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2026 Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands Salmon Season Summary

The following is an overview of the 2026 Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, and Atka-Amlia Islands Areas (Figure 1; Area M) commercial salmon fishing season.

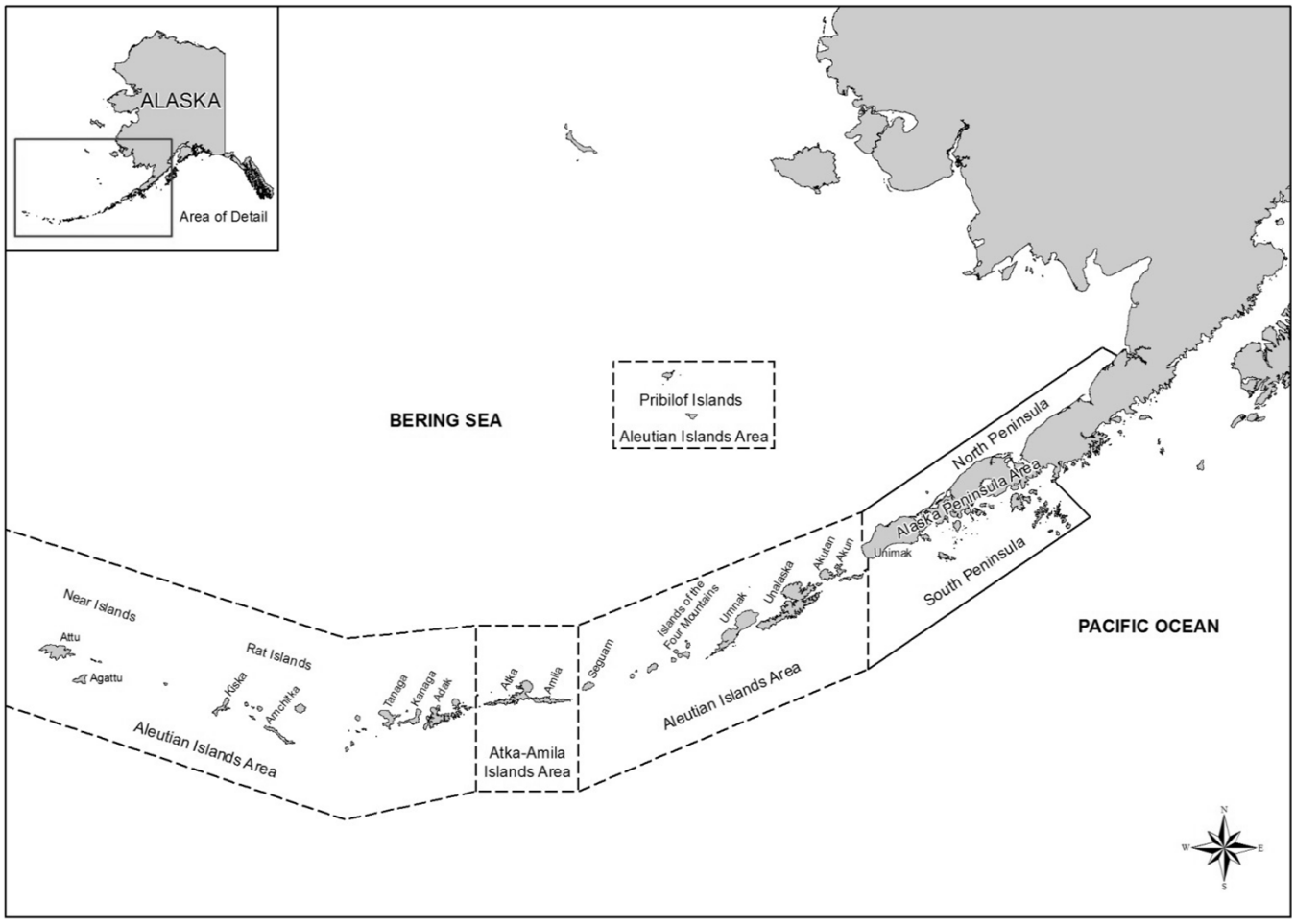


Figure 1.–Map of the Aleutian Islands, Atka-Amlia Islands, and Alaska Peninsula Management Areas, also known as Area M.

Commercial fishing effort in 2026 was below average for all gear types. Of the 390 eligible commercial salmon permits, 207 (53%) made commercial landings. By gear type, a total of 50 purse seine, 107 drift gillnet, and 50 set gillnet permit holders made deliveries in 2026. Participation of purse seine permit holders was below the 10-

year average of 61 permits, participation of drift gillnet permit holders was below the 10-year average of 140 permits, and participation of set gillnet permit holders was below the 10-year average of 74 permits (Table 1).

Table 1.–Commercial salmon fishery 2026 limited entry permit activity and 10-yr. averages, by gear type, in Area M.

Gear Type	2026 Permits			2016–2025 Average Permits		
	Available	Fished	% of Permits Fished	Available	Fished	% of Permits Fished
Purse Seine	118	50	42%	119	61	51%
Drift Gillnet	161	107	66%	161	140	87%
Set Gillnet	111	50	45%	111	74	67%
Total	390	207	53%	391	275	70%

Data detailed in this report are considered preliminary, but total harvest numbers presented here should closely approximate final harvest numbers for the 2026 commercial salmon fishing season for all species. The 2026 commercial salmon harvest in Area M totaled 8,829,019 fish, comprised of 8,535 Chinook, 4,314,616 sockeye, 90,999 coho, 3,585,166 pink, and 850,980 chum salmon (Table 2). There was no commercial harvest in the Aleutian Islands and Atka-Amlia Islands Areas.

Table 2.–Alaska Peninsula commercial salmon harvest, 2026.

	Number of Salmon					
Location	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Total
North Peninsula	1,574	2,175,283	4,162	14,456	63,308	2,237,506
South Peninsula	6,961	2,139,333	86,837	3,570,710	787,672	6,591,513
Total	8,535	4,314,616	90,999	3,585,166	850,980	8,829,019

Preliminary exvessel value of salmon harvested in Area M totaled $47,898,830 (Tables 3 and 4). This was above the recent 10-year average exvessel value of $36,111,152 (Table 4). Purse seine gear averaged $334,071 per permit fished, drift gillnet gear averaged $262,722 per permit fished, and set gillnet gear averaged $61,680 per permit fished (Table 4). Exvessel value information was generated from fish tickets and does not include postseason adjustments paid to permit holders.

