



DRAFT MEMORANDUM

TO: Members
Alaska Board of Fisheries

DATE: October 6, 2025

FROM: Forrest R. Bowers, Acting Director *FRB*
Division of Commercial Fisheries

SUBJECT: Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian
Islands and Chignik Stock of
Concern Recommendations

and

Israel Payton, Director *IP*
Division of Sport Fish

The *Policy for the Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries* (5 AAC 39.222) directs the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) to report to the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) on the status of salmon stocks and identify any stocks that present a concern related to yield, management, or conservation during regular board meetings. An interdivisional review team, consisting of staff from the divisions of Commercial Fisheries and Sport Fish, was formed to review existing Pacific salmon *Oncorhynchus* spp. escapement goals for Registration Area L (Chignik Management Area) and Registration Area M (Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands Management Area) as part of the current board meeting cycle. In conjunction with the escapement goal review, the team examined potential stocks of yield, management, or conservation concern, as defined in the *Policy for the Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries*. This memorandum summarizes the results of the stock of concern evaluation for the Registration Area L and Area M salmon stocks for the 2025–2026 board regulatory cycle.

Currently there are seven escapement goals in Registration Area L (one king, one chum, two pink, three sockeye salmon; Table 1; Finkle et al. 2022a) and 22 escapement goals in Area M (one king, five chum, two coho, one pink, 13 sockeye salmon; Table 2; Finkle et al. 2022b). Escapement is monitored using weirs or aerial surveys in these areas, and in general, escapement goals have been achieved during the recent cycle. Chignik River king salmon and Chignik River early-run sockeye salmon are the only stocks currently listed as stocks of concern (management) in these management areas.

CURRENT STOCKS OF CONCERN

Chignik River King Salmon

In February 2023, the board designated Chignik River king salmon a stock of management concern. During that meeting, an action plan was created and approved by the board (ADF&G 2023a).

The Chignik River king salmon run did not meet the Biological Escapement Goal (BEG; 1,300–2,700 fish) in five of the last six years but achieved the lower end of the goal in 2025 (Table 1). Chignik River king salmon have seen a marked downward trend in escapement recently, with 2023 being the lowest king salmon weir count in recent history. Chignik River king salmon must travel through the Chignik Lagoon where fisheries are concentrated. Given the relatively confined area of the Chignik Lagoon and proximity to the river mouth, it can be assumed that the majority of king salmon harvested are of Chignik River origin.

Fishery restrictions and closures aimed at conserving king salmon were instituted in 2017 and 2019–2022 (Burnside and Scholz 2024). In 2023, the recommended management actions outlined in the board adopted action plan were implemented. In 2024 and 2025 additional restrictions beyond the action plan were imposed on the fisheries with preemptive closures of the subsistence and sport fisheries, weekly commercial fishing limits within the Chignik Bay District, and king salmon harvest caps within the Chignik Management Area. The 2025 season was the most restrictive thus far. The department recommends continuing the Chignik River king salmon designation as a stock of management concern.

Chignik River Early-Run Sockeye Salmon

At the March 2022 Statewide Shellfish board meeting, the board designated Chignik River early-run sockeye salmon a stock of management concern. Because this stock of concern designation was made outside the normal cycle for the Chignik Management Area, no action plan was available for consideration when the designation was made. At the 2023 Alaska Peninsula and Chignik area board meeting, an action plan was created and adopted (ADF&G 2023b).

Chignik River sockeye salmon have met the early-run Optimal Escapement Goal (OEG; 300,000–400,000 fish) in four of the past five years (Table 1), and the department is expecting to meet this goal range in future years. The conditions for delisting in the board approved 2023 action plan have been met¹; therefore, the department recommends removing the Chignik River early-run sockeye salmon stock of management concern designation.

