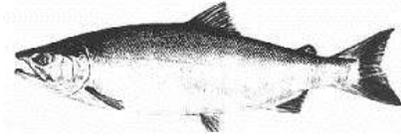


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



*Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Scott Kelley, Director*



Travis Elison, Naknek-Kvichak Manager
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Date Issued: April 4, 2016
Time: 3:00 pm

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**BRISTOL BAY
2016 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL
SALMON FISHING**

INTRODUCTION

This document provides general information to fishermen, processors, and the public, concerning the 2016 Bristol Bay salmon season. Included is the general framework for management of each of the five major districts and the 2016 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. As conditions in the fishery change, for the most current information, 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 east-side fisheries (Naknek-Kvichak, Egegik, and Ugashik), dial 246-INFO (4636), for west-side fisheries (Nushagak and Togiak) dial 842-5226. Fishermen are asked to note office hours at the Dillingham fish and game office will be 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday from June 2-June 17, and again beginning Monday July 25. From June 18 to July 22 weekday office hours will be the same as above, but weekend office hours will be from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. In King Salmon the office hours are as follows: June 1- 15 and after July 16: 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 16 to July 15: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. 7 days per week.

Regarding district registration cards: **set gillnet** permit holders are only required to fill out and return set net registration cards if they fish in the Nushagak District. At the December 2015 Board of Fisheries meeting the regulation regarding registration for drift gillnet permit holders was changed. **Drift gillnet permit holders must fill out and return district registration cards prior to commercial fishing in any district in Bristol Bay.** District registration cards will be available at the Anchorage, King Salmon, and Dillingham offices beginning May 1. In addition, PDF files of district registration cards are posted on the ADF&G Bristol Bay homepage and can be printed,

completed, mailed to the address on the printout, or submitted to Anchorage, King Salmon, or Dillingham office personnel. District registration can also be accomplished online. During the 2016 season, catch, escapement, and announcements will be available at the same site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.salmon>.

New for 2016 Port Moller genetics data will be posted at the following web site: http://www.bbedc.com/?page_id=1405 once the project becomes operational.

Fishermen and processors should be aware of the reporting requirements in **5 AAC 06.377 (b)** that state: **“Each commercial fisherman shall report, on an ADF&G fish ticket, at the time of landing, the number of Chinook and coho salmon taken but not sold.”**

Additionally, new reporting requirements for 2016 found in **5 AAC 39.130 (c)(2) and (17)** require that **when fishing as a dual permit operation, both CFEC permit numbers and signatures of the permit holders will be recorded on fish tickets when fish are delivered.**

2016 Regulatory Changes

The following regulations were adopted or modified at the December 2015 and March 2016 Board of Fisheries meetings in Anchorage:

- Vessel registration- Beginning June 1 all drift gillnet permit holders must register before fishing in any district in Bristol Bay.
- An exemption for minimum distances between units of gear when one set gillnet is operated seaward of another set gillnet that is operated under the authority of the same CFEC permit.
- The board modified the language in the Alagnak River Sockeye Salmon Special Harvest Area (ARSHA) Management Plan that allows for fishing periods to occur concurrently in the ARSHA and the Naknek-Kvichak District after escapement goals for sockeye and Chinook salmon have been met on the Alagnak River. It is unlikely a fishery will occur in the ARSHA in 2016.
- Closed waters of the Kvichak Section (north line) is now defined by those waters northeast of a line from a point near Graveyard Point at **58°52.07' N lat., 157° 00.80' W. long.** to a point on the northwest shore of Kvichak Bay at 58° 53.37' N lat., 157° 04.26' W. long.
- In the Nushagak District the board adopted GPS coordinates for all boundaries in the district. Changes were also made to portions of the Togiak District. Fishermen are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the GPS data points prior to fishing in 2016. District maps are available on the ADF&G website at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.salmon#maps> or at the Dillingham and King Salmon offices.
- In the Clarks Point area, **set gillnets located in the area from 58° 50.10' N lat., 158° 33.52' W long. to 58° 49.29' N lat., 158° 33.10' W long. will be permitted a maximum of 750 feet from the mean high tide mark, or to the minus three foot low tide mark, whichever location is closer to the mean high tide mark.**
- Nushagak subsistence areas and boundaries have been clarified.