Table 3.–Preliminary commercial exvessel values by fishery and species, 2026.

	Value					
Location	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Total
North Peninsula	$14,527	$21,947,755	$11,846	$27,234	$352,703	$22,354,064
South Peninsula	$5,346	$15,869,520	$472,457	$4,890,594	$4,306,849	$25,544,766
Total	$19,873	$37,817,275	$484,303	$4,917,828	$4,659,551	$47,898,830

Note: Due to rounding of cents, totals may differ by small amounts.

Table 4.–Estimated commercial salmon harvest and value, by gear type, 2016-2026.

			Average Exvessel Value		
Year	Total Catch	Total Value	Purse Seine	Drift Gillnet	Set Gillnet
2016	9,654,544	$26,266,222	$137,766	$107,587	$57,373
2017	31,328,829	$63,014,340	$618,771	$161,222	$73,688
2018	6,030,310	$27,632,532	$161,799	$110,945	$30,429
2019	27,172,788	$44,189,560	$323,769	$113,936	$48,372
2020	9,152,962	$14,547,225	$102,791	$44,823	$17,112
2021	26,742,829	$56,683,207	$511,534	$126,482	$38,813
2022	14,686,489	$57,719,223	$342,637	$208,782	$36,283
2023	21,445,242	$20,584,195	$215,217	$28,665	$23,083
2024	4,721,936	$15,252,193	$119,393	$59,436	$24,121
2025	21,113,873	$35,222,827	$472,824	$72,668	$61,246
2026	8,829,019	$47,898,830	$334,071	$262,722	$61,680
2016-2025 Avg.	17,204,980	$36,111,152	$300,650	$103,455	$41,052

SOUTH ALASKA PENINSULA

South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Fisheries

During the February 2026 Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, and Chignik meeting, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) made changes that allows monofilament gillnets in the Unimak, Southwestern, South Central, and Southeastern Districts. The board also adopted regulations that require purse seine gear to release Chinook salmon 28 inches or greater back to the water unharmed, but if Chinook are visibly injured or dead, then all Chinook salmon must be retained and reported on fish tickets. However, these new regulations did not become effective until July 17.

During the February 2023 Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, and Chignik meeting, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) made changes to the *South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 09.365) by amending subsection (2)(a) that establishes the June fishing schedule for seine gear. The first commercial fishing period for seine gear will begin June 10 at 6:00 a.m. and run 68 hours, closing at 2:00 a.m.; the second commercial fishing period will begin 76 hours later at 6:00 a.m. and close after 66 hours at 11:59 p.m.; the third commercial fishing period will begin 32 hours later at 8:00 a.m. and close after 88 hours at 11:59 p.m.; the final commercial fishing period in June will begin 32 hours later at 8:00 a.m. and close after 88 hours at 11:59 p.m.

Additionally, the board added a new subsection (h) to the *South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 09.365) such that if chum salmon harvest equals or exceeds 300,000 fish by June 18, based on fish ticket information, the commissioner shall reduce commercial fishing time in the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands by 44 hours during each of the remaining fishing periods in June for purse seine gear. If chum salmon harvest equals or exceeds 450,000 fish by June 23, based on fish ticket information, the commissioner shall close the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June commercial salmon fishery for the remainder of June for purse seine gear. No closures or reductions in fishing time occurred in 2026 as the chum harvest was below harvest triggers noted above.

In 2023, the board also amended 5 AAC 09.330. *Gear*, subsection (c) to close the Sanak Island Section of the Unimak District to commercial salmon fishing for all gear types from June 1 through June 30 (Figure 2). As a

result of this action, enforcement was greatly increased by the Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) during the month of June but no citations were issued for June salmon retention in 2026.