¹ The original conditions for delisting this stock of concern were as follows: “the lower bound of the biological escapement goal range for July 10 (210,000 sockeye salmon) is met or exceeded in 3 consecutive years and the department is expecting to meet the goal range in future years, or is met in 4 out of 6 consecutive years and the department is expecting to meet the goal range in future years, the department will recommend removing Chignik River sockeye salmon as a stock of management concern at the first Chignik board meeting after this condition is met”. The board subsequently approved the action plan conditions but clarified that it should instead reference the OEG and its associated numbers and also say “early run” instead of July 10.

SUMMARY

The department recommends Chignik River king salmon remain a stock of management concern but recommends delisting Chignik River early-run sockeye salmon as a stock of management concern. No other systems in Registration Area L or Area M are recommended for stock of concern designation.

REFERENCE CITED

- ADF&G (Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game). 2023a. Chignik River King Salmon Action Plan, February 7, 2023. Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Island/Chignik Finfish Board of Fisheries Meeting, RC 5, Anchorage.
- ADF&G (Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game). 2023b. Chignik River Sockeye Salmon Action Plan, February 6, 2023. Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Island/Chignik Finfish Board of Fisheries Meeting, RC 4, Anchorage.
- Burnside, C., and M. Scholze. 2024. Chignik Management Area salmon annual management report, 2023. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Management Report No. 24-24, Anchorage.
- Finkle, H., K. L. Schaberg, M. B. Foster, and T. Polum. 2022a. Review of salmon escapement goals in the Chignik Management Area, 2020. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Manuscript No. 22-05, Anchorage.
- Finkle, H., K. L. Schaberg, M. B. Foster, M. L. Wattum, and T. Polum. 2022b. Review of salmon escapement goals in the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands Management Areas, 2020. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Manuscript No. 22-06, Anchorage.
- Schaberg, K. L., H. Finkle, M. B. Foster, A. St. Saviour, and M. L. Wattum. 2019. Review of salmon escapement goals in the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands Management Areas, 2018. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Manuscript No. 19-01, Anchorage.

Table 1.—Escapements from 2016 to 2025, for salmon stocks with escapement goals in the Chignik Management Area (Area L).

System	2025 Goal range		Type	Initial year	Escapement									
	Lower	Upper			2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 ^a
KING SALMON														
Chignik River	1,300 – 2,700		BEG	2002	1,743	1,079	769	1,417	1,223	1,135	724	267	1,166	1,391
CHUM SALMON ^{b,c}														
Entire Chignik area	45,000 – 110,000		SEG	2016	69,900	96,900	33,400 ^d	98,000	35,455	107,000	73,200	183,000	83,100	95,000
PINK SALMON ^{b,e}														
Entire Chignik area (odd year)	260,000 – 450,000		SEG	2016	–	586,300	–	415,300	–	392,000	–	621,000	–	474,900
Entire Chignik area (even year)	170,000 – 280,000		SEG	2016	68,100	–	42,000 ^f	–	118,675	–	303,600	–	262,700	–
SOCKEYE SALMON ^g														
Chignik River early run	300,000 – 400,000		OEG	2023	410,922	428,350	182,991	379,444	179,200	295,726	412,228	431,283	372,831	450,000
Chignik River late run	240,000 – 360,000		OEG	2023	362,253	364,211	356,707	302,555	151,777	345,216	395,858	457,071	354,749	580,000
Chignik River total run ^h	450,000 – 800,000		BEG	2023	773,175	792,561	539,698	681,999	330,977	640,942	808,086	888,354	727,580	1,030,000

Note: Shaded cells indicate escapement below the goal that existed at the time. Grayed numbers indicate the aggregate goal lacks the complete set of survey streams. BEG = biological escapement goal; SEG = sustainable escapement goal; OEG = optimal escapement goal; En dash (–) = not applicable.

^a Preliminary data (lacking finalized escapement numbers).

^b All counts are peak stream counts from index streams; observed counts from mouths and bays are not included.

^c Prior to 2016, the chum salmon goal was an SEG threshold of 57,400 fish.

^d Although an escapement of 33,400 chum salmon was observed, all 8 index streams could not be surveyed and are not included in this analysis.