- Nushagak coho salmon management plan has been changed.
- Wood River SHA management plan has changed to include an option to open the Wood River to commercial fishing when the Nushagak District is limited to 4.75 inch mesh to protect Nushagak sockeye salmon.
- In the Togiak District- Both the permit and the vessel are now restricted from fishing in the Togiak District if they are registered for any other district, and permits and vessels are restricted to Togiak District if they register there.
- A regulation was adopted that continuously opens subsistence salmon fishing above the commercial districts in the Ugashik, Egegik, and Naknek rivers.
- Lawful gear, dates, and area descriptions were amended for the subsistence fishery targeting spawning sockeye salmon “redfish” on Naknek Lake.

Alaska Wildlife Troopers – Summer 2016 Outlook – Bristol Bay

During the last few commercial fishing seasons in Bristol Bay, Alaska Wildlife Troopers have investigated numerous complaints of assaults and vessel ramming on the fishing grounds. Several investigations have resulted in criminal charges. Because of this, during the 2016 season the Alaska Wildlife Troopers will monitor and aggressively pursue all complaints of assaultive behavior during the fishery. **Alaska Statute 11.41.220(a)** defines, “**Assault in the third degree.** (a) A person commits the crime of assault in the third degree if that person **recklessly** places another person in **fear** of imminent serious physical injury by means of a dangerous instrument.” Assault in the third degree is a **FELONY**. A 32 foot boat, a pike pole, a Victrinox knife or a deck brush could be considered dangerous instruments. In order to avoid the possibility of physical injury, lost fishing time, criminal and/or civil liability, the Alaska Wildlife Troopers implore fishers to think “Safety First”.

Enforcement Priorities:

- Continued strong focus on fishing district lines and open period enforcement, particularly in the Naknek-Kvichak and Egegik districts using all available assets to include aircraft, rotorcraft, large and small enforcement vessels, and undercover fishing vessels.
- Routine boarding of drift gillnet and processor vessels to verify licensing and permitting regulations are met. Fishermen 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 permits if dual operation**). The permit holder must be present at the time of delivery in order to sign the fish ticket. Crew members cannot sign fish tickets for permit holders.
- Increased enforcement of state boating safety laws in cooperation with the US Coast Guard.
- Increased Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) presence in the Ugashik and Togiak Districts.

Bristol Bay Test Fishery

The Bristol Bay Test Fishery was scheduled to operate in 2016 to generate funds that would pay for core management programs that were not otherwise funded by the State budget. The test fishery was expected to generate \$250,000 from salmon harvests this season. A competitive bid process was underway when the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Association (BBRSDA) elected

to provide the total amount of funding. The department has suspended plans to conduct the test fishery this season and thanks BBRSDA for their support. District test fishing for run assessment is still likely, particularly in the Naknek-Kvichak District.

SALMON OUTLOOK

BAYWIDE

The forecasted Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run for 2016 is approximately 46.6 million fish. Based on the forecast and using the mid-points of escapement goal ranges, 29.5 million fish are potentially available for commercial harvest (Table 1). The department manages fisheries based on inseason information regarding abundance. The inseason management approach uses a suite of tools to provide information on abundance in each district as each run develops and that information is used by the department to determine fishing opportunity.

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opens June 1 by regulation. Fishing in eastside districts will be allowed using a weekly schedule that will vary by district. The schedules are in place to balance fishing opportunity with escapement in the early part of the season (particularly for Chinook salmon). As each run develops and sockeye salmon run characteristics become defined within individual districts, fishing time will be adjusted accordingly. In the Nushagak District, management of the Chinook salmon fishery will govern fishing time in the early part of the season, followed by directed sockeye salmon management as abundance dictates.