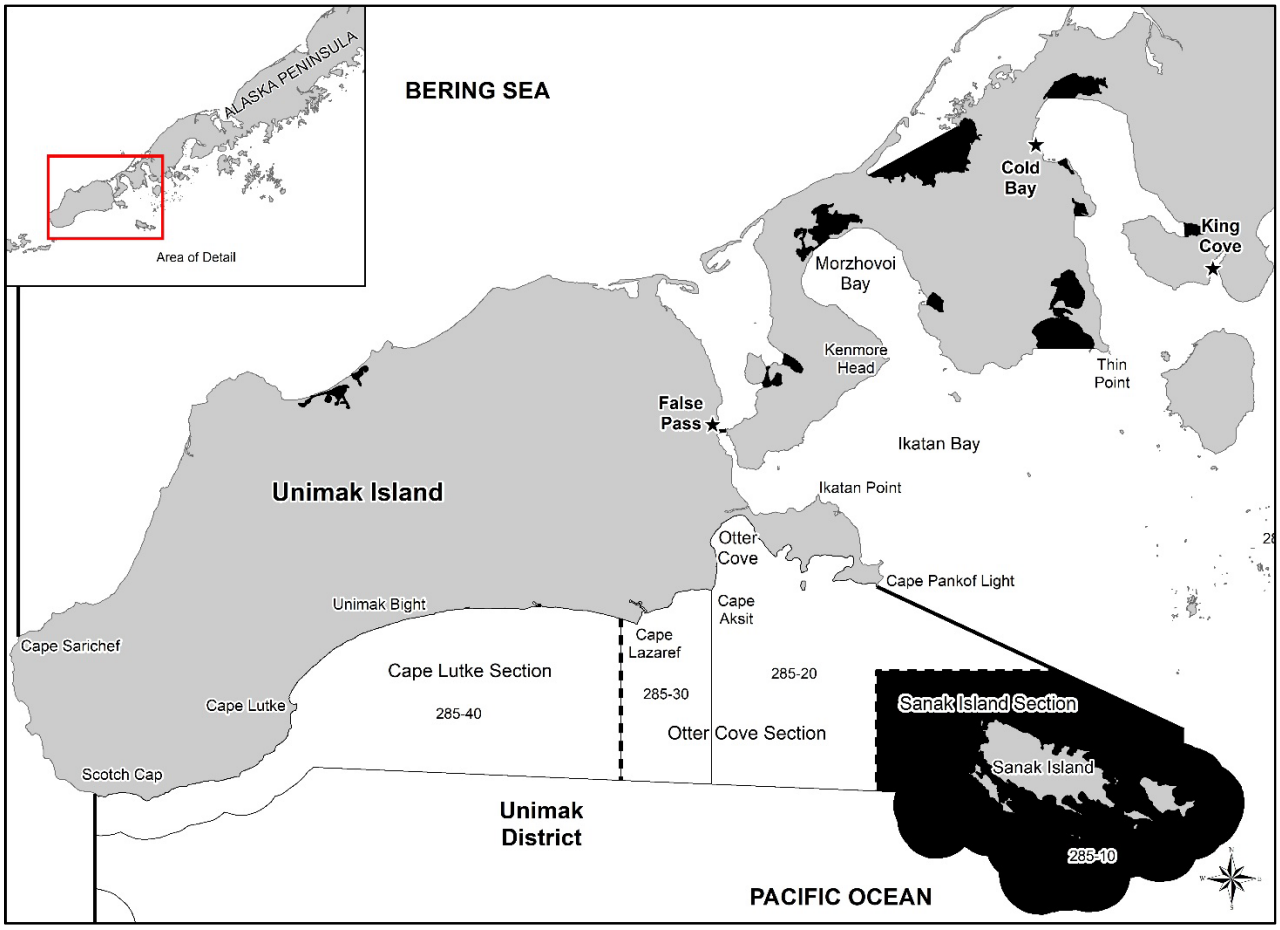


Figure 2.–Closed waters of the Sanak Island Section to all gear types during the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fishery.

In addition to the scheduled fishing periods during the month of June, the harvest of sockeye salmon in the "Dolgoi Island Area" as described by the Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Program (WASSIP) was monitored through fish ticket information. By regulation, once the harvest of sockeye salmon reaches 191,000 fish, the waters of the West Pavlof Bay Section south of Black Point and the waters of the Volcano Bay Section close to commercial salmon fishing for the remainder of the June fishery and through July 25 (Figure 3). Commercial fishers operating in the South Central and Southwestern Districts during June are advised that short notice closure of the designated "Dolgoi Island Area" will occur in the likely event the harvest of sockeye salmon approaches 191,000 fish. The department will, to the extent practical, give a minimum of 6 hours' notice of closure to all gear types. In 2019, the board closed the "Dolgoi Island Area" to purse seine gear in June. The harvest limit was not reached in the June fishery in 2026: a total of 11,018 sockeye salmon were harvested in the "Dolgoi Island Area" in June and a total of 16,892 sockeye salmon were harvested from July 1 through July 25.

Due to concerns of low forecasted chum salmon returns to systems within the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) region, test fisheries were conducted on June 8 and 9 by the commercial purse seine fleet in the Shumagin Islands Section of the Southeastern District and fishing time was reduced in subsequent openings through the industry's

adaptive management during June to ensure that the chum salmon harvest was below the June 23 chum salmon trigger of 450,00 fish during the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fishing periods.

The commercial salmon harvest for the June fishery consisted of 1,803 Chinook, 1,953,733 sockeye, 8 coho, 1,379,284 pink, and 492,866 chum salmon, for a total of 3,827,694 salmon (Table 5). The sockeye salmon harvest was above the 10-year average of 1,484,710 fish and the chum salmon harvest was below the 10-year average of 501,337 fish in the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June.

Table 5.–Total salmon harvests in numbers of salmon for the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fisheries, excluding home pack and the department test fishery, 2026.

	Number of salmon					
	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Total
South Unimak	1,413	1,426,436	0	854,766	375,374	2,657,989
Shumagin Islands	390	527,297	8	524,518	117,492	1,169,705
Total	1,803	1,953,733	8	1,379,284	492,866	3,827,694

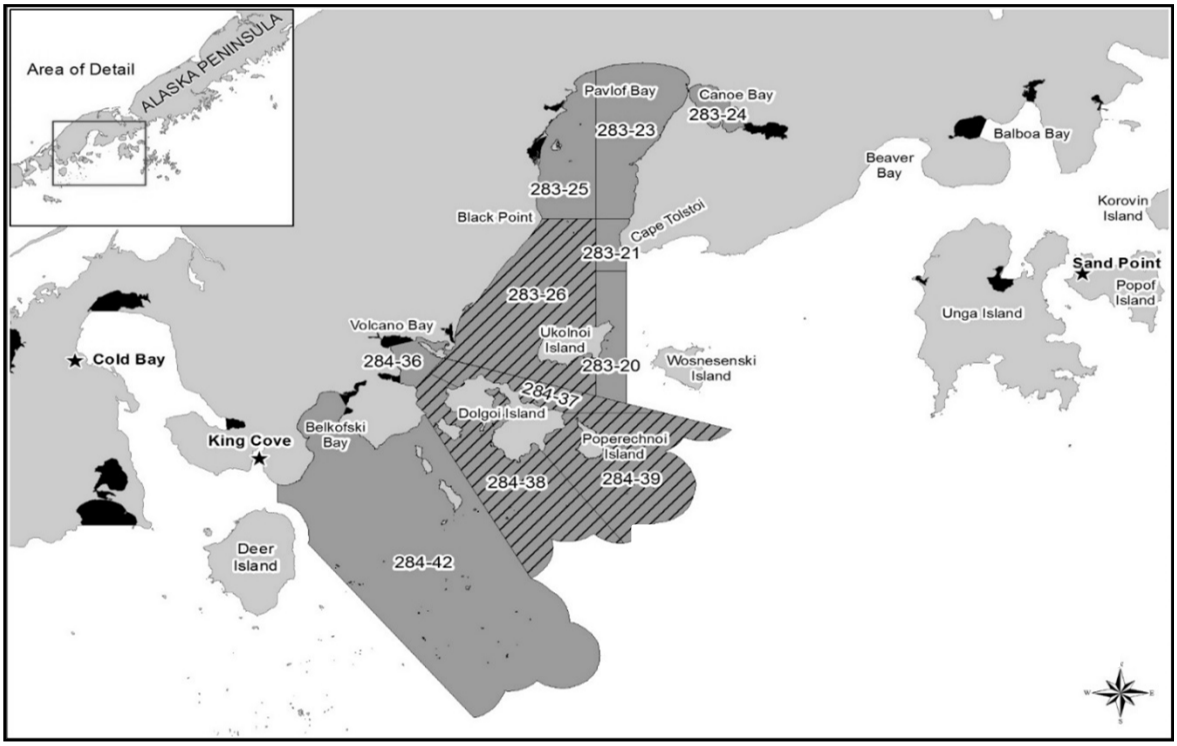


Figure 3.–Map depicting the "Dolgoi Island Area" for the June Management Plan and the areas that close after 191,000 sockeye salmon have been harvested. This area is closed to seine gear in June as per the 2019 BOF regulatory changes.

