

An Ethnographic Overview of the Kuskokwim River King Salmon Subsistence Fishery



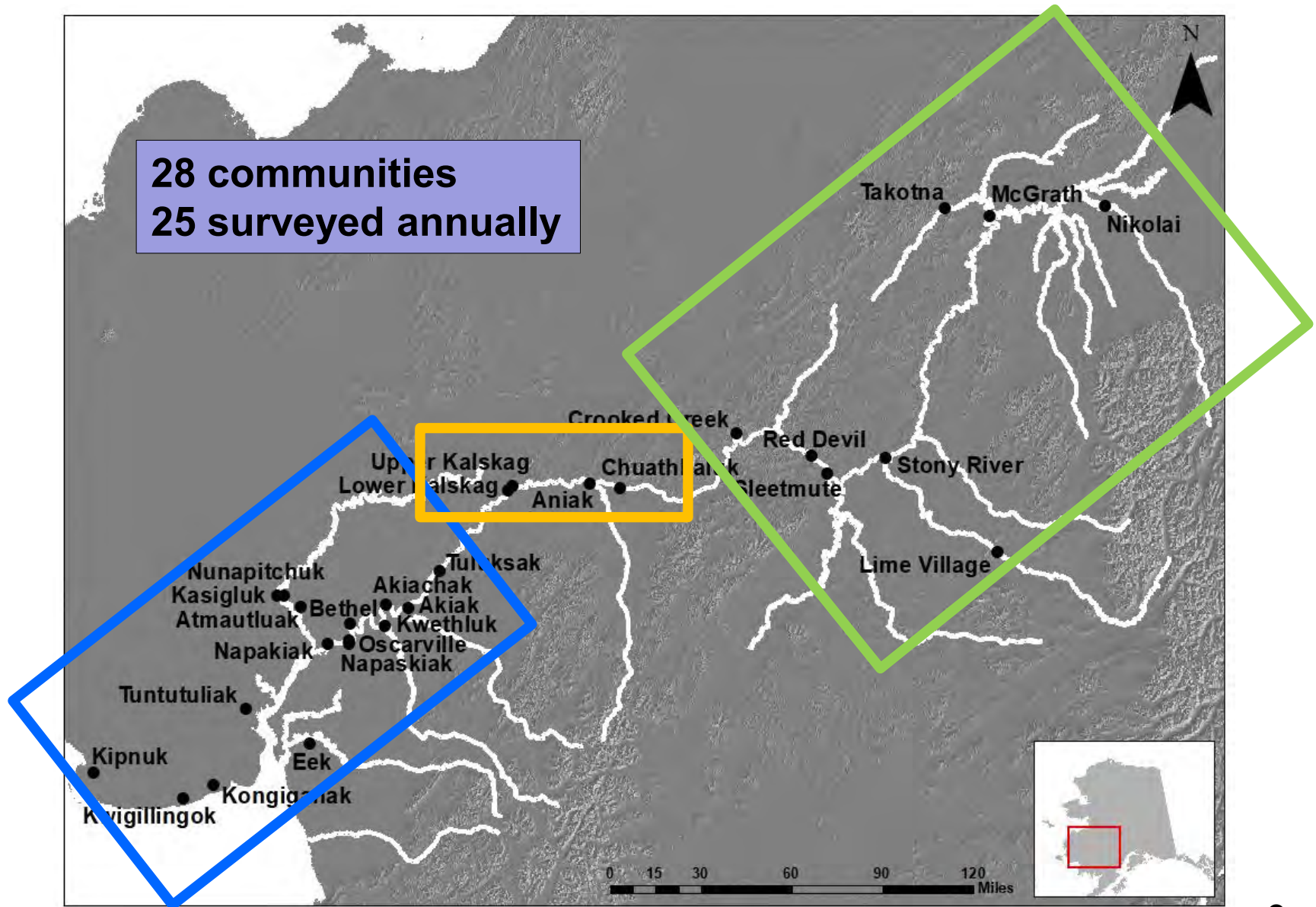
David Runfola
Subsistence Resource Specialist
RC 3, Tab 13

Kuskokwim River Salmon Fishing Season

- Primarily 4 species in subsistence harvests
- Kings arrive first then chum and sockeye
- Harvests can include all 3 species at the same time
- Coho arrive toward the season's end



Kuskokwim River Drainage



Demographics

15,200 residents and 1,800 fishing households in 3 sections

- Lower Kuskokwim
 - 88% of population in 16 communities, Bethel (~6,150)
 - 1,500 fishing households, 88% of harvest
- Middle Kuskokwim
 - 7% of population in 4 communities, Aniak (~500)
 - 170 fishing households, 9% of harvest
- Upper Kuskokwim
 - 5% of population in 8 communities, McGrath (~300)
 - 115 fishing households, 3% of harvest

Regional Differences in the Fishery



Lower

- Large, low gradient, tidal river
- Drift and set gillnets
- First opportunity on all species



