



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bureau of Land Management  
National Park Service  
Bureau of Indian Affairs



## Federal Subsistence Board News Release

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### **Federal Waters Within the Boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge**

#### **2015 Kuskokwim Area Salmon Fishery News Release 3**

The Refuge Manager of Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, through authority delegated by the Federal Subsistence Board, has previously closed the Chinook salmon fishery to non-federally qualified users. With this most recent action, Chinook salmon fishing on all of the Kuskokwim River and its salmon tributaries within the Refuge will be closed to all user groups from May 28- July 20, 2015.

Management of the Chinook salmon fishery above the Refuge boundary on the Kuskokwim River at Aniak is under authority of the state in-season manager. For more information regarding subsistence fishing in this area please contact Alaska Department of Fish and Game at 907-543-2433.

Special Action **3KS-03-15** closes Chinook salmon fishing from May 28- July 20, 2015 to all user groups on the all of Kuskokwim River and its salmon tributaries within the boundaries of Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (see Figure 3 and 4 on-line). The lower Refuge boundary is a line from the west to the east bank of the Kuskokwim River located at the Kuskokwim River mouth. This boundary line begins at a point on the west bank of the Kuskokwim River approximately 4 ½ miles south Popokamiut Point at Latitude 59.999231°, Longitude -162.507352° and ends at a point on the East bank of the Kuskokwim River approximately 3 miles south of Kuskokwak Creek at Latitude 59.999238°, Longitude -162.187927° (see Figure 1 on-line). The upper Refuge boundary is a line from the north to the south bank of the Kuskokwim River immediately up river of Aniak. This boundary line begins at a point on the north bank of the Kuskokwim River at Latitude 61.588463°, Longitude -159.517392 and ends at a point on the south bank of the Kuskokwim River at Latitude 61.574033°, Longitude -

159.517396° (see figure 2 on-line). Salmon tributaries include the Eek, Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, Tuluksak, and Aniak Rivers and their salmon tributaries.

In the Kuskokwim River and salmon tributaries, non-salmon species may be targeted using set gill nets that are restricted to four-inch or less mesh, not exceeding 60-feet in length, and 45 meshes in depth; this gill net opportunity is only allowed for 72 hours each week from 6:00 a.m. Thursday through 6:00 a.m. Sunday. This area is closed to all gill nets from 6:01 a.m. Sunday through 5:59 a.m. Thursday, weekly. Chinook salmon harvested incidentally in these gill net openings may be retained. Drifting of gill nets is prohibited. These gill net restrictions also apply to the first 100 yards non-salmon tributaries at the confluence of the Kuskokwim River.

There are no gill net restrictions more than 100 yards upstream from the mouth of non-salmon tributaries and these waters are not included in these closures.

Sport fishermen may target species other than Chinook salmon using methods and means and limits set in permanent and emergency regulations under the State of Alaska sport fishing regulations. Subsistence fishermen may target species other than Chinook salmon using other legal gear type set in permanent regulation. Legal gear types for other species include dip-net, beach seine, fish wheel, and rod and reel. All Chinook salmon caught with other legal gear types must be released alive and immediately returned to the water.

### **Biological Rationale**

Due to the low Chinook salmon returns for the last several years and the failure to meet escapement goals at two of three weir projects in 2014, conservation measures are warranted in 2015. The 2014 State of Alaska Chinook salmon drainage-wide return was estimated at 136,000 fish, well below the annual average of 243,000 fish over the last 25 years. The subsistence harvest in 2014 was estimated to be 12,000 Chinook salmon, a historically low harvest. The escapement for 2014 was estimated at 124,000 Chinook salmon drainage-wide. The State of Alaska drainage-wide escapement goal is 65,000–120,000 Chinook salmon, and the 2015 return is forecasted to be between 96,000 and 163,000 Chinook salmon. At the upper end of that range, there would be enough fish to meet escapement goals and provide for a moderate Chinook salmon subsistence harvest. At the lower end of the projected run, however, even a very limited subsistence harvest could impact the likelihood of achieving escapement goals.

A dedicated message line with up-to-date fishing regulations on the federal waters of the Kuskokwim drainage can be reached at 907-543-1037. Maps pertaining to this federal closure can be obtained at [http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/topics/kuskokwim\\_2015.cfm](http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/topics/kuskokwim_2015.cfm) or by contacting Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge at (907) 543-3151.

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