Southeastern District Mainland Fisheries

From June 1 to July 25, the Southeastern District Mainland (SEDM; excluding the Northwest Stepovak Section [NWSS] beginning July 1) is managed based on the strength of the Chignik sockeye salmon run. During years in which it appears that sockeye salmon harvest will be greater than 600,000 fish in the Chignik Management Area (CMA), and the first run begins to develop as anticipated followed by a commercial salmon opening in the CMA, commercial salmon fishing can be allowed in the East Stepovak, Stepovak Flats, Northwest Stepovak, Southwest

Stepovak, Balboa Bay and Beaver Bay Sections of the Southeastern District. There was no commercial salmon harvest during the allocation period from June 1 – July 25 (Table 6).

Beginning July 1, the NWSS of SEDM is managed on the strength of the Orzinski Lake sockeye salmon run. In 2026, the Orzinski Lake sockeye salmon escapement of 16,041 fish was within the range of the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 14,000–28,000 sockeye salmon. The run appeared early and strong and the first commercial fishing period in the NWSS began on July 1. The total harvest in the NWSS from July 1 through July 25 was 8 Chinook, 11,043 sockeye, 12 coho, 1,811 pink, and 1,712 chum salmon (Table 6).

From July 26 through August 31, SEDM is managed based on the abundance of local salmon stocks. Commercial salmon fishing in the Beaver Bay, Balboa Bay, Southwest Stepovak, Stepovak Flats, and East Stepovak Sections of the Southeastern District began on July 26 with a 36-hour fishing period for set gillnet and seine gear. The second fishing period was for 36 hours, beginning on July 30. Aerial surveys indicated building escapement and the next two commercial fishing periods were for 61 hours each and occurred on August 5 and August 12. SEDM was opened again on August 19 for 61 hours and later extended to 109 hours total, as subsequent aerial surveys indicated adequate escapement. SEDM was opened for 109 hours on August 26, and again for 109 hours on September 2, which was later extended by 23 hours for 132 hours total. The last fishing period of the season in SEDM was opened on September 10 for 131 hours. By regulation, there shall be at least one 36-hour closed period within a seven-day period in SEDM (5 AAC 09.360 (*l*)(2)), which allows for a maximum fishing period of ~132 hours that must be followed by a 36-hour closure.

Table 6.–Preliminary Southeastern District Mainland salmon harvest, excluding home pack and the department test fishery, 2026.

Dates and Location	Number of Salmon				
	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
June 1–June 30	0	0	0	0	0
July 1–July 25 SEDM[a]	0	339	21	1,434	134
Total SEDM harvest in allocation	0	339	21	1,434	134
July 1–July 25 NWSS[b]	8	11,043	12	1,811	1,712
July 26–September 30	751	28,442	15,446	807,196	56,205
Total	759	39,824	15,479	810,441	58,051

[a] Southeastern District Mainland (excluding Northwest Stepovak Section).

[b] Northwest Stepovak Section

South Peninsula Post-June Fishery

The Post-June fishery follows a fixed regulatory schedule from July 6 through July 31, in which there was one 33-hour fishing period, followed by a 63-hour closure, followed by six 36-hour fishing periods that were separated by 60-hour closures.

Prior to the South Peninsula post-June fishery, the department conducts a test fishery to determine immature salmon abundance in the Shumagin Islands, which at minimum is conducted on July 2, 3, and 5. The test fisheries that occurred on these three days resulted in an average of 275.2, 158.7, and 390.8 immature salmon per set, respectively. The average number of immature salmon per set was above the regulatory threshold of 100 immature salmon gilled in the seine, and a very low ratio of mature salmon to immature salmon was observed. Accordingly, the Shumagin Island Section did not open to purse seine gear for the July 6 commercial salmon fishing period. Additional immature test fisheries were conducted on July 8 and 9, with an average of 38.4 and 365 immature salmon per set, respectively. Thus, the Shumagin Islands section did not open to purse seine gear for the July 10

commercial salmon fishing period. Further immature test fisheries were conducted on July 12 and 13, with an average of 70.8 and 255.5 immature salmon per set, respectively. While the test fisheries on July 8 and July 12 both resulted in immature salmon averages below the threshold of 100 immature salmon per set, the ratio of mature to immature salmon was very low. This observation and the results of the July 9 and July 13 test fisheries demonstrated that immature salmon were still present in the area in large numbers. As a result, the Shumagin Islands section did not open to purse seine gear for the July 14 commercial salmon fishing period. The last immature salmon test fishery occurred on July 16, which resulted in an average of 23.4 immature salmon per set and showed favorable ratios of mature to immature salmon present. Due to these results, the Shumagin Islands section opened for fishing by purse seine gear on July 18.

During August, the post-June fishery is managed based on the abundance of local pink and chum salmon stocks. In September and October, management focuses on coho salmon returns, though the status of late pink and chum salmon returns may also be taken into consideration. It was apparent in early August, that both pink and chum salmon runs were weak but stronger than in 2024. Short weekly 61-hour fishing periods were permitted beginning August 5. When it was determined that escapement goals would be met, fishing periods were extended to 109 hours on August 21. The last delivery occurred on September 9. The total commercial harvest for the South Peninsula post-June fishery (including SEDM from July 26–October 31) was 5,150 Chinook, 174,526 sockeye, 86,817 coho, 2,189,615 pink, and 293,074 chum salmon (Table 7).

Table 7.–Post-June South Peninsula commercial salmon harvest, excluding home pack and the department test fishery, 2026.

