

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



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director*



Contact:
Travis Elison, Kuskokwim Area Manager
Jeff Estensen, Yukon Area Manager
Aaron Tiernan, Assistant Kuskokwim Area Manager
Phone: (907) 543-2433
Fax: (907) 543-2021

Issuing Area Office
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Bethel, Alaska 99559
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2013 KUSKOKWIM BAY-CAPE ROMANZOF HERRING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

This news release is to inform fishermen and processors of the strategies employed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to monitor the commercial herring fishery in the five Kuskokwim Bay districts and the Cape Romanzof District (Figure 1). Review of the status of the fisheries and herring stocks, fishermen license requirements, and processor/buyer requirements are included.

Kuskokwim Bay Districts

Table 1 shows the total projected biomass estimates and guideline harvests levels by district for 2013. The total guideline harvest level for the Kuskokwim Area is expected to be approximately 12,422 tons.

Table 1. Projected herring spawning biomass and harvest in the Kuskokwim Area commercial herring districts, 2013^a.

District	Projected Biomass (st)	Guideline Harvest (st)	Threshold^b	Exploitation Rate (%)
Security Cove	17,542	3,508	1,200	20
Goodnews Bay	28,236	5,647	1,200	20
Cape Avinof	1,773	266	500	15
Nelson Island	3,906	581	3,000	20 ^c
Nunivak Island	2,879	2,420	1,500	20
Kuskokwim Area Total	54,336	12,422		

^a Projection may be adjusted based on inseason biomass estimates.

^b Threshold biomass needed to allow a commercial fishery (5 AAC 27.060)

^c Nelson Island exploitation rate is 20% of projected biomass minus 200 st for subsistence harvest.

Management Overview

Projections from postseason estimates suggest the 2013 spawning biomass for Kuskokwim Bay herring stocks will be 54,336 tons, with a total guideline harvest level of 12,422 tons for the combined districts (Table 1). Variability in the quality of aerial survey assessments of biomass and deviation from the assumed survival or recruitment rates may result in the observed biomass being either above or below these preseason projections. ADF&G will conduct aerial surveys as regularly as possible, beginning on May 9, and monitor catch statistics inseason. Guideline harvest levels may be increased or decreased accordingly based on inseason aerial survey observations. If aerial surveys are not adequate because of weather or water clarity conditions, stock abundance will be assessed using information from the projected biomass and test fishery catches.

ADF&G anticipates Coastal Villages Seafoods to buy herring in Goodnews Bay, Cape Avinof, and Nelson Island districts.

Commercial fishing will be opened by emergency order once ADF&G has determined the threshold herring biomass (Table 1) is present in each district. The one buyer is not targeting herring with a specific roe percentage and will be buying all harvested herring. ADF&G will likely open the fishery on a continuous basis. **Fishermen need to be in contact with their buyer in regards to daily capacities and tender availability.** Buyers will be required to report their deliveries to the ADF&G office in Bethel, daily.

ADF&G plans to operate test fish projects at Goodnews Bay and Nelson Island.

Regulations

Buyers interested in participating in the Kuskokwim Bay herring fishery must register their company for the district they intend to participate in prior to taking their first delivery. Registration can be coordinated through the Bethel ADF&G office.

Fishermen must renew their Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits prior to fishing. The renewal fee for years when there was not a herring fishery will be waived. Contact CFEC (907-789-6150) to renew or transfer permits. Crew member licenses can be obtained at any ADF&G area office or from Coastal Villages Seafoods representatives. Fishermen must have their permit or crewmember license and photo identification on their person while fishing.

A vessel used for commercial herring fishing must be registered by completing a vessel license application or renewal form and submitting it to CFEC. The vessel license includes a permanent number plate (triangle) and shall be accompanied by a tab designating the year to be fished. The vessel license number must also be displayed in permanent symbols at least 12 inches high and with lines at least one inch thick on both sides of the vessel. The vessel license number must be recorded on the Fish Ticket during delivery. Commercial fishing vessels are also required to display an AK number, which can be obtained by registering the vessel with the Department of Motor Vehicles.