Middle

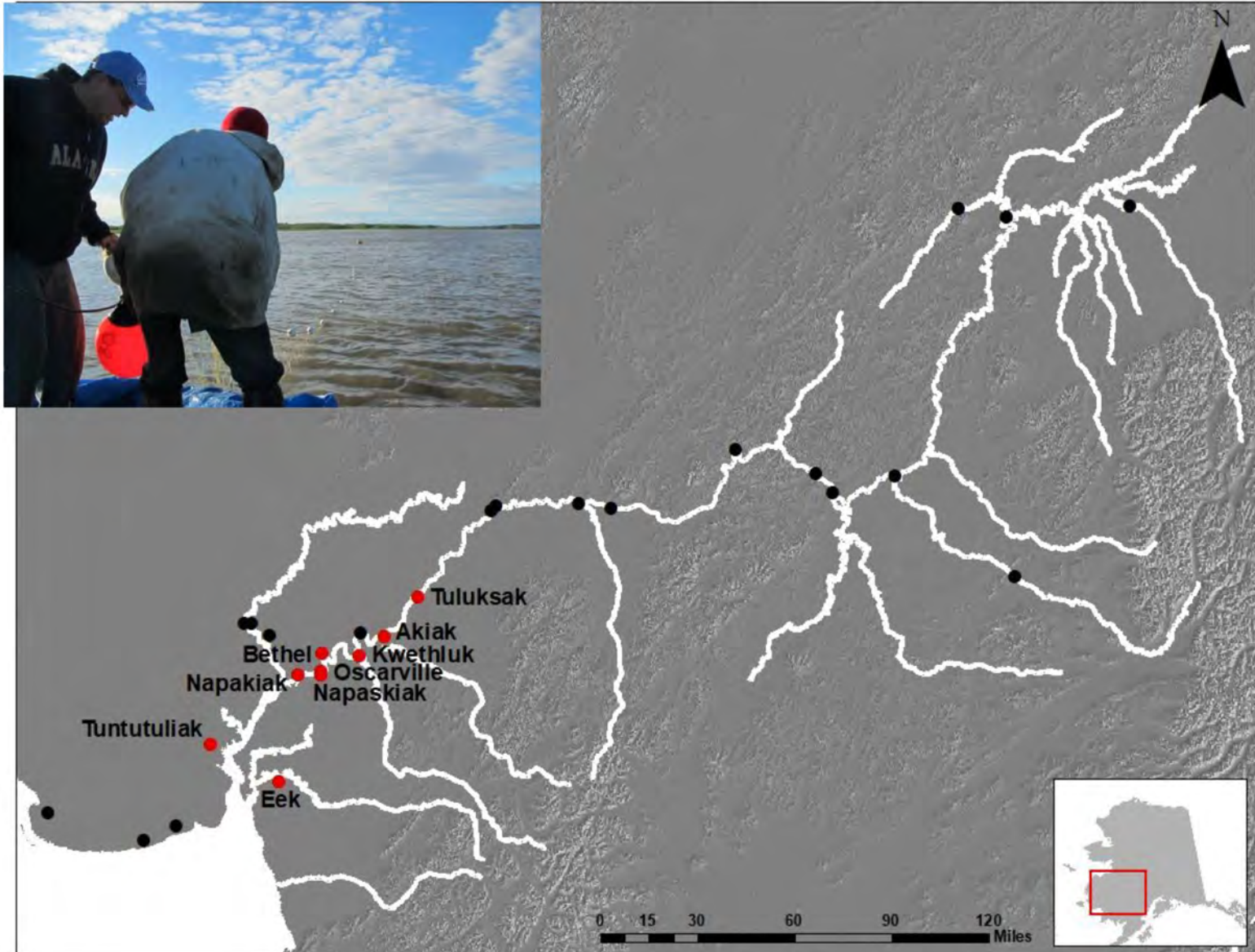
- Narrower river with fewer channels
- Gillnets, fish wheels, rod and reel
- Lower abundance of salmon