	Number of Salmon				
Location	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
South Peninsula Post-June harvest	4,399	145,970	71,358	1,382,053	236,818
Post-June SEDM harvest (July 26– October 31)	751	28,556	15,459	807,562	56,256
Total Post-June harvest	5,150	174,526	86,817	2,189,615	293,074

South Peninsula Escapement

The South Peninsula sockeye salmon escapement of 51,941 (Table 8) was within the management objective range of 48,200–86,400 fish. Escapement into Orzinski Lake of 16,061 sockeye salmon was within the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 14,000–28,000 fish. The number of sockeye salmon observed in Mortensen's Lagoon (1,900 fish) was within the SEG range of 1,400–5,700. Escapement into Thin Point Lagoon (28,200 sockeye salmon) exceeded the management objective of 9,000–19,000 fish. The pink salmon total indexed escapement of 2,495,690 fish (Table 8) was within the SEG range of 1,750,000–4,000,000 fish. Chum salmon total escapement of 371,287 fish (Table 8) was within the cumulative district escapement goal range of 330,400–660,800 fish. Escapement into chum salmon index streams met the escapement goal range of 218,300–410,600 with a peak index escapement of 337,270 chum salmon. Coho salmon surveys were conducted during the last week of August. These surveys do not represent peak aerial survey counts and are considered a minimum. A lack of escapement information for coho salmon is due to staffing shortages preventing aerial surveys from being conducted during peak coho salmon runs.

Table 8.–South Peninsula salmon escapement by species and year, 2016–2026.

	Number of Salmon				
Year	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
2016	0	120,170	no surveys	1,038,160	626,776
2017	0	113,042	5,100	5,663,637	1,773,626
2018	0	15,617	no surveys	732,422	344,830
2019	0	31,667	no surveys	4,236,700	672,475
2020	0	34,169	no surveys	3,209,750	415,570
2021	0	59,699	no surveys	4,388,100	483,200
2022	0	56,723	26,375	5,177,350	398,302
2023	0	69,811	no surveys	5,914,600	912,410
2024	0	46,283	no surveys	2,481,157	382,107
2025	0	35,894	no surveys	4,471,350	528,400
2026	0	51,941	no surveys	2,495,690	371,287
2016–2025 average	0	58,308	15,738	3,731,323	653,770

Aleutian Islands Fishery and Escapement

The Aleutian Islands Area may open to commercial salmon fishing by emergency order if adequate escapement is observed and there is interest from the fishing industry. No surveys were flown in 2026, and no fishing opportunity was provided in the Aleutian Islands Area. The McLees River weir, which is located northwest of Dutch Harbor and used to monitor sockeye salmon returning to McLees Lake and to manage the local subsistence fishery, was not operated this year due to a lack of funding. Subsistence fishing was managed based on established regulations.

NORTH ALASKA PENINSULA

Commercial Harvest

In 2026, 121 Area M permit holders participated in commercial salmon fisheries along the North Alaska Peninsula (Figure 4). The North Alaska Peninsula has an overlap area which allows Area T (Bristol Bay) permit holders to fish in areas that they historically did prior to statehood during certain times of the year. There were 0 Area T permit holders that fished the overlap area during the 2026 season. The number of Area M permit holders participating in 2026 was below the most recent 10-year average of 161, and was below historical numbers observed during the 1990s, which peaked at 364 permits in 1992.

The North Alaska Peninsula fishery predominantly targets sockeye salmon; although, directed Chinook, coho, and chum salmon fisheries occur in some locations depending on market conditions.

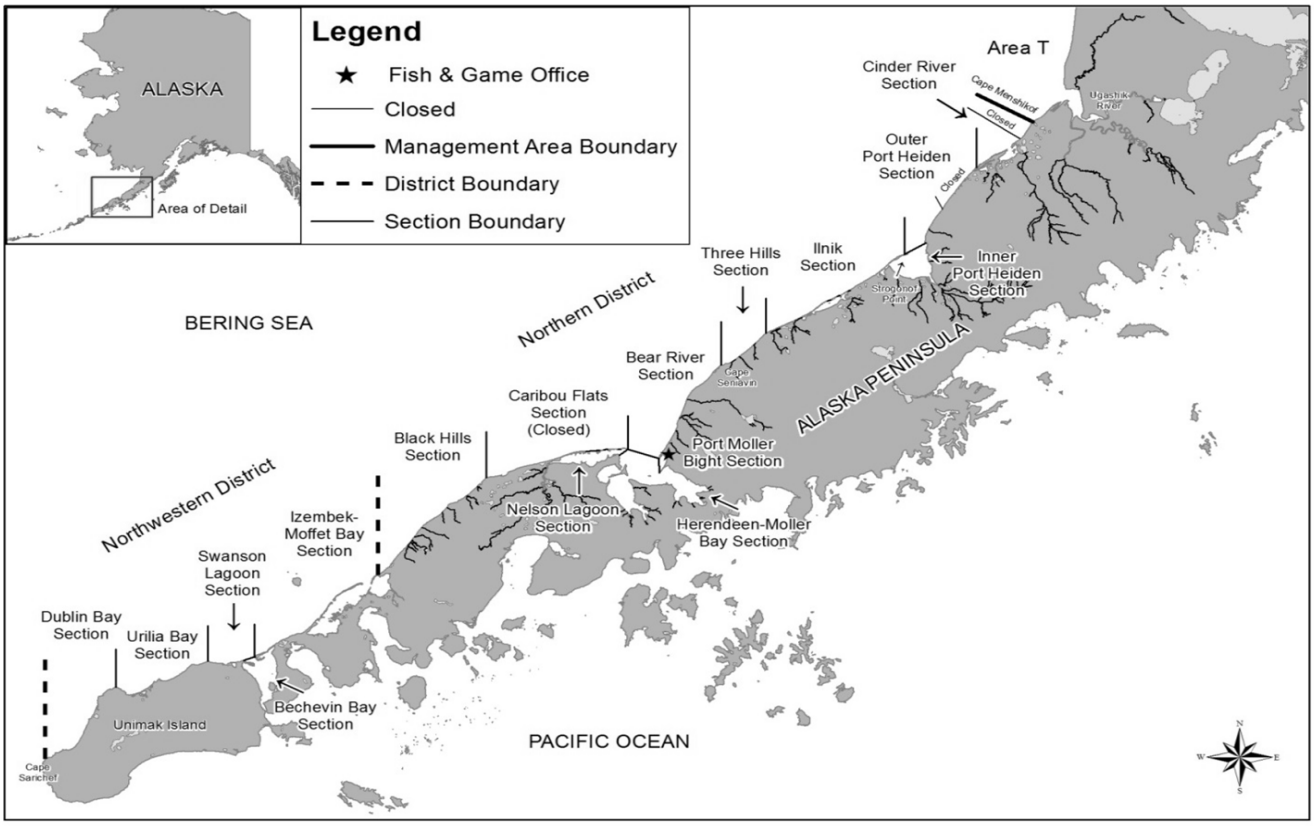


Figure 4.–Alaska Peninsula with North Alaska Peninsula commercial salmon fishing districts depicted.

