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Advisory Announcement

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BRISTOL BAY 2026 COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHING OUTLOOK

INTRODUCTION

This document provides general information to fishermen, processors, and the public about the upcoming Bristol Bay salmon season. Included is the general framework for management of each of the five districts and the 2026 sockeye salmon forecast.

During the season, Bristol Bay salmon fishing announcements are broadcast on marine VHF channel 07A. Current fishing announcements are aired on local radio stations KAKN and KDLG. Fishermen should stand by at regular announcement times: 9:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, 3:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., and 8:00 p.m., unless otherwise stated. Information is also available via telephone: for eastside fisheries (Naknek-Kvichak, Egegik, and Ugashik), dial 907-246-INFO (4636); for westside fisheries (Nushagak and Togiak), dial 907-842-5226. Regular office hours at the Dillingham (Alaska Department of Fish and Game; ADF&G) office will be 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, except from June 17 through July 17, the office will be open seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In King Salmon, the office hours are as follows: June 1 to June 17 and after July 17: 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., closed for lunch and weekends. From June 17 through July 17: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., seven days per week.

ADF&G Forms

All relevant Bristol Bay forms are available online and can be submitted in various ways, including by email. Contacts are listed on ADF&G's Bristol Bay home page, here:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.contacts>

To avoid problems and processing delays, please submit forms early. Contact your processor for a digital copy of your Permit Holder's Agent Authorization (PHAA) form. Set gillnet permit holders are only required to fill out and return set gillnet registration cards if they fish in the Nushagak District. Drift gillnet permit holders must fill out and return district registration cards prior to commercial fishing in any district in Bristol Bay. PDF files of district registration cards, permit holder agent authorization forms, and dual drift registration forms are posted online on the department Bristol Bay homepage here: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.salmon#management> and can be printed, completed, then mailed to the address on the printout, or submitted electronically to DFG.BristolBay.CF.Forms@alaska.gov. If electronic or mail submission is not possible, forms will be available from and may be submitted to Anchorage, King Salmon, or Dillingham office personnel.

Crewmember licenses may be difficult to obtain in Bristol Bay and crewmembers should buy licenses before arriving. They are available through the ADFG app or online, here:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishlicense.crewmember>

Inseason Fishery Information

Fishery updates, announcements, catch and escapement information, and Port Moller Test Fishery genetic stock composition estimates will be available at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.salmon>

The Port Moller Test Fishery daily catch updates and interpretations of the data will be posted at the following web site once the project becomes operational on June 10:

<https://www.bbsri.org/port-moller-test-fishery>

2026 Regulatory Changes

The Alaska Board of Fisheries (Board) met in January 2026 and made several substantive changes to Bristol Bay regulations. Several of those are mentioned below in the enforcement priorities section. These include new regulations about retaining and selling king salmon caught in the Nushagak District (5 AAC 06.391), distance between drift and gillnet gear in the Nushagak District (5 AAC 06.335), and vessel length regulations (5 AAC 06.341). Additionally, the Board changed the triggers in the *Nushagak District King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan* that allows for the start of fishing in the Nushagak District. The triggers increased from 6 to 8% for Nushagak River sockeye salmon and from 10 to 12% for Wood River sockeye salmon. The Board removed the restriction of a 48-hour maximum allowable extension for the Togiak River Section and changed the fishing schedule in Kulukak Bay such that fishing will only be allowed in the Kulukak Section by emergency order for no more than 96 hours per week.

Alaska Wildlife Troopers – Summer 2026 Outlook – Bristol Bay

Enforcement Priorities:

- Strong focus on fishing district lines and open/closed fishing periods in all districts using all available assets.
- Troopers have observed an increase in improper identification markings of vessels. Vessel name requirements under 5 AAC 06.343 and vessel license plate (ADF&G number) requirements under 5 AAC 39.119 should be reviewed and will be strictly enforced. This identifying information must be plainly visible and unobscured at all times.
- Drift gillnet fishermen should review upcoming changes to vessel specifications relating to length under 5 AAC 06.341.
- Troopers will conduct routine boardings of drift gillnet and processor vessels, as well as conduct beach patrols to verify licensing and permitting regulations are met, along with gillnet specifications and gear identification.
- Permit holders in the Nushagak District should review upcoming changes under 5 AAC 06.391, which prohibit CFEC permit holders from retaining commercially caught king salmon for homepack or personal use in the Nushagak District. All king salmon caught in the Nushagak District must now be retained and either enter the commercial market or be donated to a nonprofit food bank, charitable organization, or tribal or village entity providing food distribution services in the Bristol Bay region.