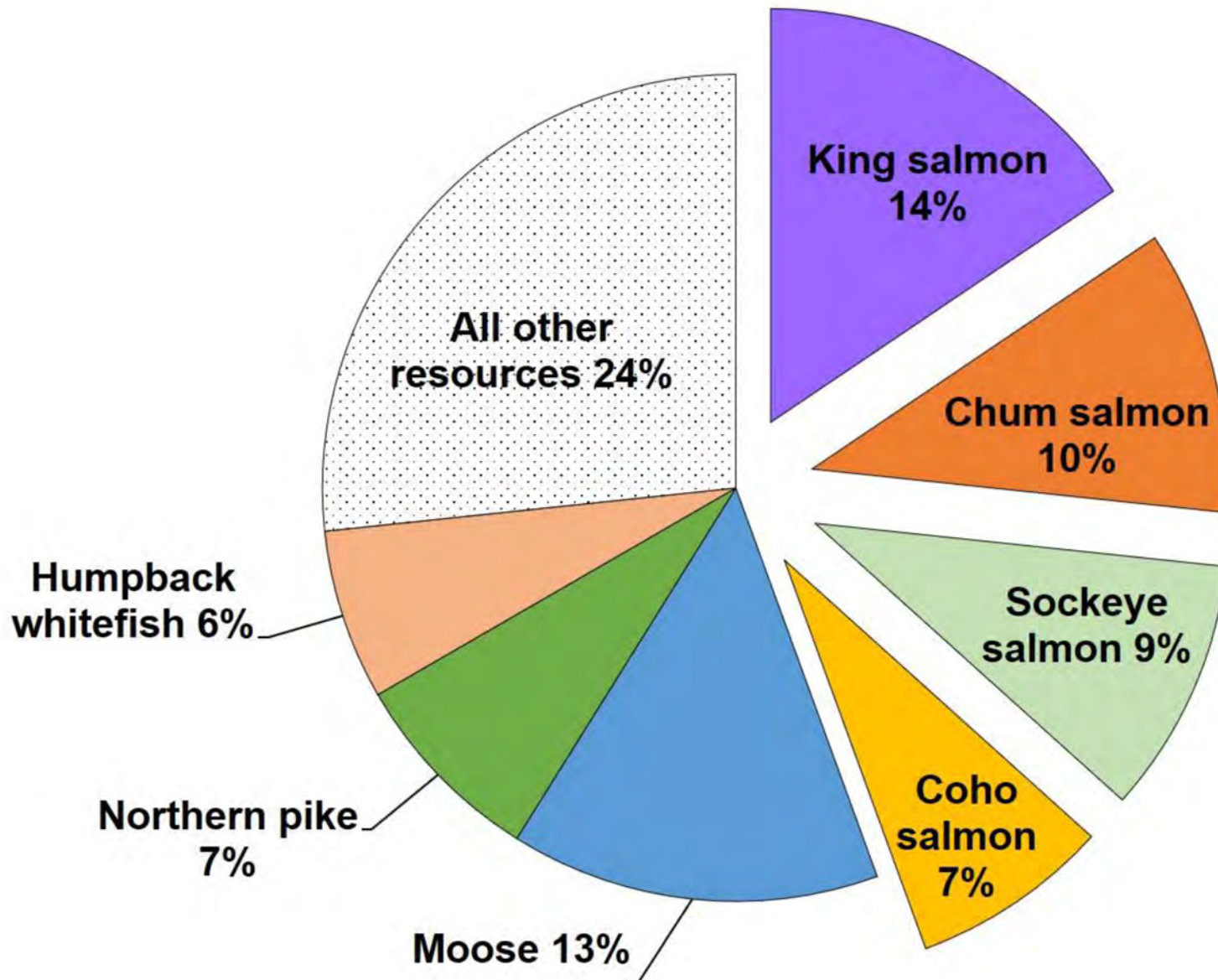
Upper

- Set gillnets, fish wheels, rod and reel
- Late season king salmon
- No sockeye upstream of Stony River