In 2026, the harvest of 2,175,279 sockeye salmon on the North Alaska Peninsula was above the projected harvest of 2,117,000 sockeye salmon but below the 10-year average of 2,393,142 sockeye salmon (Table 9). The 2026 harvest of 4,149 coho salmon was below both the projected harvest of 19,000 coho salmon and the 10-year average harvest of 38,192 coho salmon. The 2026 harvest of 14,449 pink salmon was below the projected harvest of 62,000 pink salmon and the 10-year average harvest of 97,379 pink salmon. The 2026 harvest of 63,051 chum salmon was above the projected harvest of 44,000 chum salmon and below the 10-year average harvest of 94,075 chum salmon.

Table 9.–The total 2026 North Alaska Peninsula commercial salmon harvest, excluding home pack and department test fishery, 2026 projected harvest, and 2016–2025 average harvest.

	Number of salmon				
	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
2026 season total	1,574	2,175,279	4,149	14,449	63,051
Projected harvest	1,000	2,144,000	19,000	62,000	44,000
2016-2025 average	1,701	2,393,142	38,192	97,379	94,075

Northwestern District

Approximately 9 Chinook, 22,061 sockeye,1,181 coho, 12,367 pink, and 38,573 chum salmon were harvested in the Northwestern District during the 2026 commercial salmon fishery (Table 10). A total of 19 permit holders participated in the fishery, consisting of 3 purse seiners, 15 drift gillnetters, and one set gillnet.

Table 10.–Northwestern District commercial salmon harvest, excluding home pack by section, all gear combined, 2026.

Location	Number of Salmon				
	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
Dublin Bay Section	0	0	0	0	0
Urilia Bay Section	0	241	4	226	134
Swanson Lagoon Section	0	0	0	0	0
Bechevin Bay Section[a]	*	*	*	*	*
Izembek-Moffet Bay Section	9	21,820	1,177	12,141	56,204
2026 Northwestern District total[b]	9	22,061	1,181	12,367	56,338
2016–2025 NW District average	9	42,668	2,148	72,316	69,562

[a] Confidential information

[b] Does not include confidential information

In the Northwestern District, the chum salmon index escapement of 71,110 fish (Table 11) was within the SEG of 49,000–133,000 fish. This is likely an underestimate of escapement, as survey conditions were poor throughout the season, particularly in one of the significant chum salmon-producing streams (the Joshua Green River) in the Northwestern District. The 2026 Northwestern District sockeye salmon escapement was 42,800 fish, below the escapement objective range of 52,600–106,000 fish (Table 11).

Table 11.–Northwestern District salmon escapement by species and section, 2026.

Location	Number of Salmon				
	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho*	Pink	Chum
Urilia Bay Section	0	28,000	0	0	0
Swanson Lagoon Section	0	0	0	0	0
Bechevin Bay Section	0	0	0	260,900	40,700
Izembek-Moffet Bay Section	0	14,800	0	0	30,410
Northwestern District total	0	42,800	0	260,900	71,110

* No coho salmon survey information due to departure of department staff prior to coho salmon arrival in streams.

Black Hills Section

Harvest effort in the Black Hills Section typically occurs when other sections are closed. Approximately 3,604 sockeye salmon (Table 12) were harvested in the Black Hills Section in 2026. Weekly fishing periods occurred throughout the season in the Black Hills Section. North Creek is the only system in the Black Hills Section with a sockeye salmon escapement goal. The 2026 North Creek salmon escapement of 7,400 sockeye salmon was below the escapement goal of 7,500–10,000 fish. However, because weather conditions limited the department's ability to conduct a peak escapement survey of North Creek during 2026, the escapement is likely underestimated.

Table 12.–North Alaska Peninsula sockeye salmon commercial harvest, excluding home pack and department test fisheries, by statistical area or combination of statistical areas, 2026.

Area [a]	Sockeye salmon harvest	% of total harvest
Northwestern District		
311-20 Dublin Bay, 311-32 Urilia Bay, 311-52 Swanson Lagoon [b]	241	0.01%
311-60 Bechevin Bay [b]	0	0.00%
312-20 Izembek Lagoon, and 312-40 Moffet Bay	9,388	0.43%
311-58, 312-10 Outside Izembek-Moffet	12,432	0.57%
Northwestern District total	22,061	1.01%
Northern District		
313-10 Black Hills Section	3,604	0.17%
313-20 Caribou Flats	1,200	0.06%
313-30 Nelson Lagoon Section	345,137	15.87%
314-20, 314-30 Herendeen-Moller bays	0	0.00%
314-12, 315-11 Bear River and Port Moller Bight	14,279	0.66%
315-20 NE Bear River	0	0.00%
Bear River total (314-12,315-11,315-20)	14,279	0.66%
316-10 Three Hills Section	57,820	2.66%
316-20 Ilnik SW of Unangashak Bluffs	575,283	26.45%
316-25 Ilnik NE of Unangashak Bluffs	556,389	25.58%
Ilnik Section total (316-20,316-22,316-25)	1,189,492	54.68%
317-20 Inner Port Heiden Section [b]	0	0.00%
317-10 Outer Port Heiden Section	599,506	27.56%
318-20 Cinder River Section [b]	0	0.00%
Northern District total	2,153,218	98.99%
North Peninsula total	2,175,279	100.00%

[a] Some statistical areas are combined because the low number of participants makes the information confidential.
[b] No commercial salmon fishing effort in this area.