^e Prior to 2016, the pink salmon even-year SEG was 200,000–600,000 fish and the odd-year SEG was 500,000–800,000.

^f Although an escapement of 42,000 pink salmon was observed, all 8 index streams could not be surveyed and are not included in this analysis.

^g From 2016 to 2022, the early-run BEG was 350,000–450,000 and the late-run SEG was 200,000–400,000 fish; in 2023, the board established OEGs for each run in lieu of a single run BEG.

^h The Chignik River total-run BEG did not exist prior to 2023. For comparison, the goal is inferred to be the sum of the early- and late-run goals at the time.

Table 2.—Escapements from 2016 to 2025 for salmon stocks with escapement goals in Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands Management (Area M).

	2025 Goal range		Type	Initial year	Escapement									
System	Lower	Upper			2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 ^a
KING SALMON														
Nelson River ^b	2,400 – 5,000		BEG	2019	4,618	1,852	5,022	12,163	2,498	4,839	5,285	4,078	3,542	4,551
CHUM SALMON ^c														
Northern District ^d	49,000 – 132,000		SEG	2023	277,674	234,440	236,109	208,397	118,815	94,856	163,882	128,000	41,200	78,050
Northwestern District ^e	49,000 – 133,000		SEG	2023	113,250	195,700	90,705	173,600	62,100	68,050	50,090	94,000	85,275	121,750
South Central District ^f	68,900 – 99,200		SEG	2019	248,360	810,053	238,720	226,800	93,500	51,900	140,600	151,200	178,480	164,700
Southeastern District ^g	62,500 – 151,900		SEG	2019	150,456	592,460	71,232	106,100	108,800	141,550	130,800	163,200	51,900	144,300
Southwestern District ^h	86,900 – 159,500		SEG	2019	220,060	363,000	32,900	88,300	84,550	114,600	57,250	133,100	74,560	204,850
COHO SALMON														
Ilnik River ⁱ	9,000 – 24,000		SEG	2023	28,000	6,000	122,200	24,000	45,000	11,000	36,200	NS	NS	NS
Nelson River ^j	19,000 – 29,000		SEG	2023	45,000	19,000	44,000	23,000	23,000	26,000	21,500	5,000	NS	NS
PINK SALMON														
South Peninsula total	1,750,000 – 4,000,000		SEG	2016	1,038,160	5,663,637	732,422	4,236,700	3,209,750	4,388,100	5,177,350	5,914,600	2,486,157	4,471,350
SOCKEYE SALMON														
Bear River early run	176,000 – 293,000		SEG	2004	293,280	585,840	324,093	294,727	299,198	387,240	368,072	280,626	208,459	212,355
Bear River late run	117,000 – 195,000		SEG	2004	139,720	214,160	232,907	205,273	200,802	192,760	148,928	171,703	245,768	127,000
Christianson Lagoon ^k	23,000 – 50,000		SEG	2023	111,700	290,600	26,100	39,300	22,800	61,100	40,700	79,600	55,000	54,300
Cinder River ^l	36,000 – 94,000		SEG	2016	200,500	222,600	189,000	95,025	115,800	54,500	102,500	54,700	35,200	20,300
Ilnik River ^m	40,000 – 75,000		SEG	2023	124,000	238,000	81,000	75,000	41,000	70,000	110,500	109,021	99,694	40,810
McLees Lake ⁿ	10,000		LB SEG	2019	39,892	13,195	NW	NW	5,037	16,173	14,015	26,945	NW	NW
Meshik River ^o	48,000 – 86,000		SEG	2016	112,800	191,525	133,700	103,200	63,350	117,500	112,700	79,100	48,000	45,200
Mortensen Lagoon ^p	1,400 – 5,700		SEG	2023	13,000	15,500	1,200	800	800	1,500	3,900	5,100	NS	1,100
Nelson River	97,000 – 219,000		BEG	2004	300,000	381,000	221,000	115,000	185,000	110,000	98,000	250,213	754,766	555,000
North Creek ^q	7,500 – 10,000		SEG	2019	21,000	5,800	8,300	11,000	8,200	9,100	9,900	11,200	500	7,200
Orzinski Lake ^r	14,000 – 28,000		SEG	2023	21,019	20,989	2,817	4,367	6,819	21,839	17,283	19,512	14,571	16,394
Sandy River ^s	37,000 – 69,000		SEG	2023	170,000	145,000	35,000	71,000	60,000	52,657	44,000	48,757	38,007	NW
Thin Point Lake ^t	9,000 – 19,000		SEG	2023	36,400	39,300	1,000	9,600	9,900	18,900	11,900	6,870	26,920	6,100