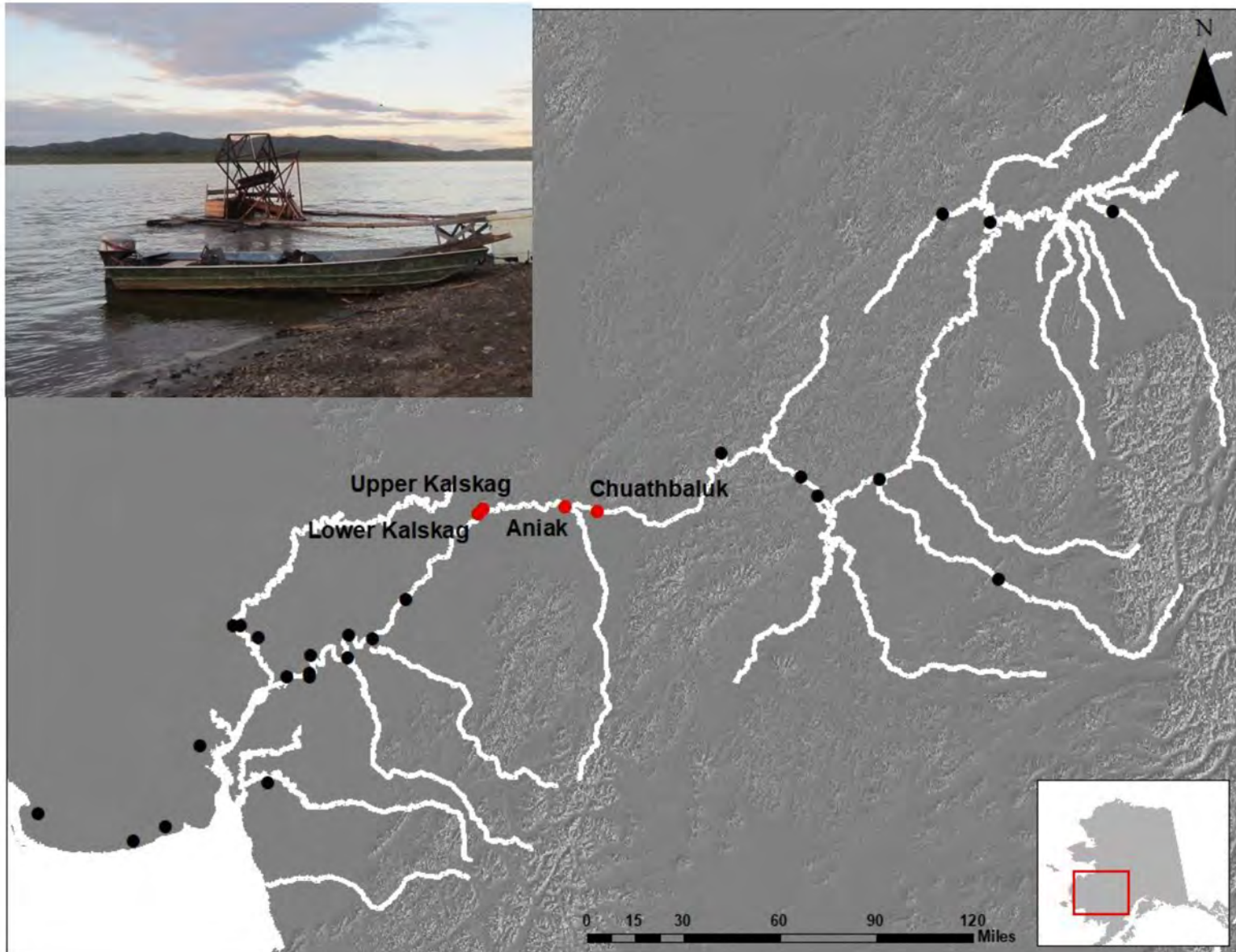
Lower Kuskokwim: Regional Subsistence



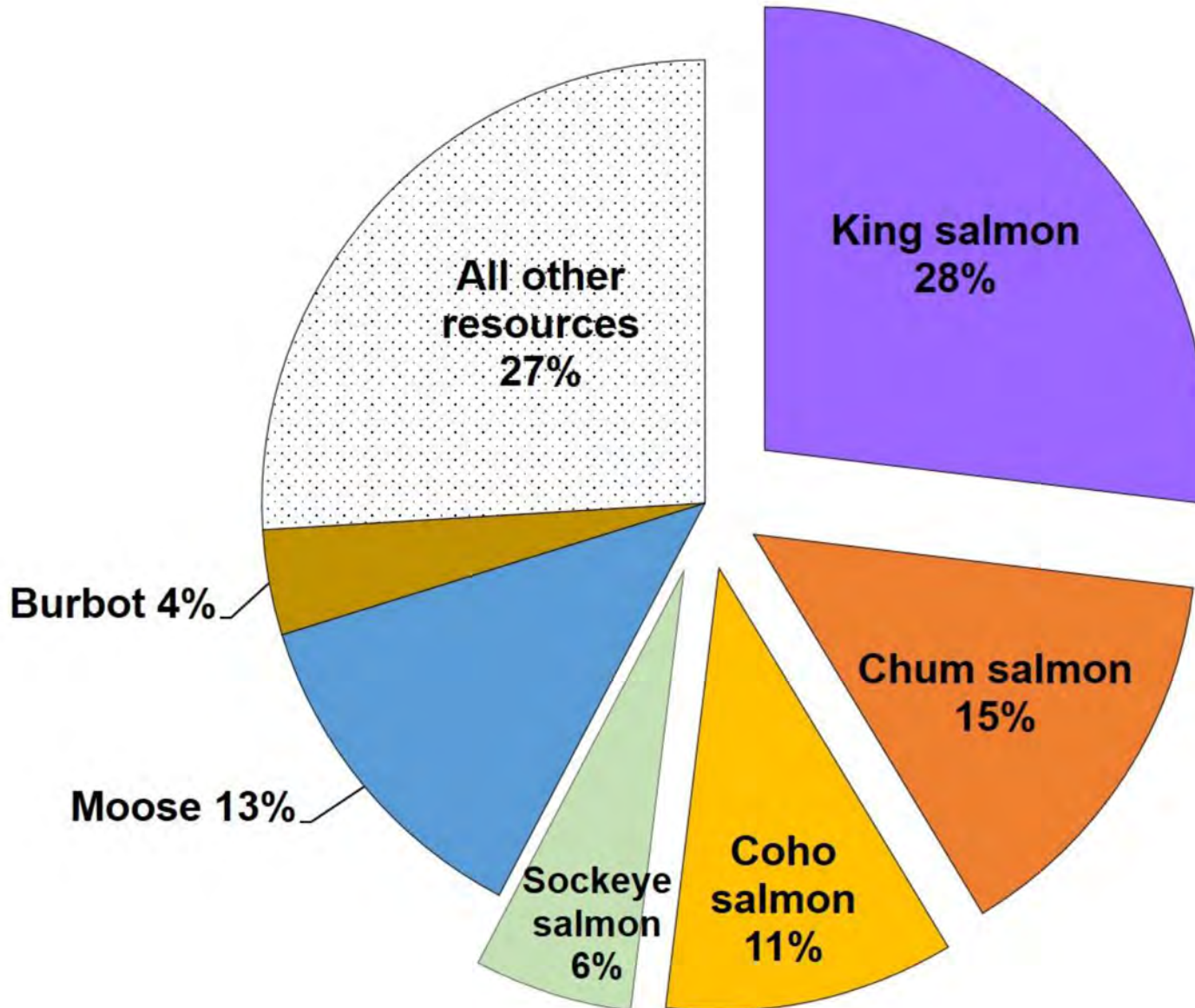
Top 10 Resources: Lower Kuskokwim Communities (Study Years 2010-2013)



