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## **Fisheries Update**

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## **CONTACT:**

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## **2026 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL DRIFT GILLNET SALMON FISHING - Supplemental**

This update is intended to clarify the management of the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery to begin the 2026 season and is supplemental to the Commercial Fishery outlook released on May 12, 2026. New regulations adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries, in March 2026, that modified the *Central District Drift Gillnet Management Plan* (CDDFMP, 5 AAC 21.353), are still undergoing review by the Alaska Department of Law, therefore the drift gillnet fishery will be managed consistent with the existing codified regulations of the CDDGFMP until the new regulations become effective 30 days after they are filed by the Lieutenant Governor.

The following outlines management of the drift gillnet fishery under the existing regulations that will be in effect to begin the 2026 season based on the middle tier (2.3–4.6 million fish) of Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon run size.

### ***General Information for the UCI State of Alaska waters Drift Gillnet Fishery:***

- **All descriptions in this document will be for State of Alaska (SOA) waters only** (Figure 1).
- For more information on commercial drift gillnet salmon fishing regulations in the Federal waters of Upper Cook Inlet see the link below:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/commercial-fishing/salmon-management-federal-waters-cook-inlet-cook-inlet-eez>

### ***Upper Cook Inlet Statistical and Drift Areas***

- Openings that include Drift Areas 1 and 4 will be in State of Alaska (SOA) waters only (Figure 2). It is the responsibility of fishery participants to ensure they are fishing in legal areas.
  - Drift gillnet statistical areas were updated in 2024 to reflect the new jurisdictional boundaries and management strategies in UCI (Figure 1).
    - Statistical Area 244-60 will not be used.
    - UCI Federal waters (EEZ) will be identified under statistical code 244-64.
- <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable-fisheries/cook-inlet-eez-area-maps>

## ***Central District Drift Gillnet Fisheries Overview***

- The department manages the UCI drift gillnet fleet primarily under the guidance of the CDDGFMP. The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into Northern Cook Inlet drainages and to provide the department with management guidelines. All the following regarding the drift gillnet fishery is applicable to the waters of the SOA only (Figure 1).
- The drift gillnet fishery opens the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later.
- The 2026 drift gillnet fishery may open June 22 by regulatory period.
- Drift gillnet openings follow regulatory Monday/Thursday fishing periods; 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- Drift gillnet fishing is closed within 2 miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline per stipulations in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan (5 AAC 21.382)* until the stock is delisted.
- Drift gillnet fishery openings are stipulated in the CDDGFMP by date and sockeye salmon abundance.
- Additional fishing time may be added based on sockeye salmon abundance considering Chinook and coho salmon abundance.
- Beginning August 1, if the department determines that less than one-percent of the season total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period, for two consecutive fishing periods by drift gillnets, then regulatory fishing periods will be restricted to SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 (Figure 2).

## ***Inseason Management***

- **Prior to July 8,**
  - Regulations specify 12-hour SOA waters district wide Monday/Thursday fishing periods. These periods will coincide with the established federal periods in federal waters. Under federal rules, drift gillnet vessels who participate in the federal fishery cannot participate in any SOA fisheries on the same day. This means that if a permit holder chooses to fish the federal waters they cannot move into state waters on the same day.
  - Additional time may be allowed in SOA waters district wide or restricted as needed based on sockeye salmon abundance.
- **From July 9 through July 15,**
  - Drift gillnet fishing is restricted for both regulatory fishing periods to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections (Figure 1), and SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Area 1 (Figure 2). For Kenai River sockeye salmon runs greater than 2.3 million fish, one additional fishing period may be opened in the Expanded Sections and Area 1. Any additional fishing time is allowed only in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections.
- **From July 16 through July 31,**
  - For runs of 2.3–4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, fishing during one regulatory

period per week will be opened in one or more of the following areas: the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, the Anchor Point Section, and SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Area 1. The remaining regulatory period will be restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sand Anchor Point Section of the Upper Subdistrict. Any additional time shall be restricted to the Expanded Kenai Section, the Expanded Kasilof Section, and the Anchor Point Section.

- **From August 1 through August 15,**
  - Regular Mon/Thurs fishing periods will be restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Kenai Section, Expanded Kasilof Section, Anchor Point Section, SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Area 3, or SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Area 1. Any additional fishing time will be dependent upon meeting sockeye and coho salmon escapement objectives but is limited to the Expanded Kenai or Kasilof and Anchor Point Sections.
  - Two one-percent rules apply to drift gillnet fishing in August. If the entire ESSN fishery is closed per its own one-percent rule, or if the department determines that less than one-percent of the season total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period, for two consecutive fishing periods by drift gillnets, then regulatory fishing periods will be restricted to SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 (Figure 2).
  - The department uses harvest from all (state and federal) open drift gillnet periods, regardless of the area(s) open to fishing, to calculate the drift gillnet one-percent rule per stipulations in *Fishing seasons (5 AAC 21.310)*.
- **From August 16 until closed by EO,**
  - SOA waters of Drift Areas 3 and 4 are open for regulatory periods.
  - Chinitna Bay may be opened by EO only, based upon chum salmon escapement objectives being met or when the chum salmon run is complete.
- State of Alaska waters drift fisheries close for the season by EO, when effort ceases, which is generally mid- to late-September.