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Table 2.—Page 2 of 2.

Note: Shaded cells indicate escapement below the goal that existed at the time. Grayed numbers indicate the aggregate goal lacks the complete set of survey streams. BEG = biological escapement goal; SEG = sustainable escapement goal; LB SEG = lower bound SEG; NS = no survey; NW = no weir.

- ^a Preliminary data (lacking finalized escapement numbers).
- ^b Nelson River king salmon include weir count and post weir surveys of Sapsuk drainage areas. Prior to 2019, the BEG was 2,400–4,400.
- ^c Alaska Peninsula chum salmon escapement goals are determined from an escapement index of consistently surveyed streams that contribute more than 5% to the overall district escapement as described in Schaberg et al. (2019) and Finkle et al. (2022). Indexed escapement and are not the sum of peak counts from all streams surveyed in a given district.
- ^d Prior to 2023, the Northern District chum salmon SEG was 119,600–239,200.
- ^e Prior to 2023, the Northwestern District chum salmon SEG was 100,000–215,000.
- ^f Prior to 2019, the South Central District chum salmon SEG was 89,800–179,600.
- ^g Prior to 2019, the Southeastern District chum salmon SEG was 133,400–266,800.
- ^h Prior to 2019, the Southwestern District chum salmon SEG was 106,400–212,800.
- ⁱ Ilnik coho includes Ocean River survey estimate. Prior to 2023, the Ilnik coho salmon goal was a LB SEG of 9,000.
- ^j Prior to 2023, the Nelson coho salmon goal was a LB SEG of 18,000.
- ^k Prior to 2023, the Christianson Lagoon sockeye salmon SEG was 25,000–50,000.
- ^l Cinder River sockeye salmon escapement includes Mud Creek. Counts are from streams that were consistently sampled ≥ 10 years and that contributed $\geq 5\%$ to the total historical aggregate peak aerial survey escapement. Weather and flooding in 2025 heavily impacted visibility during peak survey timeframe.
- ^m Ilnik River sockeye salmon counts in 2009–2010, 2012–2013, 2016, and 2022–2023 include Ocean River aerial surveys added as a separate component. In all other years Ocean River flows into Ilnik Lagoon and is counted at the Ilnik River weir. Prior to 2023, the Ilnik sockeye salmon SEG was 40,000–60,000.
- ⁿ McLees Lake sockeye salmon SEG will be in effect if a weir is in place; there will be no goal if a weir is not operated. Prior to 2019, the SEG was 10,000–60,000.
- ^o Meshik escapement includes Meshik River, Red Bluff Creek, and Yellow Bluff Creek. It does not include Highland or Charles Creeks.
- ^p Prior to 2023, the Mortensen Lagoon sockeye salmon SEG was 3,200–6,400.
- ^q Prior to 2019, the North Creek sockeye salmon SEG was 4,400–8,800.
- ^r Prior to 2023, the Orzinski Lake sockeye salmon SEG was 15,000–20,000.
- ^s Prior to 2023, the Sandy River sockeye salmon SEG was 34,000–74,000.
- ^t Prior to 2023, the Thin Pt. Lake sockeye salmon SEG was 14,000–28,000. Thin Pt. is notorious for having survey conditions not conducive to good escapement estimation.