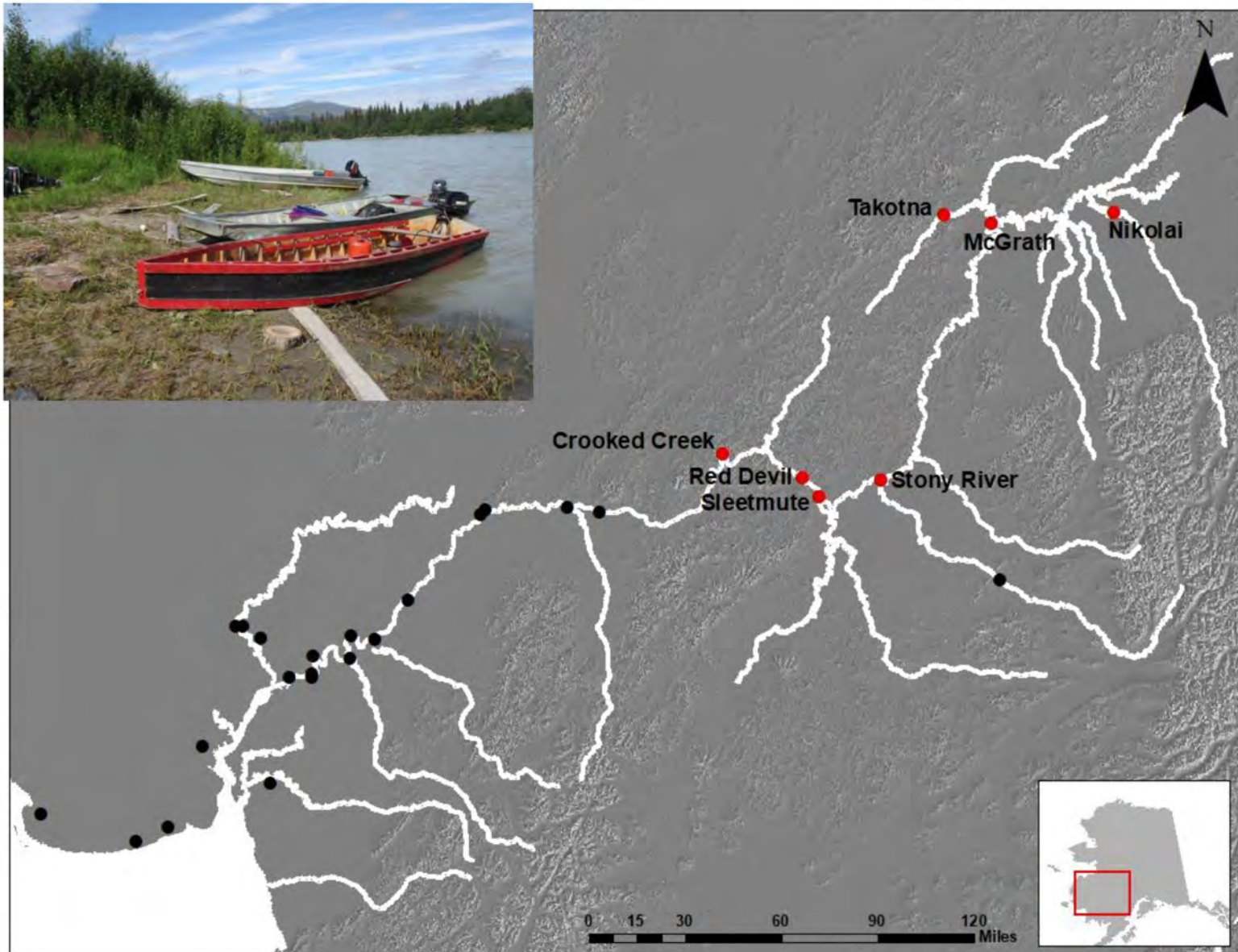
Middle Kuskokwim: Regional Subsistence



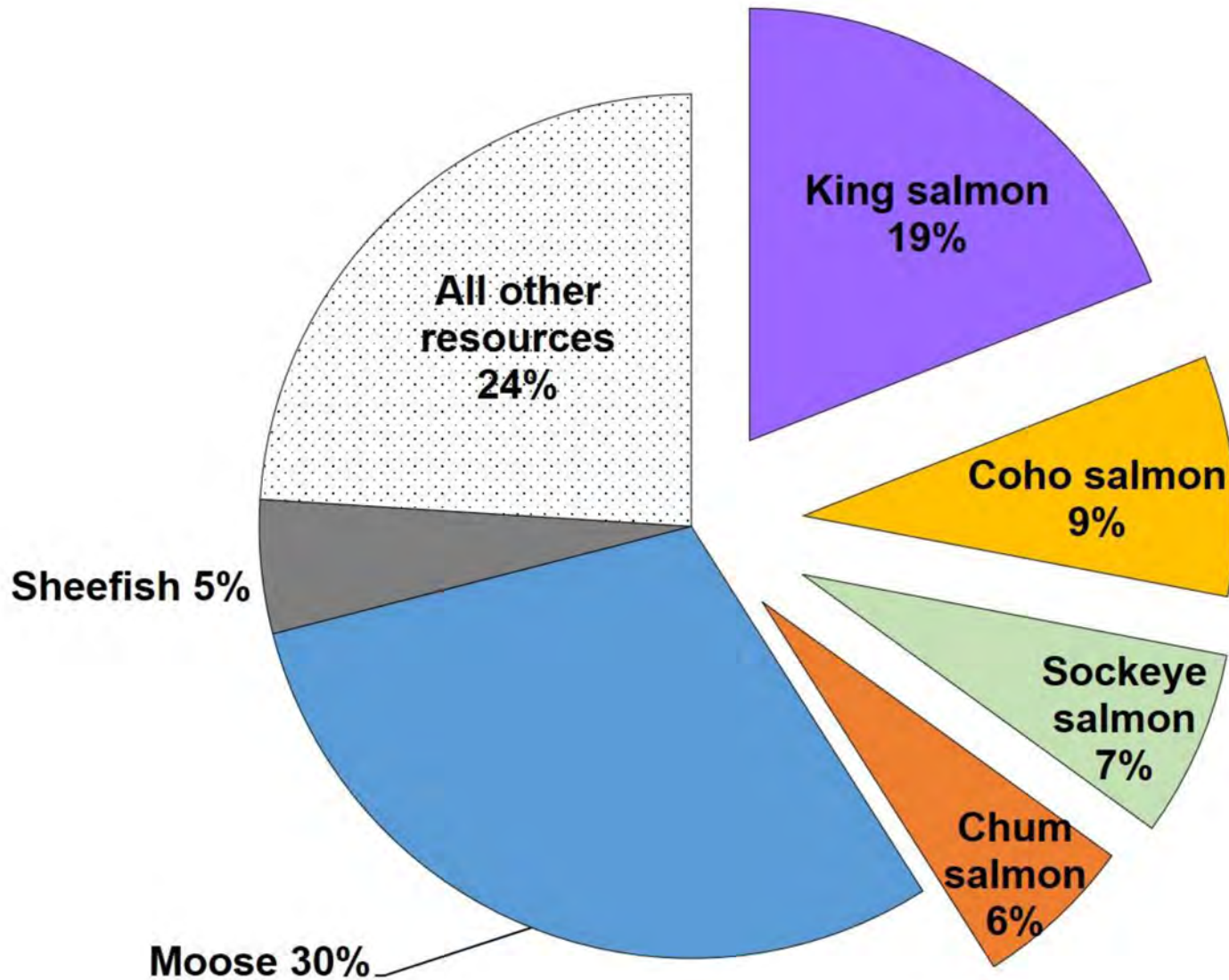
Top 10 Resources: Middle Kuskokwim River Communities (Study Year 2009)