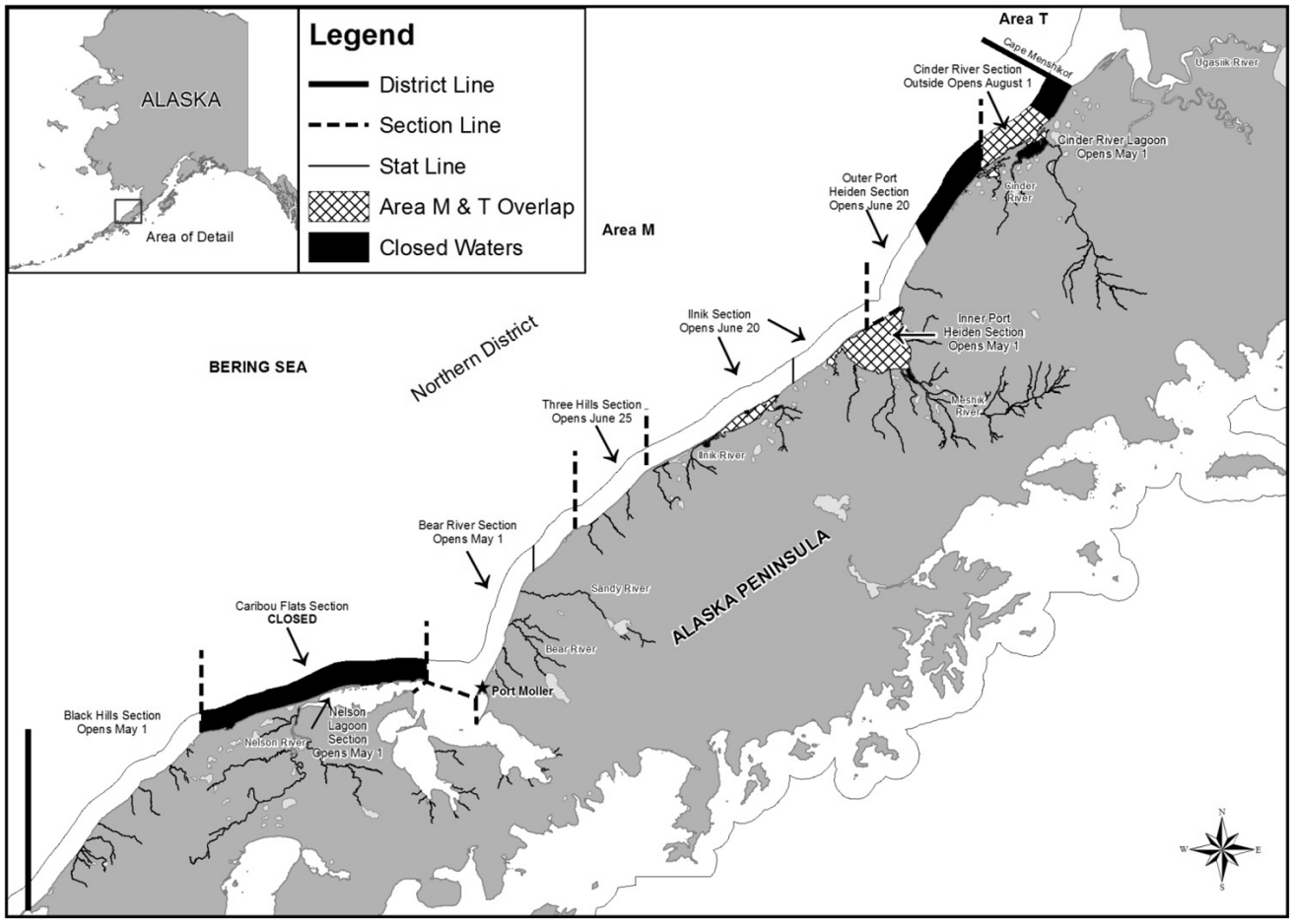


Figure 5.–Northern District commercial salmon fishing sections with earliest opening dates depicted.

Nelson Lagoon Section

The Nelson Lagoon Section was open for all weekly fishing periods and was open continuously starting on June 22 during the 2026 season. The Nelson (Sapsuk) River (Figure 5) total run of 861,962 sockeye salmon (includes harvest and escapement) was well above the estimated forecast of 430,000 sockeye salmon. From the total run, 345,137 sockeye salmon were harvested in Nelson Lagoon (Table 12), 485,725 fish escaped (Table 13) into the Nelson River, 27,000 escaped into the Caribou River, and 4,100 escaped into the David River. The harvest in Nelson Lagoon was well above the historical 10-year average of 168,066 sockeye salmon and was the second-largest harvest in the past 20 years. However, sockeye salmon escapement into Nelson River was the third-largest since 1975 and well above the biological escapement goal (BEG) of 97,000–219,000 fish (Table 13).

Beginning August 15, the Nelson Lagoon Section is managed based on local coho salmon runs. Nelson River has a SEG range 19,000–29,000 fish. However, due to poor weather conditions and logistical constraints in August and September, the department's ability to conduct aerial surveys was limited. The last significant coho salmon fishery within Nelson Lagoon occurred in 2020 when 18,838 coho salmon were harvested. Since 2020, the coho salmon fishery within Nelson Lagoon has been limited due to a lack of industry interest and market conditions. During 2026, a total of 80 coho salmon were harvested, which is below the recent 10-year average of 15,817 coho salmon.

Table 13.–Northern District sockeye salmon escapements and goals, 2026.

	Escapement [a]	Goal
Nelson (Sapsuk) River	485,725	97,000–219,000
Ilnik River	76,479	40,000–75,000
Bear Lake early run	210,678	176,000–293,000
Bear Lake late run	119,161	117,000–195,000
Bear Lake total	329,839	293,000–488,000
Subtotal for systems with weirs	892,042	430,000–782,000
Subtotal for systems without weirs	181,600	111,500–220,000
Northern District total	1,073,643	541,500–1,002,000

[a] Includes an estimate of sockeye salmon after removal of the weirs.

Bear River and Three Hills Sections

As specified by the Northern District Salmon Fisheries Management Plan (5 AAC 09.369), the Bear River Section (Figure 5) opens to commercial salmon fishing on May 1, while the Three Hills Section opens on June 25. Both areas are managed based on the sockeye salmon run strength into Bear and Sandy Rivers. The early sockeye salmon run at Bear River was weak in June and July. During this time, the Bear River Section was closed to commercial fishing. Sockeye escapement at the Bear River weir improved enough in early July to open the Three Hills Section on July 7. However, early-run escapement remained weak through the remainder of July but above objectives, and the Three Hills and Ilnik Sections remained open for commercial fishing from July 21 to July 31.