NAKNEK-KVICHAK DISTRICT

A run of approximately 23.2 million sockeye salmon is expected for the Naknek-Kvichak District in 2016. Based on the forecast, the projected harvest in the Naknek-Kvichak District is approximately 11.7 million sockeye salmon: 5.9 million from the Kvichak River, 2.7 million from the Alagnak River and 3.2 million from the Naknek River. Sockeye salmon returning to the Naknek-Kvichak District are predicted to be 33% age-2.2, 30% age-1.2, 28% age-1.3, and 9% 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. Escapements will be managed within the lower or upper portions of the escapement goals proportional to the run size based on the preseason forecast and inseason assessment of run size.

Fishing in the Naknek-Kvichak District will be open 4 days per week from 9:00 a.m. Mondays to 9:00 a.m. Fridays, beginning 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 1 and ending 9:00 a.m. Thursday, June 23. 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 23 until July 17 fishing periods will be based on sockeye salmon escapements, abundance in the district, and gear group catch allocations. District test fishing for inseason management may be conducted periodically depending on run characteristics. As in previous years, some openings could occur on short notice.

A mesh size restriction of 5.5 inches or less will be in effect beginning 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 1 until 9:00 a.m. Friday, July 22, to help in the conservation of Chinook salmon.

EGEGIK DISTRICT

A forecasted run of approximately 7.4 million sockeye salmon is expected for the Egegik River in 2016. The escapement goal range is 800,000 to 2.0 million sockeye. Based on the forecast, the expected surplus potentially available for harvest is 5.7 million fish. Approximately 47 % of the run

is expected to be age-2.3 fish, followed by age-2.2 (42 %), age-1.3 (7%), and age 1.2 (4%).

In 2016, separate gear openings and extensions will be used to adjust harvest in an attempt to achieve allocation percentages. Fishermen are reminded that regulation directs the department to avoid “to the extent practicable”, continuous fishing with set gillnet gear in the Egegik District, therefore Egegik set gillnet fishermen should expect breaks in fishing.

Based on the Kvichak River sockeye salmon forecast, fishing will begin in the full Egegik District. The season will start with a 3 day per week schedule that will be in effect through June 17. The primary reason for the 3 day per week schedule is to provide for Chinook salmon escapement. By emergency order (E.O.), 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 12:01 a.m. Wednesday June 1 and run through 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 17 for drift and set gillnet gear. After June 17, additional fishing time for both gear groups will be scheduled according to sockeye salmon run strength. As in previous years, some openings could occur on short notice. Periods will be adjusted to allocate harvest between drift and set gillnet gear groups.

In addition, subsistence fishing will be permitted in the waters of the Egegik commercial district from 12:01 a.m. Wednesday June 1 until 11:59 p.m. Friday, June 17. The department will consider additional directed subsistence openings, but will wait until inseason to announce the timing of those openings.

The department does not produce forecasts of the coho salmon run to the Egegik River. The parent year for the 2016 coho run was the 2012 escapement, however, because of weather conditions surveys were not flown so no assessment of coho escapement for that year is available. In 2016, management of the fall coho fishery will be based on fishery performance and run strength indicators.

UGASHIK DISTRICT

The forecasted Ugashik River sockeye salmon run in 2016 is 5.0 million fish. The escapement goal range is 500,000 to 1.4 million sockeye. Based on the forecast, 3.8 million fish are potentially available for harvest. Approximately 74% of the run is expected to be age-1.2 fish, 10% age-2.2, 11% age-1.3, and 5% age-2.3 fish.

The Ugashik District allocation plan specifies 10% set gillnet and 90% for the drift gillnet group. As in previous years separate gear openings and adjusting length of commercial periods will be used to address allocation between gear groups in 2016. A mesh size restriction of 5.5 inches or less will be in effect beginning 12:01 a.m. Wednesday June 1 until 11:59 p.m. Friday July 22, to help in the conservation of Chinook salmon.

Beginning 12:01 a.m. Wednesday June 1, commercial fishing in the Ugashik District will be allowed on a 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday schedule through 11:59 p.m. Wednesday June 22. With an expected run to the Kvichak River that exceeds the minimum escapement goal stipulated in regulation, fishing will begin in the full Ugashik District. Additional fishing time after June 22 will depend on fishery performance and run strength indicators. 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 in 2016.