Upper Kuskokwim: Regional Subsistence



Top 10 Resources: Upper Kuskokwim Communities (Study Years 2009 & 2012)

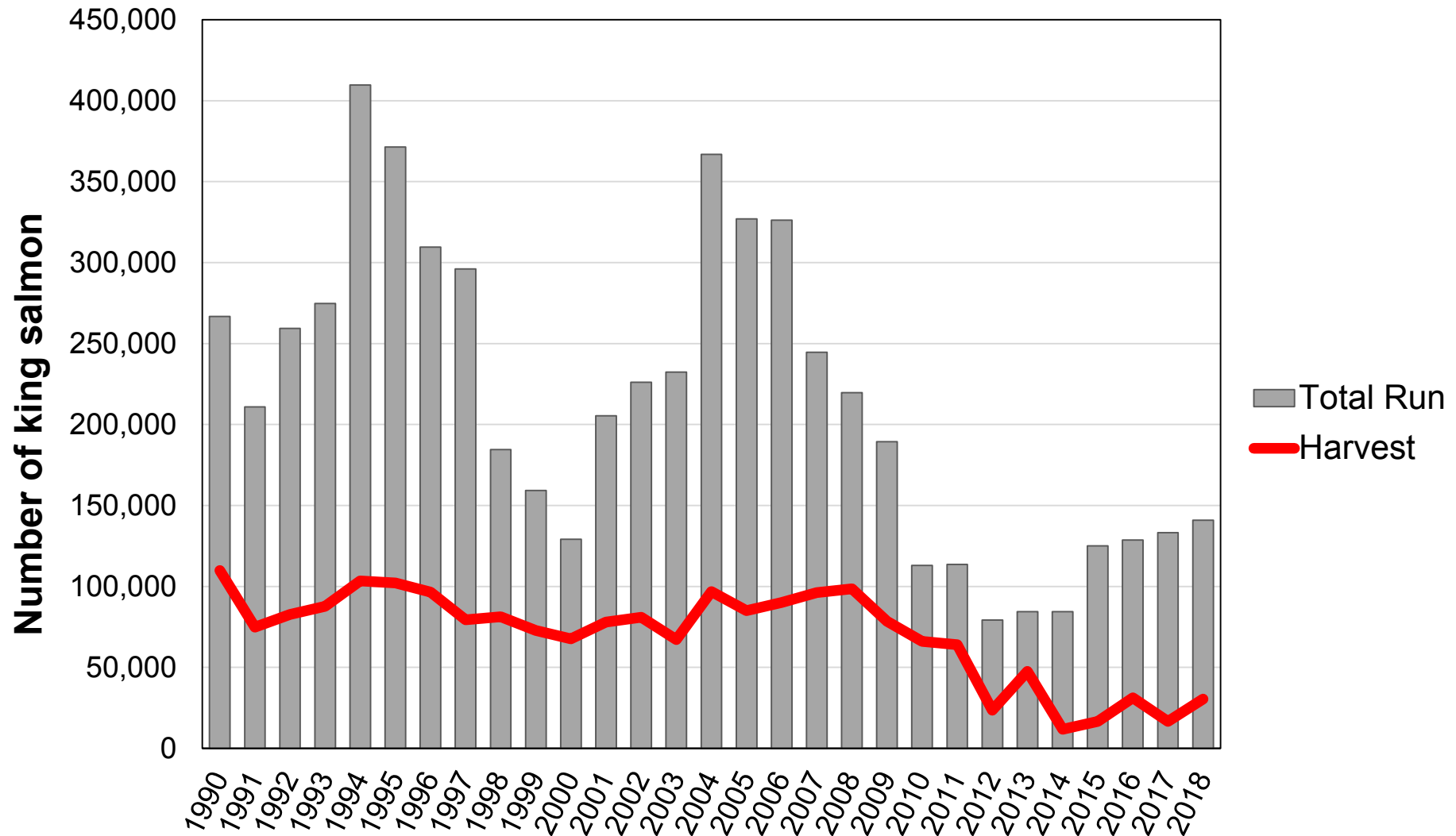


Subsistence King Salmon Fishing in the Kuskokwim, 2012—2018

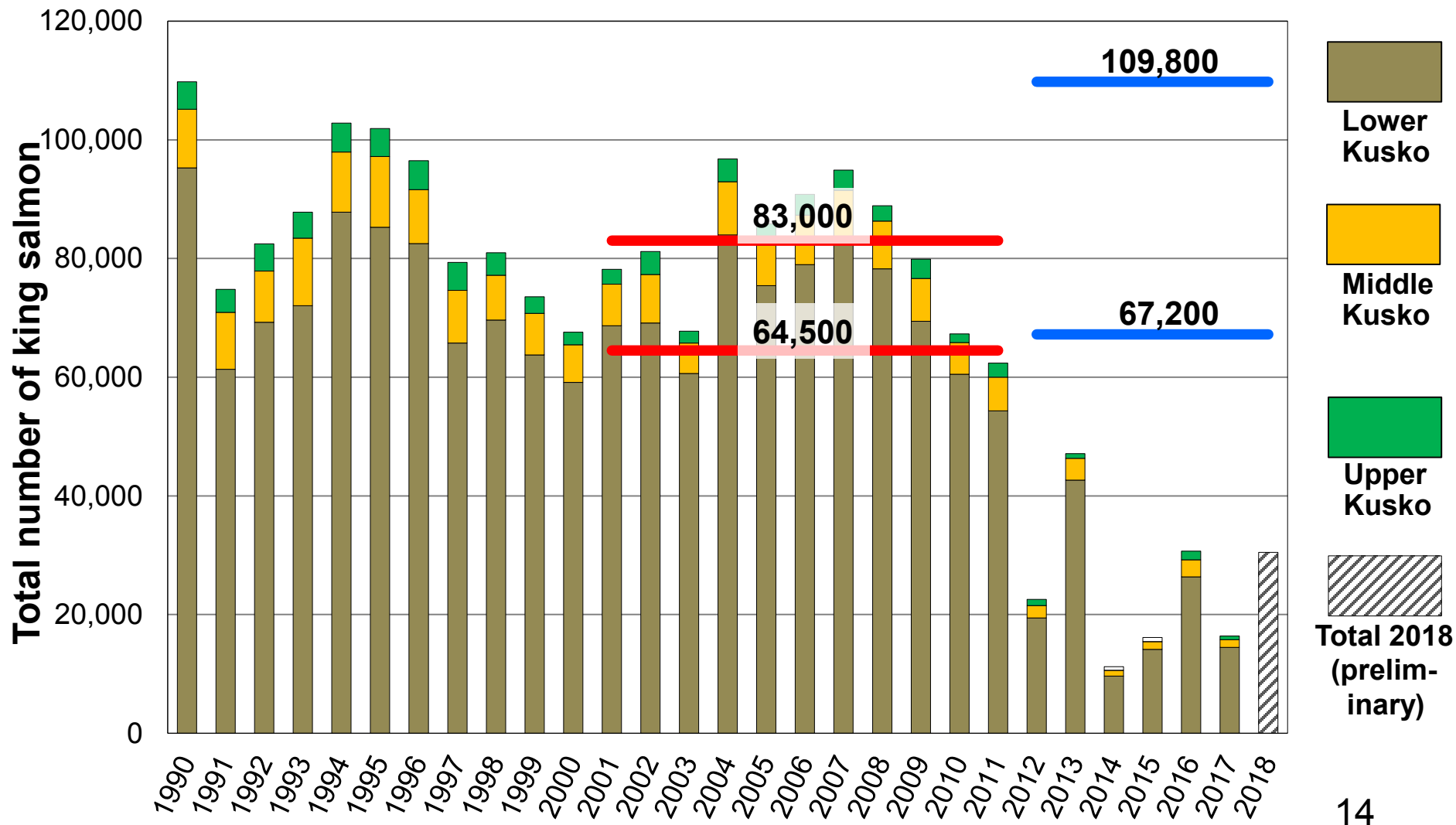