### ***General Information and Contact Numbers***

The UCI commercial fisheries information line will again be available by calling 907-262-9611. The most recent EO announcement is always available on the recorded message line and catch, escapement information is included whenever possible. The same recording may be accessed at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.main> and clicking on the UCI Commercial Fisheries Information Recording player.

All EO announcements are posted online at:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon#fishery>.

If you would like all EOs and News Releases to be emailed to you as soon as they are released, you can subscribe at this website for that service <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.search>. For very general information, the Commercial Fisheries web page is found at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingCommercial.main>

If, during the summer, permit holders have information or questions concerning the commercial fishery, the Soldotna Division of Commercial Fisheries staff can be reached by phone at 907-262-9368, or 907-420-7740, by fax at 907-262-4709, or by mail at 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Road, Suite B, Soldotna, 99669.

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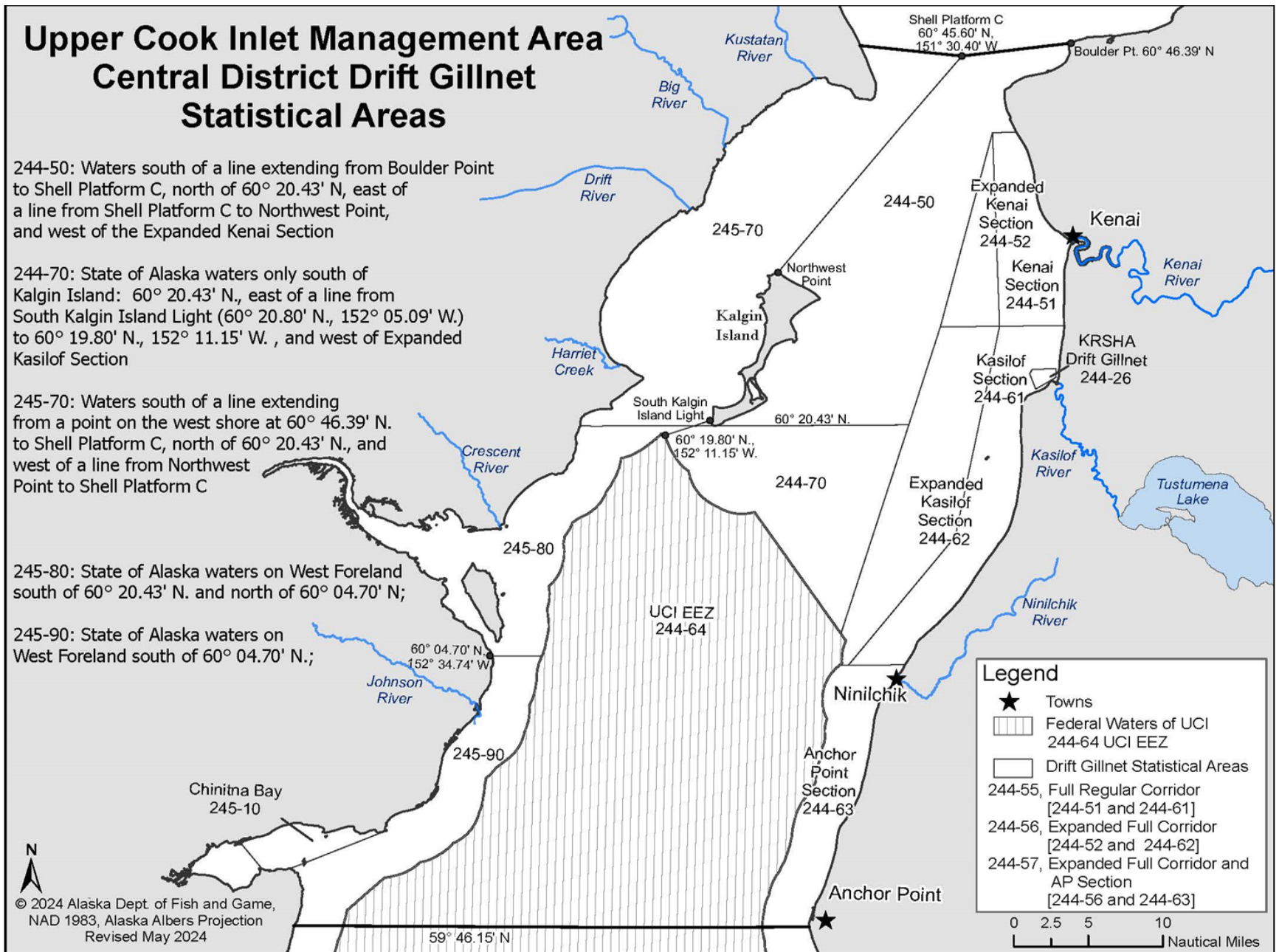


Figure 1.– Map of Upper Cook Inlet Drift Gillnet Statistical Areas.