Tenders and Fishermen can expect to be boarded and checked for undocumented king salmon on their vessels. However, all salmon, including king and coho, are still required by regulation in all districts to be reported on fish tickets at the time of delivery, even if not sold. See 5 AAC 39.130 and 5 AAC 06.377(b) for details.

- CFEC permit holders and processors are reminded that at the time of delivery of fish, a fish ticket must be generated and must include the signature of a company representative and the full name and signature of the CFEC permit holder (BOTH permit holders if dual drift operation). The permit holder(s) must be present at the time of delivery to sign the fish ticket. Crew members cannot make deliveries or sign fish tickets for permit holders. Fish tickets also must include the number or pounds of fish, by species, retained by a commercial fisherman for that person's own use.

- Fishermen should review minimum distance requirements to set gillnets, including changes to 5 AAC 06.335 in the Nushagak District. In essence, changes in the Nushagak District prohibit any part of a drift boat or its gear from contacting any part of a set gillnet or other gear used in the operation of a set gillnet. This includes set net running lines, anchors, pegs, stakes, buoys, or pulleys, even during times when the set gillnet is not in the water, fishing, and transiting drift vessels, even if not actively fishing.

- Fishermen are reminded to review regulations on gillnet specifications and operations. Be aware, regulations prohibit drift gillnet fishing when the attached vessel is grounded or the gillnet is above the waterline.

- Loss of a gillnet or portion of a gillnet must be reported directly to a local ADF&G department office in Dillingham or King Salmon within 15 hours of the gear loss.

- CFEC permit holders are reminded when registering or reregistering (changing districts) under 5 AAC 06.370 with an agent authorization on file, the CFEC permit holders are still responsible for ensuring that the registration was accomplished by their agent.

- Termination of joint operation of drift gillnet gear is not effective until at least one of the permit holders registers the date and time of termination with the department in the manner specified for reregistration in 5 AAC 06.370(b).

- Continued enforcement of state boating safety laws in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard.

- CFEC permit holders and vessel operators should ensure their GPS waypoints and boundary lines match 2023–2026 regulations for fishing districts and sections.

- Fishermen who failed to appear for scheduled court hearings do have outstanding arrest warrants issued by the Court. Absconders will be arrested and remanded to jails in either Dillingham or King Salmon, which will result in substantial loss of fishing time. Wildlife Troopers encourage fishermen to address any outstanding arrest warrants.

Alaska Wildlife Troopers in Dillingham can be reached at 907-842-5351, King Salmon at 907-246-3307, and 24-Hour Dispatch in Fairbanks at 907-451-5100.

SALMON OUTLOOK

BAYWIDE

The 2026 Bristol Bay inshore sockeye salmon run is forecasted to be approximately 44.1 million fish (<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcnewsrelease/1745780946.pdf>).

Based on the forecasted run size to each district and accounting for escapement, there is a potential inshore surplus of 32.3 million sockeye salmon (Table 1). The department manages fisheries based on inseason abundance information. The inseason management approach uses a suite of assessment tools to provide information on abundance and run timing in each district, which will be used by the department to determine fishing opportunity.

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opens June 1 by regulation. Fishing in eastside districts and the Togiak District will be allowed using a weekly schedule that varies by section. The schedules are in place to balance fishing opportunity with escapement in the early part of the season, particularly for king salmon. Fishing time will be adjusted within individual districts as each run develops and sockeye salmon run characteristics become defined. In the Nushagak District, management will follow the Nushagak District King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan, focusing on conserving king salmon in the early part of the season, then transition to a more sockeye salmon focused management structure as abundance and regulations dictate.