Management of the fall coho fishery will be based on fishery performance and run strength indicators. Assessment of the escapement is done with aerial surveys. The parent year for the 2016 coho run was the 2012 escapement, however, because of weather conditions surveys were not flown so no assessment of the coho escapement for that year is available.

At the March 2013 meeting the board made changes to when Area T permit holders may fish in the inner portion of the Cinder River Section (river and lagoon) and Inner Port Heiden sections. The board adopted proposals that would allow Area T permit holders to fish within the inner portion of the Cinder River Section and Inner Port Heiden Section during all months when open by regulation. For further information contact ADF&G in Port Moller at 907-375-2716. 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 during July.

NUSHAGAK DISTRICT

Nushagak River Chinook salmon are managed according to the *Nushagak-Mulchatna King Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 06.361)*. This plan directs the commercial fishery to be managed for an inriver goal of 95,000 Chinook salmon. The department will closely monitor Chinook salmon escapement but does not anticipate any directed Chinook salmon openings in 2016.

The 2016 forecast for sockeye salmon in the Nushagak District is 10.4 million fish; 2.2 million for escapement and 7.8 million potentially available for harvest in the Nushagak District commercial salmon fishery. The total run by river system is Wood River 7.5 million (escapement goal range 700,000 to 1.8 million), Igushik River 1.1 million (escapement goal range 150,000 to 400,000), and Nushagak River 1.7 million (escapement goal range of 370,000 to 900,000). Approximately 50% of the forecasted run is expected to be age-1.2 sockeye salmon, < 2% age-2.2, 46% age-1.3, and < 1% age-2.3 fish.

Management strategies for 2016 include: 1) directed Chinook salmon openings only if warranted by escapement, 2) Igushik Section sockeye salmon openings are likely to begin in the second week of June and will likely be set gillnet only until escapement or strong harvests dictate otherwise, and 3) begin fishing in the regular district in the third week of June with short openings. Openings will be scheduled based on sockeye salmon escapement levels in the Nushagak and Wood rivers. Mesh size will be limited to 5.5 inches or smaller unless Chinook salmon escapement is above expectations. If the Nushagak River sockeye salmon escapement decreases relative to expected escapements the department may first warn and then impose the 4.75 inch mesh restriction in the Nushagak District. Based on changes made by the Board of Fisheries in December 2015 the department would also open the WRSOA at this time. Subsequently, if Nushagak River sockeye salmon escapement falls below the expected 370,000 fish curve, then the department may limit fishing to only the WRSOA to protect Nushagak River sockeye salmon. Commercial openings in the district may follow as allowed by escapement levels in the Nushagak River. With the large forecast this year the department will try to provide early season opportunity in the Nushagak District. Contingent upon sockeye and Chinook salmon escapement, the department plans to begin fishing once Wood River sockeye salmon escapement exceeds 30,000 fish. This is a notable change from previous years when the department waited to reach 100,000 fish escapement on the Wood River before opening directed sockeye fishing in the commercial district.

Permit holders are reminded that there were significant changes made to the WRSOA management plan at the December 2012 Board of Fisheries meeting. The changes require separate gear type openings, and allocation will be done by a ratio of openings (3:1) for the different gear types. Other changes include restrictions regarding where and how set gillnets may be fished and the amount of gear allowed on board set or drift gillnet vessels. Please be sure you understand all regulations

before participating in any fishing activities. Additionally the board changed a boundary line above the Muklung River at the 2015 board meeting.

Igushik River sockeye salmon will be managed independently of the Nushagak-Wood River sockeye salmon stocks. Permit holders should be aware that because of budget cuts the Igushik Tower will not be operated this year. Set gillnet fishing will begin in the Igushik Section when there is a market available. Initial openings will be 8 hours per day and additional time will be added if large harvests or escapement information indicate more time is warranted. Drift gillnet openings in the Igushik Section will be added as needed to control sockeye salmon escapement. Igushik River sockeye salmon returns can be quite variable relative to forecasted run strength. Management will incorporate a readiness to respond with increasing early set gillnet openings, and an attempt to maintain the 6% sockeye harvest allocated to the Igushik Section set gillnet group by only adding drift gillnet openings as needed.