General regulatory provisions set the maximum mesh size of a herring gillnet at 3½ inches stretch measure and the minimum mesh size at 2½ inches. No more than two gillnets with an aggregate of

100 fathoms may be on board or operated from any commercially licensed vessel, **except** that no more than 50 fathoms and one gillnet may be on board or operated from any vessel attempting to take herring during periods specified by emergency order for reduced gear length. There must be a red buoy attached to one end of the gillnet legibly marked with the permit holders CFEC license number. There must be no writing on the buoy other than the CFEC numbers. See regulations for details. Copies of the current regulations, which include the Bering Sea Herring Management Plan (5AAC 27.060) and Kuskokwim Area herring regulations (5 AAC 27.870 – 5 AAC 27.899) are available at all ADF&G area offices and online at www.adfg.alaska.gov under the regulations page.

It is likely that gear will initially be restricted to no more than 50 fathoms and one gillnet (one shackle of gear) per vessel. However, depending on effort and harvest, it is possible that 100 fathoms (two shackles of gear) per vessel may be permitted. Fishermen should be prepared and bring two nets to the fishing grounds.

In the Goodnews Bay, Nelson Island, and Cape Avinof Districts, a vessel used to take herring may not be more than 30 feet in overall length and may not have on board a mechanical device designed to shake or dislodge herring from a gillnet.

The Cape Avinof District is a superexclusive use area. The Nelson Island and Nunivak Island Districts are a combined superexclusive use area. CFEC permit holders, crew members, or vessels that have participated in the commercial taking of herring in a superexclusive use area at any time from February 1 through June 30, 2013, **may not** participate in the commercial taking of herring, either as a CFEC permit holder or a crewmember aboard a vessel used to take herring, in another superexclusive or non-exclusive use area at any time from February 1 through June 30 of that same year.

Cape Romanzof District Herring

At this time, one buyer has expressed interest in operating a buying station in the Cape Romanzof area for the 2013 season. ADF&G will not operate a field camp nor conduct test fishing operations in the district in 2013. The Cape Romanzof District consists of all waters of Alaska between the latitude of Dall Point and 62°N latitude (Figure 4).

Management Overview

In the Cape Romanzof District, the arrival and spawning of herring occurs between mid-May and mid-June depending on ice conditions. Major spawning areas are located along the north shore of Kokechik Bay and to a lesser extent along the south shore of Scammon Bay.

The Cape Romanzof herring biomass in 2013 is estimated to be 4,012 tons. Herring ages 8–10 are expected to comprise 70% of the returning biomass, 22%, 26%, and 22%, respectively. Based on the Bering Sea Herring Fishery Management Plan (5 AAC 27.060), the exploitation rate shall not exceed 20% of the estimated biomass. Therefore, the 2013 allowable harvest is 802 tons.

Commercial fishing will be opened by emergency order once ADF&G has determined the threshold herring biomass of 1,500 tons is present in the district. The one buyer in the district is not targeting herring with a specific roe percentage and will be buying all harvested herring. ADF&G

will likely open the fishery on a continuous basis. **Fishermen need to be in contact with their buyer in regards to daily capacities and tender availability.** Buyers will be required to report their deliveries to the ADF&G office in Bethel, daily.

Regulations

Buyers interested in participating in the Cape Romanzof herring fisheries must register their company prior to taking their first delivery. Registration can be coordinated through the Fairbanks ADF&G office.

Fishermen must renew their CFEC permits prior to fishing. The renewal fee for years when there was not a herring fishery will be waived. Contact CFEC (907-789-6150) to renew or transfer permits. Crew member licenses can be obtained at any ADF&G area office or from Coastal Villages Seafoods representatives. Fishermen must have their permit or crewmember license and photo identification on their person while fishing.

A vessel used for commercial herring fishing must be registered by completing a vessel license application or renewal form and submitting it to CFEC. The vessel license includes a permanent number plate (triangle) and shall be accompanied by a tab designating the year to be fished. The vessel license number must also be displayed in permanent symbols at least 12 inches high and with lines at least one inch thick on both sides of the vessel. The vessel license number must be recorded on the Fish Ticket during delivery. Commercial fishing vessels are also required to display an AK number, which can be obtained by registering the vessel with the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The Cape Romanzof District is a superexclusive use area. CFEC permit holders, crew members, or vessels that have participated in the commercial taking of herring in a superexclusive use area at any time from February 1 through June 30, 2013, **may not** participate in the commercial taking of herring, either as a CFEC permit holder or a crewmember aboard a vessel used to take herring, in another superexclusive or non-exclusive use area at any time from February 1 through June 30 of that same year.