NAKNEK-KVICHAK DISTRICT

An inshore run of approximately 11.0 million sockeye salmon is expected for the Naknek-Kvichak District in 2026. Based on the forecast and escapement goals, the projected surplus in the Naknek-Kvichak District is approximately 6.2 million sockeye salmon: 1.9 million from the Kvichak River, 1.5 million from the Alagnak River, and 2.8 million from the Naknek River (Table 1). Sockeye salmon returning to the Naknek-Kvichak District are predicted to be 42% age-1.3, 37% age-1.2, 14% age-2.2, and 7% age-2.3 fish.

The Naknek River escapement goal range is 800,000 to 2.0 million sockeye salmon. The Kvichak River escapement goal range is 2.0 million to 10.0 million sockeye salmon. The Alagnak River escapement goal is a minimum of 210,000 sockeye salmon. The Kvichak River forecast is large enough for the season to open in the Naknek-Kvichak District, however if inseason run indicators suggest a smaller run than forecast for the Kvichak River, there is potential for the fishery to move into the Naknek River Special Harvest Area (NRSHA). The department would make an announcement at least 48 hours prior, if this action is required.

Fishing in the Naknek-Kvichak District will be open four days per week from 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday, beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday, June 1, and ending 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 24. Drift gillnet gear will be restricted to fishing in the Naknek Section only, while set gillnet gear will be allowed to fish in the entire Naknek-Kvichak District. From June 24 until July 17, fishing periods will be based on sockeye salmon escapements, abundance in the district, and gear group harvest percentages. As in previous years, some openings may occur on short notice.

EGEGIK DISTRICT

The 2026 Egegik River inshore run is forecast to be approximately 8.9 million sockeye salmon. With an escapement goal of 800,000 to 2.0 million fish, the potential surplus is 7.5 million (Table 1). Approximately 31% of the run is expected to be age-2.2 fish, followed by age-1.2 (29%), age-2.3 (28%), and age-1.3 (12%).

The season will start with a three-day-per-week schedule to provide for king salmon escapement. Commercial fishing will be allowed in the Egegik District from 9:00 a.m. Monday, until 9:00 a.m. Wednesday and from 9:00 a.m. Thursday until 9:00 a.m. Friday. This schedule will begin at 9:00 a.m. Monday, June 1, and run through 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 17. Additional fishing time for both gear groups after June 17 will be scheduled according to sockeye salmon run strength. As in previous years,

some openings may occur on short notice. Separate gear openings and variable length commercial periods will be used to achieve gear group allocations.

If inseason run indicators suggest a smaller run than forecast in the Kvichak River, there is potential for the boundary to be moved into the Egegik Special Harvest Area (ESHA). The department would make an announcement at least 48 hours prior, if this action is required.

UGASHIK DISTRICT

The 2026 forecasted inshore run of sockeye salmon to Ugashik River is 5.2 million fish. With an escapement goal of 500,000 to 1.4 million sockeye salmon, the potential surplus is 4.3 million (Table 1). Approximately 45% of the run is expected to be age-1.2, followed by age-1.3 (41%), age-2.2 (9%), and age-2.3 (5%).

Commercial fishing in the Ugashik District will be allowed from 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday, June 1 through 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 19, and from 9:00 a.m. Monday, June 22, through 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 24. Additional fishing time after June 24 will depend on fishery performance and run strength indicators. Separate gear openings and adjusting length of commercial periods will be used to achieve gear group allocations in 2026. Permit holders should note that the regulation restricting opportunity to no more than 48 hours between June 16 and June 23 will not be in effect for 2026.

As a reminder, Registration Area T permit holders may fish in the inner portion of the Cinder River Section (river and lagoon) and the Inner Port Heiden Section during all months when open by regulation. For further information, contact ADF&G in Port Moller at 907-375-2716. Registration Area T permit holders who fish the Cinder River and Port Heiden sections and deliver their catch in the Ugashik District are reminded to report the section of catch on the appropriate fish tickets and note that transporting fish from the sections mentioned above to deliver in the Ugashik District is not permitted in July.

WALRUS

It is unknown at this time whether walrus will return to the Cape Greig area. If they do, the department will use the adjusted line as in previous years. If they do not, the district boundaries will revert to those in regulation at 5 AAC 06.200(d). The first announcement of the 2026 season will clarify which boundary will be in place for the summer.