- **Decreased king salmon run sizes**
- **Unprecedented fishing closures**
- **Lowest subsistence harvests observed since 1990**
- **Federal management**

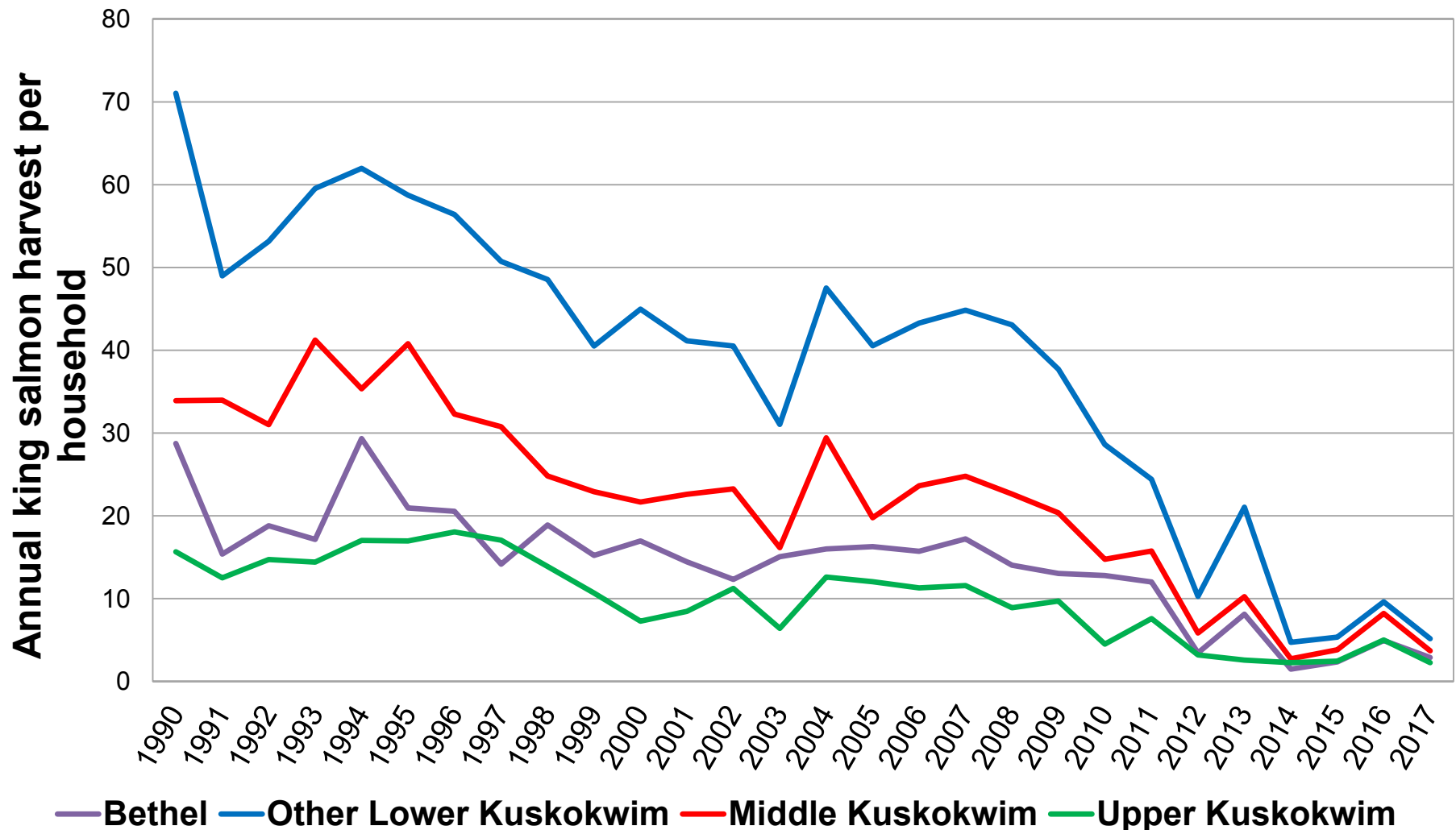
Kuskokwim River King Salmon Run Size and Total Subsistence Harvest, 1990-2018



