

There were no commercial salmon fishing periods in District 4 during the 2024 season due to a lack of a buyer/processor. An aerial survey was completed on the Kanektok River in 2025. The Chinook salmon aerial survey SEG of 3,900–12,000 fish was achieved with an estimate of 6,676 fish. The sockeye salmon aerial survey SEG 15,300–41,000 fish, however not all survey indices were assessed in 2025.

District 5 (Goodnews Bay)

There were no commercial salmon fishing periods in District 5 during the 2025 season due to a lack of processing capacity. No aerial surveys were completed on the North Fork or Middle Fork Goodnews rivers in 2025 due to hazardous weather conditions during peak salmon spawning dates.

For additional information concerning this advisory announcement:
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Table 1.–Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon weir-based escapement estimates, 2011–2025.

Year	Kwethluk River	Tuluksak River	George River	Kogrukluk River	Tatlawiksuk River	Salmon River (Aniak)	Salmon River (Pitka)	Takotna River
2011	4,056	284	1,605	6,926	1,011	–	–	183
2012	–	559	2,362	–	1,116	–	–	149
2013	–	198	1,267	1,919	495	711	–	238
2014	3,191	325	2,988	3,726	2,050	1,722	–	104
2015	8,163	711	2,301	8,333	2,131	2,401	7,156	–
2016	–	909	2,218	7,062	2,693	–	6,371	–
2017	7,207	648	3,669	7,787	2,146	2,611	8,298	318
2018	–	–	3,322	6,292	–	2,252	5,354	205
2019	8,505	–	3,828	10,301	–	–	4,823	554
2020	–	–	2,418	5,645	–	1,228	4,825	357
2021	–	–	2,920	6,969	–	1,303	3,992	323
2022	6,808	–	4,318	5,837	–	1,620	1,330	–
2023	–	–	2,834	–	–	1,228	4,791	233
2024	–	–	2,403	–	–	–	–	–
2025[a]	–	–	1,988	9,894	–	1,442	–	201
Escapement goal:	4,100 – 7,500	–	1,800 – 3,300	4,800 – 8,800	–	–	–	–

Note: En dash indicates no data, either weir did not operate or more than 40 % of the run was missed and annual escapement was not estimated.

[a] Preliminary numbers, subject to change.

Table 2.–Chinook salmon aerial survey index estimates, Kuskokwim River Drainage, Kuskokwim Management Area, 2011–2025.

	Lower Kuskokwim River	Middle Kuskokwim River									Upper Kuskokwim River		
Year	Kwethluk Canyon C.	Kisaralik	Aniak	Kipchuk	Salmon (Aniak)	Holokuk	Oskawalik	Holitna	Gagarayah	Cheeneetnuk	Bear (Pitka)	Salmon (Pitka)	Upper Pitka Fork
2011	–	–	–	116	79	61	26	–	96	249	145	767	85
2012	–	588	–	193	49	36	51	–	178	229	–	670	–
2013	1,165	599	754	261	154	–	38	532	74	138	64	469	–
2014	–	622	3,201	1,220	497	80	200	–	359	340	–	1,865	–
2015	–	709	–	917	810	77	–	662	19	–	1,381	2,016	–
2016	–	622	718	898	–	100	47	1,157	135	217	580	1,578	–
2017	–	–	1,781	889	423	140	136	676	453	660	492	687	234
2018	–	584	1,534	1,123	442	162	–	980	438	565	550	1,399	471
2019	–	1063	3160	1344	950	719	638	1377	760	1345	542	1918	330
2020	721	350	1264	723	269	99	169	854	–	419	321	1150	160
2021	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2022	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2023	–	–	628	–	–	660	373	–	449	645	326	697	28
2024	–	–	–	330	–	581	1,126	1,150	1,015	1,637	226	702	–
2025	–	221	–	–	–	263	–	–	598	1,066	733	1,189	466
SEG	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	470 – 1,600	–
2015–2024 Avg.	NA	666	1,514	885	NA	341	415	1,032	550	819	471	1,165	282

Note: Estimates are from aerial surveys conducted during peak spawning periods under 'good' or 'fair' survey conditions. En dash indicates survey was not flown or did not meet acceptable survey criteria. NA indicates insufficient data to calculate an average.

Table 3.–Kuskokwim River sockeye salmon weir-based escapement estimates, 2011–2025.

Year	Kwethluk River	Tuluksak River	George River	Kogrukluk River	Telaquana River	Salmon River (Aniak)
2011	–	136	43	8,079	35,099	–
2012	–	195	79	–	23,002	950
2013	677	394	150	7,793	28,058	966
2014	3,880	514	156	6,479	24,292	934
2015	8,998	831	159	6,647	95,570	1,504
2016	21,618	1,512	2,807	20,108	82,710	310
2017	28,806	4,210	912	24,696	145,281	–
2018	19,554	–	1,615	21,343	197,368	2,537
2019	42,212	–	3,973	32,116	198,485	–
2020	–	–	281	9,923	177,509	234
2021	–	–	937	13,534	123,958	907
2022	8,563	–	519	10,278	153,374	1,414
2023	–	–	1,181	–	283,014	2,693
2024	–	–	–	–	111,183	–
2025[a]	–	–	1,361	22,312	117,652	408
Escapement goal:	–	–	–	4,400–17,000	–	–

Note: En dash indicates no data, either weir did not operate or more than 40 % of the run was missed and annual escapement was not estimated.