Commercial gillnet mesh size may not be less than 2-1/2 inches and may not exceed 3-1/2 inches. A herring gillnet may not exceed 50 fathoms (300 ft) in length and may not be greater than 60 meshes in depth. At least one cork every 10 fathoms along the cork line must be plainly and legibly marked with the fisherman's CFEC permit number, and with the ADF&G number of the vessel from which the gillnet is operated. Regulations prohibit gear other than the legal limit to be onboard fishing vessels during open commercial fishing periods. No vessel used to take herring may have on board any mechanical device designed to shake or dislodge herring from a gillnet. Gillnets must be buoyed on both ends and at least one buoy must be marked with the permit holder's herring entry permit number.

It is likely that gear will initially be restricted to no more than 50 fathoms and one gillnet (one shackle of gear) per vessel. However, depending on effort and harvest, it is possible that 100 fathoms (two shackles of gear) per vessel may be permitted. Fishermen should be prepared and bring two nets to the fishing grounds.

The Alaska Department of Public Safety, Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers conducts fishery enforcement. Period openings and closures will be patrolled; licenses and photo identifications “spot checked”; and other duties will be accomplished as warranted.

ADF&G’s fishery managers can be reached by calling Travis Elison at (907) 543-2709 and Aaron Tiernan at (907) 543-2331 in the Bethel office, and Jeff Estensen (907) 459-7217 in the Fairbanks office. Current fishery information will be available by calling the telephone recorder in Bethel at (907) 543-2598 or toll free at (855) 933-2433. Recordings will be updated as information becomes available. Fishery updates will also be available at the Commercial Fisheries website:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

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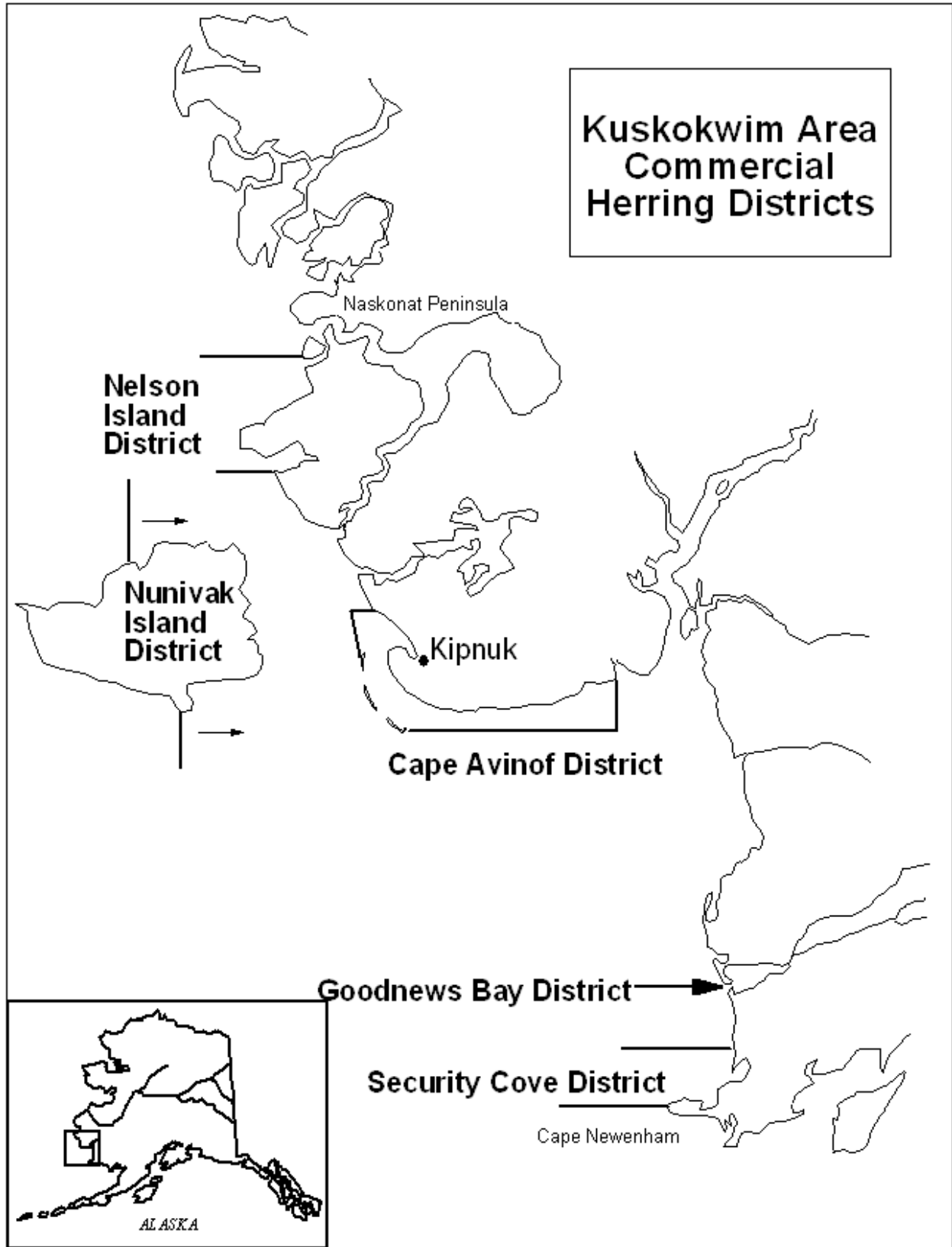