NUSHAGAK DISTRICT

The Nushagak District sockeye salmon inshore run forecast is approximately 18.4 million fish: 4.5 million for escapement with a potential surplus of 13.9 million (Table 1). The total inshore run by river system is as follows: Wood River, 6.4 million (escapement goal range 700,000 to 2.8 million), Igushik River, 890,000 (escapement goal range 150,000 to 400,000), and Nushagak River, 11.1 million (escapement goal range of 370,000 to 2.6 million; Table 1). Approximately 62% of the forecasted run is expected to be age-1.3 sockeye salmon, followed by 35% age 1.2, 2% age 2.2, and 1% age-2.3 fish.

There are three triggers that guide when to start fishing under the *Nushagak District King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan* regulations. Commercial fishing with drift gillnets in the Nushagak District and set gillnets in the Nushagak Section may begin once any one of the following triggers is met:

- The Nushagak River trigger is 8% of the total preseason forecast. In 2026, that is 911,000 sockeye salmon projected past the sonar. The trigger percent for the Nushagak River increased from 6% to 8% by Board action at the January meeting.

- The Wood River trigger is 12% of the total preseason forecast. In 2026, that is 793,000 sockeye salmon projected past the counting tower. The trigger percent for the Wood River increased from 10% to 12% by Board action at the January meeting.
- If neither of the above conditions are met by 9:00 a.m. June 28, then fishing may be allowed in the Nushagak District.

In addition to the triggers that regulate the start of fishing, the Plan includes Optimal Escapement Goals (OEGs) larger than department Sustainable Escapement Goals (SEGs) that reduce opportunity after commercial fishing starts. Those OEGs are structured such that 15% of the preseason forecast is added to the upper end of each SEG range. Lower bounds of both SEGs remain unchanged.

- The 2026 upper bound of the Wood River OEG is 2.8 million sockeye salmon.
- The 2026 upper bound of the Nushagak River OEG is 2.6 million sockeye salmon.

The 2026 fishery will start with directed sockeye salmon openings after one or more triggers have been met. From that point on, the department will make tide-by-tide decisions to prioritize king salmon escapement balanced with sockeye salmon fishing opportunity. Set gillnet fishermen in the Nushagak Section should expect to have regular closures into the second week of July. Breaks in drift gillnet openings will be timed to allow king and chum salmon to pass through the district. Drift gillnet management may start at or after high tide and may include drift gillnet openings as short as 3 hours. Allocation will also be considered when setting drift gillnet openings. With the poor Igushik River sockeye salmon forecast, there may be Nushagak Section only drift gillnet openings. Fishermen are asked to avoid areas where they may catch higher numbers of king and chum salmon. As stated above, all king salmon caught must be retained on the vessel and either sold or donated at the time of delivery.

Nushagak Section fishing periods will be scheduled based on king and sockeye salmon escapement levels in the Nushagak River and sockeye salmon escapement in the Wood River. Mesh size will be limited to 5.5 inches or smaller beginning June 1 for the conservation of king salmon. If the run comes in as forecast, it is likely that the Wood River Special Harvest Area will be used in 2026 to harvest surplus sockeye salmon in the Wood River. In this case, fishing opportunity will be afforded to the gear type that is behind on harvest percentage relative to the allocation.

Igushik River sockeye salmon will be managed independently of the Nushagak and Wood River sockeye salmon stocks. Set gillnet fishing will begin in the Igushik Section when there is a market available, likely mid-June. Initial openings will be 15 hours per day, and additional time will be added if large harvests or escapement information indicate more time is warranted. There is a very low forecast for Igushik River sockeye salmon in 2026. This may result in Nushagak Section only drift gillnet openings and less set gillnet fishing time in the Igushik Section.

The department will switch to coho salmon management in the Nushagak District around July 23, when sockeye salmon harvest decreases. Nushagak sonar counts will cease approximately July 25; after that, management decisions will be based on the level of effort, catch per unit effort, and sport and subsistence reports.

TOGIAK DISTRICT

The 2026 inshore run of Togiak River sockeye salmon is forecast to be approximately 530,000 fish with a potential surplus of 370,000 fish (Table 1). The escapement goal range is 120,000 to 270,000 sockeye salmon. Approximately 72% are expected to be age 1.3; 26% of the run is expected to be age 1.2; <1% of the run is expected to be ages 2.2 and 2.3.