[a] Preliminary numbers, subject to change.

Table 4.–Annual escapement of chum salmon past Kuskokwim River weir projects, 2011–2025.

Year	Kwethluk River	Tuluksak River	George River	Kogrukluk River	Tatlawiksuk River	Salmon River (Aniak)	Takotna
2011	17,552	10,011	45,257	76,649	85,723	–	8,562
2012	–	16,684	33,277	–	44,573	–	6,039
2013	16,271	12,896	37,945	65,648	32,253	7,685	6,516
2014	17,942	8,728	17,183	30,697	12,453	2,777	–
2015	23,071	6,362	17,554	33,091	10,382	5,511	–
2016	31,666	5,871	19,469	45,234	10,849	1,691	–
2017	52,202	22,757	39,971	85,793	30,174	9,754	6,557
2018	–	–	48,915	52,937	–	18,770	6,007
2019	33,100	–	43,072	71,006	–	–	5,618
2020	–	–	8,943	19,020	–	1,995	–
2021	–	–	1,371	4,153	–	537	–
2022	2,368	–	8,429	13,471	–	1,050	–
2023	–	–	15,253	–	–	4,040	2,763
2024	–	–	20,243	–	–	–	–
2025[a]	–	–	4,851	29,426	–	2,388	1,981
Escapement goal:	–	–	–	15,000–49,000	–	–	–

Note: En dash indicates no data, either weir did not operate or more than 40 % of the run was missed and annual escapement was not estimated.

[a] Preliminary numbers, subject to change.

Table 5.–Kuskokwim River coho salmon weir-based escapement estimates, 2011–2025.

Year	Kwethluk River	Tuluksak River	George River	Kogrukluk River	Tatlawiksuk River	Salmon River (Aniak)
2011	–	4,613	31,900	21,950	15,635	–
2012	20,627	6,331	14,844	13,462	8,001	–
2013	–	14,022	14,823	23,800	12,724	2,834
2014	48,478	12,366	35,771	54,001	19,822	8,189
2015	32,124	3,903	35,790	32,900	17,669	–
2016	38,152	76,854	–	–	11,719	–
2017	55,722	–	25,338	–	–	–
2018	–	–	8,993	8,169	–	–
2019	34,561	–	13,277	16,470	–	–
2020	–	–	21,426	–	–	–
2021	–	–	31,491	14,373	–	–
2022	8,702	–	9,934	–	–	–
2023	36,035	–	33,439	28,132	–	–
2024	–	–	–	14,480	–	–
2025[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Escapement goal:	>19,000	–	–	13,000 – 28,000	–	–

Note: En dash indicates no data, either weir did not operate or more than 40 % of the run was missed and annual escapement was not estimated.

[a] Escapement estimates were not available at the time of reporting.

Table 6.–Aerial survey index estimates, Kanektok River, Kuskokwim Bay, 2011–2025.

Year	Chinook	Sockeye
2011	–	–
2012	–	–
2013	2,277	51,517
2014	1,840	136,400
2015	4,919	39,970
2016	5,631	80,160
2017	–	–
2018	4,246	326,200
2019	7,212	349,073
2020	4,405	52,886
2021	4,115	53,960
2022	–	–
2023	4,689	90,360
2024	6,688	180,290
2025	6,676	–
Escapement Goal:	3,900 – 12,000	15,300 – 41,000

Note: Estimates are from aerial surveys conducted during peak spawning periods under 'good' or 'fair' survey conditions. En dash indicates no data, either survey not flown due to safety or conditions did not meet acceptable survey criteria.

Table 7.–Salmon spawning escapement estimates, Goodnews River, Kuskokwim Bay, 2011–2025.

	Middle Fork Goodnews R. Weir Escapement					North Fork Goodnews R. Aerial Escapement	
Year	Chinook	Sockeye	Chum	Pink[a]	Coho	Chinook	Sockeye
2011	2,045	19,643	19,974	1,394	24,668	853	14,140
2012	524	29,531	9,065	6,316	–	378	16,710
2013	1,187	23,545	27,682	530	–	–	–
2014[b]	750	41,473	11,518	9,287	5,294	630	–
2015[b]	1,494	57,809	11,517	1,159	15,084	991	38,390
2016[c]	3,767	170,574	41,815	11,267	–	1,120	90,060
2017[c]	6,881	179,897	54,799	8,921	–	–	–
2018	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2019	6,039	162,711	38,072	3,943	–	2,462	162,930
2020	–	–	–	–	–	1,098	55,110
2021	–	–	–	–	–	2,273	95,020
2022	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2023	–	–	–	–	–	4,336	33,020
2024	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2025	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Escapement goal:	1,500 – 3,600	22,000 – 43,000	>12,000	–	>12,000	640 – 3,300	9,600 – 18,000

Note: Funding has been unstable since 2020. En dash indicates no data, either weir did not operate or more than 40 % of the run was missed and annual escapement was not estimated.

[a] Pink salmon numbers represent actual counts. No estimates of missed escapement, due to picket spacing allowing unmonitored passage for small pink salmon.

[b] Field operations were completed on August 30. Sum of daily counts is an underestimate of total escapement.

[c] Weir operation ended July 31 and total annual escapement was estimated.

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