Figure 1. Commercial herring fishing districts in the Kuskokwim Area.

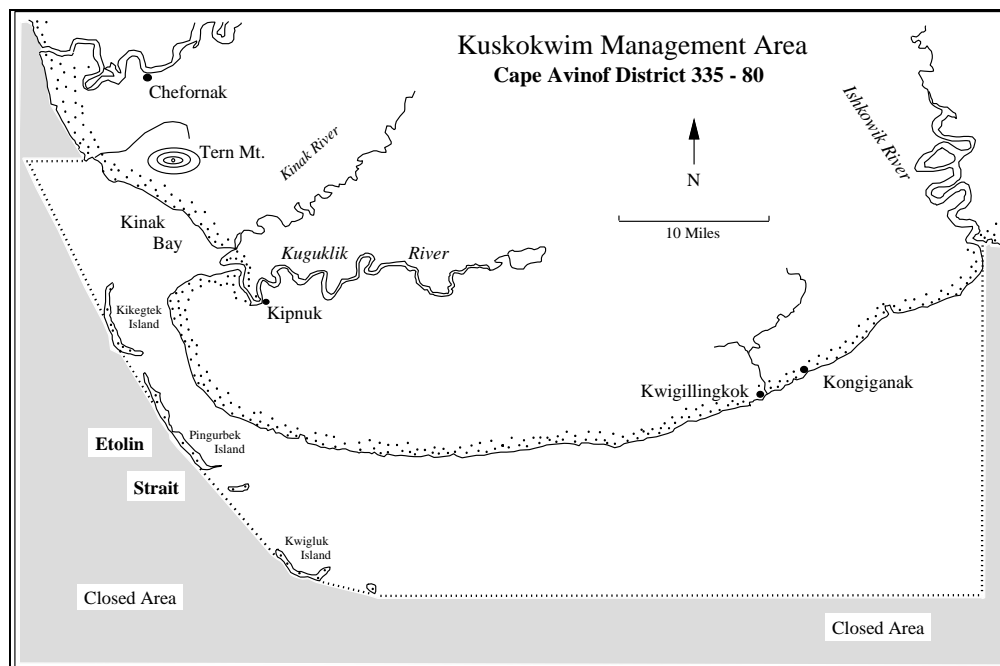
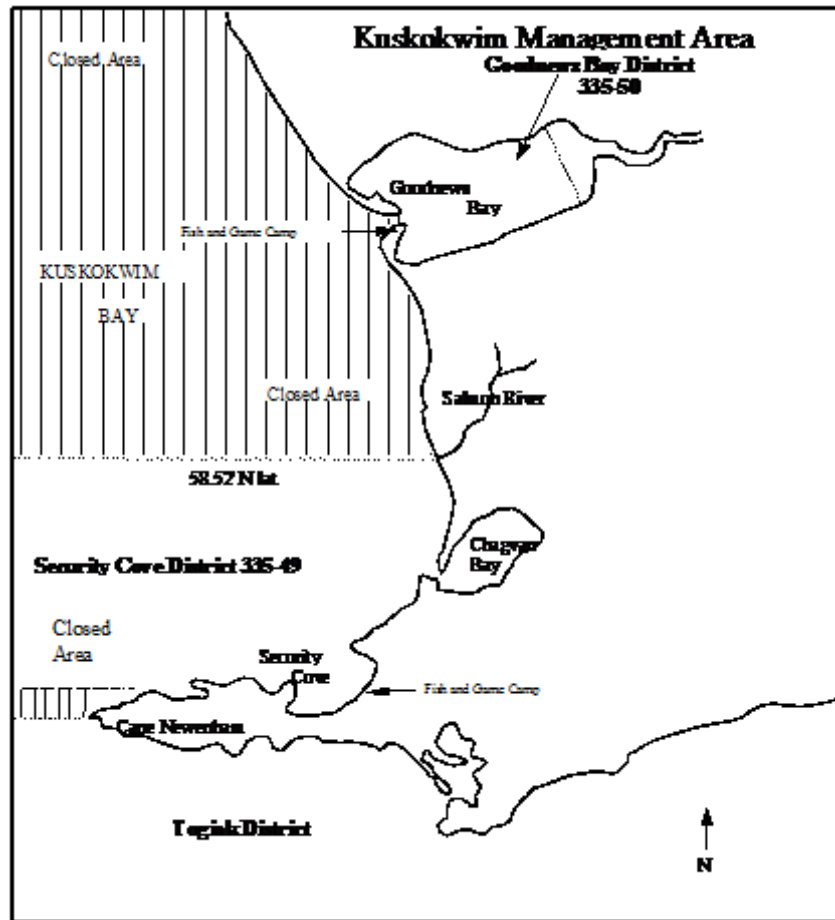