The late-run of sockeye salmon at Bear River, which starts on August 1, was weak and arrived later than usual. Commercial harvest opportunity for late-run sockeye salmon opened on August 9. Once the fishery was opened, a large closure area around the mouth of the Bear River was used to ensure the escapement goal was met while still providing fishing opportunities within the Northern District. Zero sockeye salmon were harvested in the Bear River Section during 2026, and 57,820 sockeye salmon were harvested in the Three Hills Section (Table 12).

The Bear River early-run (through July 31) sockeye salmon escapement of 210,678 fish met the escapement goal of 176,000–293,000 fish (Table 13). The Bear River late-run (after July 31) sockeye salmon escapement of 119,161 fish met the late-run sockeye salmon escapement goal of 117,000–195,000 fish. The Bear River season total sockeye salmon escapement was 329,839 fish (Table 13), which met the combined early- and late-run sockeye salmon escapement goal of 293,000–488,000 fish.

The 2026 Sandy River sockeye salmon escapement of 17,500 fish (Table 13) was below the aerial survey escapement goal range of 20,000-30,000 fish. Because of budgetary constraints, the Sandy River weir was not operated during the 2026 season, so escapement was estimated by aerial survey.

Ilnik Section

In 2026, the Ilnik River system sockeye salmon escapement through the weir was 76,479 fish (Table 13), which was above the Ilnik River escapement goal of 40,000–75,000 fish. By regulation, the Ilnik Section can open to commercial salmon fishing on June 20. Initially, sockeye salmon escapement into the Ilnik River was weak during June; escapement started to improve on June 25, and the NE portion of the Ilnik Section opened on June 26. Sockeye escapement continued to improve into the Ilnik River, and the SW portion of the Ilnik Section was

opened on July 1. Because the initial escapement into the Meshik River was poor, the NE Ilnik Section closed from July 2 through July 6. The NE Ilnik Section reopened on July 7, and the entire Ilnik Section remained open until July 31. Between July 21 and August 15, fishing time in the entire Ilnik Section is based on Bear River sockeye salmon run strength. The Bear River early-run escapement was on track to achieve the lower end of the escapement goal, and the Ilnik Section remained open after July 21. Approximately 1.2 million sockeye salmon were harvested in the Ilnik Section, below the recent ten-year average of 1.3 million fish (Table 12).

The Ilnik Section reopened on August 9, when Bear River late-run escapement met minimum interim objectives. Effort was minimal, and the last delivery in the Ilnik Section occurred on August 10. Beginning August 15, the Ilnik Section is managed for coho salmon runs into Ilnik Lagoon. However, most fishing efforts continued to target sockeye salmon during this period. In 2026, a total of 1,891 coho salmon were harvested in the Ilnik Section, all in July.

Inner and Outer Port Heiden Sections

Aerial escapement surveys of the Meshik River began on June 17, and subsequent surveys occurred weekly throughout the season. Low water conditions delayed sockeye run entry into the Meshik River system during the 2026 season. Aerial surveys were among the poorest on record through July 5. However, stream conditions started to slowly improve, and sockeye began entering the Meshik River system rapidly; by July 11, 47,500 sockeye salmon were observed in the lower Meshik River. The final sockeye salmon escapement into the Meshik River system was 78,700 fish, within the escapement goal of 48,000–86,000 sockeye salmon. This includes escapement into the Meshik River and its tributaries, including Red Bluff and Yellow Bluff Creeks.

Fishing time in the Outer Port Heiden Section (Figure 5) is based on Meshik River sockeye salmon abundance. By regulation, the Outer Port Heiden Section may open to commercial salmon fishing from June 20 to July 31. The weekly fishing periods in the Outer Port Heiden Section are scheduled from 6:00 a.m. Monday to 6:00 p.m. Wednesday. The Outer Port Heiden Section opened on June 26 and had openings of no more than 2.5 days per week until the section closed on July 31. In 2026, a total of 599,506 sockeye salmon (Table 12) were harvested from the Outer Port Heiden Section. The 2026 sockeye salmon harvest in the Outer Port Heiden Section was above the 10-year average harvest of 523,156 sockeye salmon.

Cinder River Section

No effort occurred in the Cinder River Section during 2026 despite weekly commercial salmon fishing openers throughout the season. The total Cinder River (including Mud Creek) sockeye salmon escapement estimate of 42,600 fish met the escapement goal of 36,000–94,000 fish.

Northern District Escapement for Other Salmon Species

Chinook Salmon

Nelson River is the only river in Area M with a Chinook salmon escapement goal. A total of 3,259 Chinook salmon escaped at the Nelson River weir, meeting the escapement goal of 2,400–5,000 fish. The total Northern District Chinook salmon escapement of 6,052 fish was below the recent ten-year average of 11,499 fish.

Coho Salmon

Due to weather and no industry interest in a directed coho salmon fishery, coho salmon surveys were limited in August. Additionally, budgetary and logistical constraints did not permit coho salmon surveys to occur in

September during the peak of the return. Coho salmon runs continue through September and into October, therefore escapements tabulated from aerial surveys are considered minimum estimates. During 2026, 0 coho salmon were observed during aerial surveys conducted during August in the Northern District. The Nelson River coho SEG is 19,000–29,000 fish and the Ilnik River coho SEG is 9,000–24,000 fish. It is unknown if these goals were achieved; however, no directed fishery occurred in these locations.

Chum Salmon

The North Alaska Peninsula has two aggregated chum salmon escapement goals for the Northern and Northwestern Districts. The Northern District escapement goal is determined by an aggregate of 18 index streams. In 2026, 29,800 chum salmon were observed in these streams, below the escapement goal of 49,000–132,000 fish. A total of 33,770 chum salmon escaped into Northern District streams in 2026.

Pink Salmon

There are no escapement goals for pink salmon in the Northern District. In some years, depending on market conditions, a directed pink salmon fishery may occur; however, this did not happen in 2026. A total of 7,800 pink salmon were observed as escapement in the Northern District during 2026.