The department will switch to coho salmon management around July 23 when sockeye salmon harvest decreases. Fishery performance and run strength indicators will be used to make management decisions regarding pink and coho salmon fishing opportunity.

District test fishing for inseason management may be conducted periodically depending on run characteristics. Permit holders interested in test fishing in the Nushagak District should contact Tim Sands in Dillingham at (907) 842-5227.

TOGIAC DISTRICT

The 2016 total run of Togiak River sockeye salmon is forecast at 660,000 fish, an increase from the 2015 forecast of 610,000. The *Togiak District Salmon Management Plan* (TDSMP, **5 AAC 06.369**) calls for sockeye salmon escapement of 150,000 fish past the counting towers located at the outlet of Togiak Lake. Based on the forecast, approximately 440,000 sockeye salmon will potentially be available for commercial harvest. Approximately 21% of the run is expected to be 2-ocean fish and 79% is expected to be 3-ocean fish.

Unlike other fishing districts in Bristol Bay that require emergency orders to announce fishing periods, Togiak District follows a regular weekly schedule that allows fishing in: Togiak Bay four days per week, fishing in Kulukak Section two and a half days per week, and fishing in Matogak, Osviak, and Cape Peirce Sections five days per week. Following the TDSMP, permit holders are restricted from fishing in the Togiak District until July 27 if they have fished in any other district in Bristol Bay, and conversely, restricts permit holders from fishing in any other district until July 27 if they have fished in the Togiak District. As previously mentioned, 2015 Board of Fisheries action now requires vessel transfers to be restricted in Togiak District similarly to the restriction of permit transfers. Other recent regulation changes prevent drift gillnet fishing effort near the Togiak River mouth through July 15, and restrict mesh size to 5.5 inches or smaller between June 15 and July 15 for the conservation of Chinook salmon.

Chinook salmon run strength in the Togiak River has been considered below average for several years. Anticipating another poor Chinook salmon run, permit holders can expect emergency orders to reduce the weekly fishing schedule in the last two weeks of June and a mesh size restriction through all of July.

Harvest of coho and pink salmon will be dependent on market presence. If a market for coho salmon is present, a conservative harvest strategy will be utilized due to the lack of information about the returning coho salmon run.

Table 1.-Forecast of total run, escapement and harvest of sockeye salmon returning to Bristol Bay River systems in 2016.

Millions of Sockeye Salmon							
DISTRICT River	Total Run Forecast by Age Class				Total	Escapement	Total Harvest ^a
	1.2	2.2	1.3	2.3			
NAKNEK-KVICHAK:							
Kvichak	4.30	6.09	1.25	1.06	12.69	6.34	5.87
Alagnak	1.78	0.07	3.73	0.15	5.72	2.86 ^b	2.65
Naknek	0.94	1.44	1.41	0.98	4.76	1.40	3.18
Total	7.02	7.59	6.38	2.18	23.17	10.61	11.71
EGEGIK	0.30	3.12	0.50	3.49	7.41	1.40	5.74
UGASHIK	3.67	0.48	0.54	0.26	4.95	0.95	3.82
NUSHAGAK							
Wood	4.91	0.16	2.38	0.08	7.53	1.25	6.00
Igushik	0.13	0.02	0.93	0.01	1.00	0.28	0.77
Nushagak	0.14	0.00	1.48	0.00	1.74	0.64	1.04
Total	5.17	0.19	4.78	0.10	10.36	2.16	7.82
TOGIAK	0.12	0.02	0.49	0.02	0.66	0.20	0.44
BRISTOL BAY	16.28	11.47	12.70	6.05	46.55	15.31	29.52

^a The projected harvest accounts for the inshore run of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon, excluding harvest in the South Peninsula commercial salmon fisheries. The South Peninsula harvest has averaged 3.7% of the total Bristol Bay sockeye production during the last five years and is forecasted to be 1.72 million in 2016.

^b The escapement to the Alagnak was estimated based on exploiting the Alagnak stock at the same level as the Kvichak River stock.