The Togiak District follows a regular weekly schedule that allows fishing in the Togiak Bay Section four days per week and fishing in the Matogak, Osviak, and Cape Peirce Sections five days per week. The Board changed the Togiak District regulations to allow for the Kulukak Section to be opened by emergency order only for up to 96 hours per week. The department will work with stakeholders to decide on opening times and duration. Permit holders should listen at regular announcement times throughout the season.

Following the registration and reregistration regulations, permit holders are restricted from fishing in the Togiak District until the mid-point of the Togiak River escapement goal has been achieved, as announced by the department, if they have fished in any other district in Bristol Bay. Conversely, permit holders who have fished in the Togiak District are restricted from fishing in any other district until the department announces that the mid-point of the Togiak River escapement goal has been achieved. Regulation 5 AAC 06.370 requires vessel transfers to be restricted in Togiak District similarly to the restriction of permit transfers. Regulation also prevents drift gillnet fishing effort near the Togiak River mouth through July 15 and restricts mesh size to 5.5 inches or smaller between June 15 and July 15 for the conservation of king salmon.

The 2026 forecast is relatively poor for the Togiak District. A poor age-1.2 return in 2025 is the main indicator for a poor age-1.3 return for 2026. Based on the forecast it is less likely that escapement in the Togiak River will reach the threshold that allows Togiak District to open to boats/permits that fished in other districts. It is also likely that fish size may be smaller than usual.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The department would like to acknowledge the Bristol Bay Fisheries Collaborative (BBFC) for continued financial, operational, and logistical support of Bristol Bay salmon fishery management. BBFC is an agreement between the department and the Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute (BBSRI) to work together with stakeholders to support fisheries management. Additionally, the department would like to thank BBSRI and Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association for their funding and efforts to operate the Port Moller Test Fishery.

Table 1.– Forecast of total run, escapement, and surplus of major age classes of sockeye salmon returning to Bristol Bay river systems in 2026.

DISTRICT	River	Millions of Sockeye Salmon								
		Forecasted Production by Age Class				Total	Forecasted		South Peninsula ^a	BB Inshore
		1.2	2.2	1.3	2.3		Escapement	Surplus		
NAKNEK-KVICHAK										
	Kvichak	1.48	0.92	1.29	0.35	4.04	2.02	1.91	0.11	3.93
	Alagnak	1.58	0.24	1.35	0.10	3.26	1.63	1.54	0.09	3.17
	Naknek	1.11	0.45	2.09	0.35	4.00	1.10	2.79	0.11	3.89
	Total	4.17	1.61	4.73	0.80	11.30	4.75	6.23	0.32	10.98
EGEGIK										
		2.70	2.84	1.07	2.58	9.19	1.40	7.53	0.26	8.93
UGASHIK										
		2.43	0.49	2.19	0.25	5.36	0.95	4.26	0.15	5.21
NUSHAGAK										
	Wood	3.60	0.25	2.71	0.07	6.61	2.27	4.16	0.19	6.43
	Igushik	0.41	0.02	0.48	0.01	0.91	0.21	0.68	0.03	0.89
	Nushagak	2.56	0.17	8.42	0.14	11.39 ^b	2.05	9.02	0.32	11.07
	Total	6.56	0.43	11.60	0.22	18.92	4.53	13.86	0.53	18.39
TOGIAC										
		0.14	0.01	0.39	0.01	0.54 ^c	0.16	0.37	0.02	0.53
BRISTOL BAY										
		16.00	5.38	19.98	3.85	45.32	11.79	32.26	1.27	44.05
		35%	12%	44%	8%	100%				

Note: This table is a summary. Slight difference may appear due to rounding.

^a Projected harvest based on a current 5-year running average exploitation rate of 2.8%.

^b Nushagak River forecast includes approximately 108,000 age-1.4 fish.

^c Forecasts for Kulukak, Kanik, Osviak, and Matogak river systems are not included. These systems contribute approximately 50,000 sockeye salmon to Togiak District harvest each year.