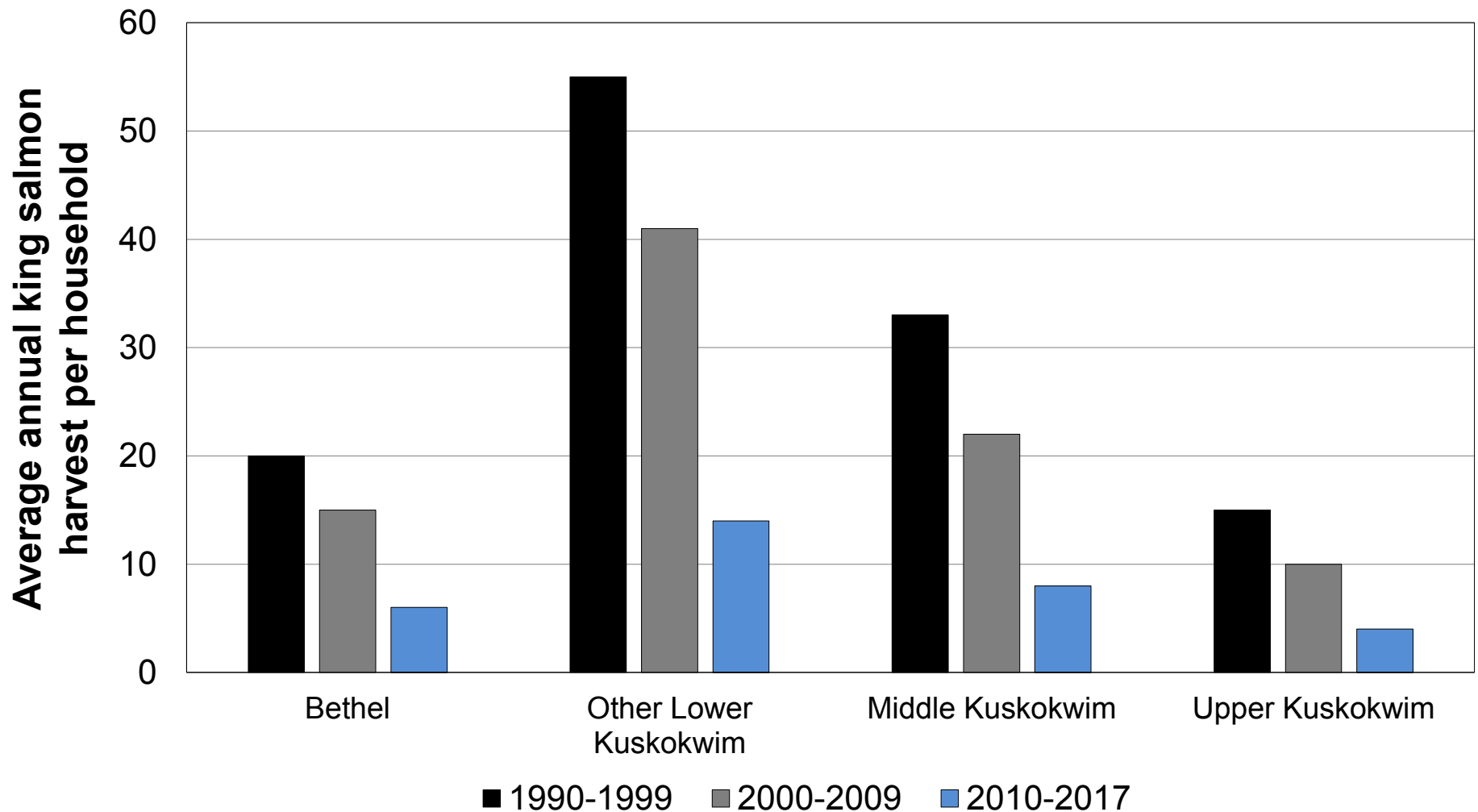
Kuskokwim River Subsistence King Salmon Harvest and ANS Ranges, 1990-2018



Kuskokwim River Subsistence King Salmon Harvest Per Household by Region, 1990-2017



Summary of King Salmon Harvest Per Household by Region, 1990-2017



Changes to the Kuskokwim Subsistence Salmon Fishery



- **Fishing restrictions make it more difficult to catch chum and sockeye**
- **Adapting to infrequent and short openers**
- **Derby fishing results in more competitive fishing**
- **Fishers traveling to locations outside of traditional fishing areas**
- **Fishers desire more predictable schedule and more reliable sources of information**

Changes to the Kuskokwim Subsistence Salmon Fishery (continued)

- Late season fishing and processing in cooler, wetter weather
- Less time spent catching and processing fish
- Middle and Upper river fishers targeting more coho late in the season
- Dipnets slowly increasing in use
- Many fishers supportive of conservation efforts



QUESTIONS