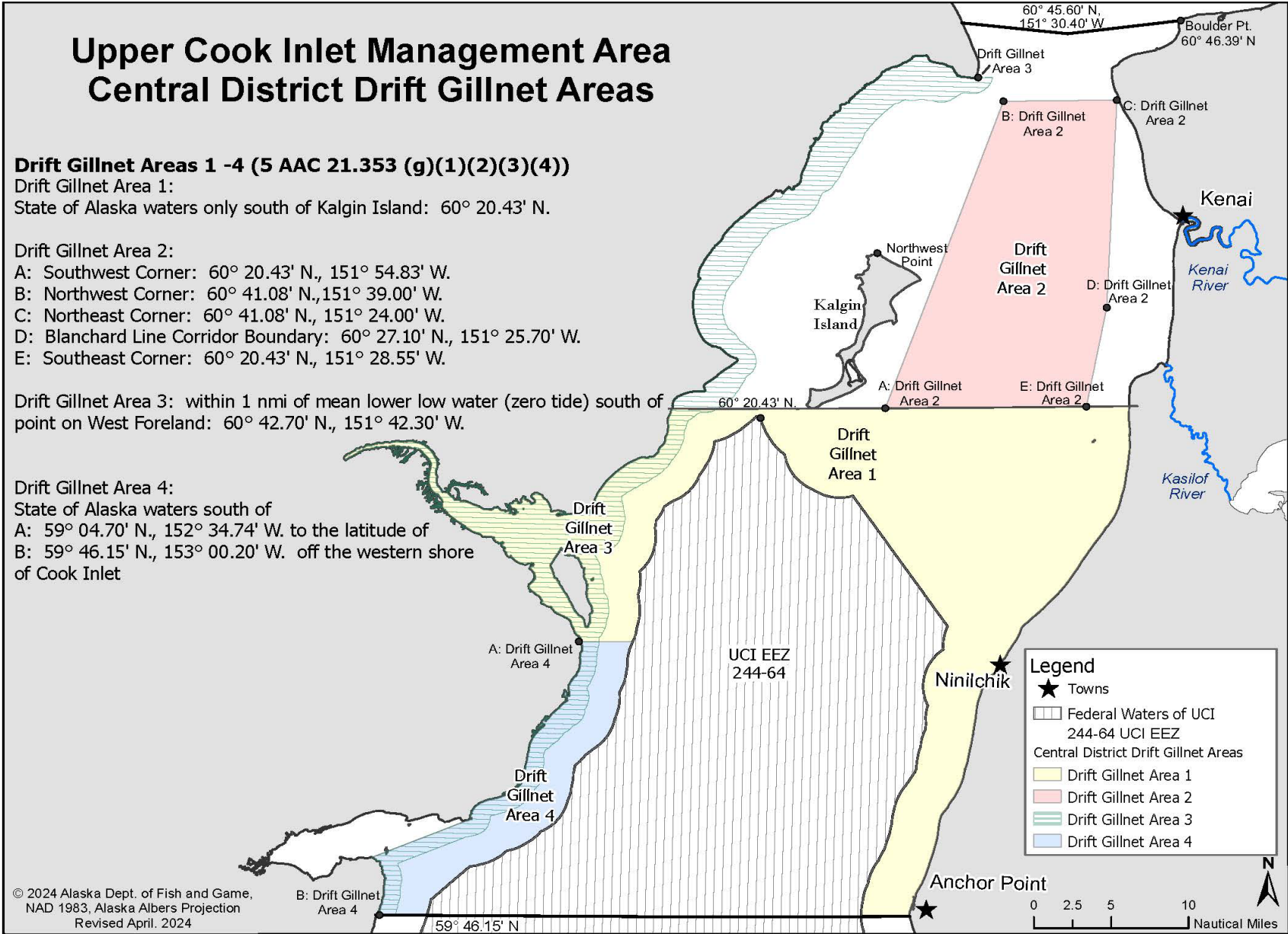


Figure 2.— Map of Upper Cook Inlet Drift Gillnet Areas.