Figure 2. Security Cove, Goodnews Bay, and Cape Avinof commercial herring fishing districts.

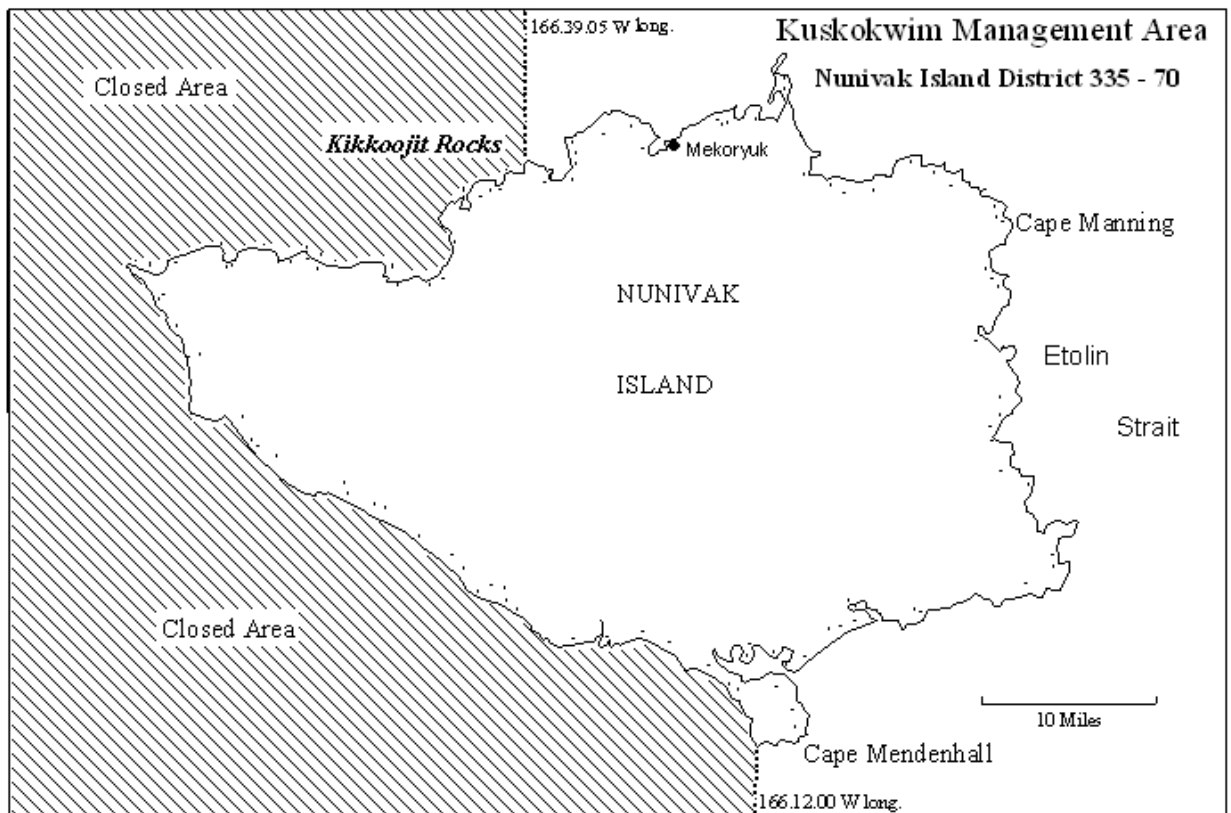
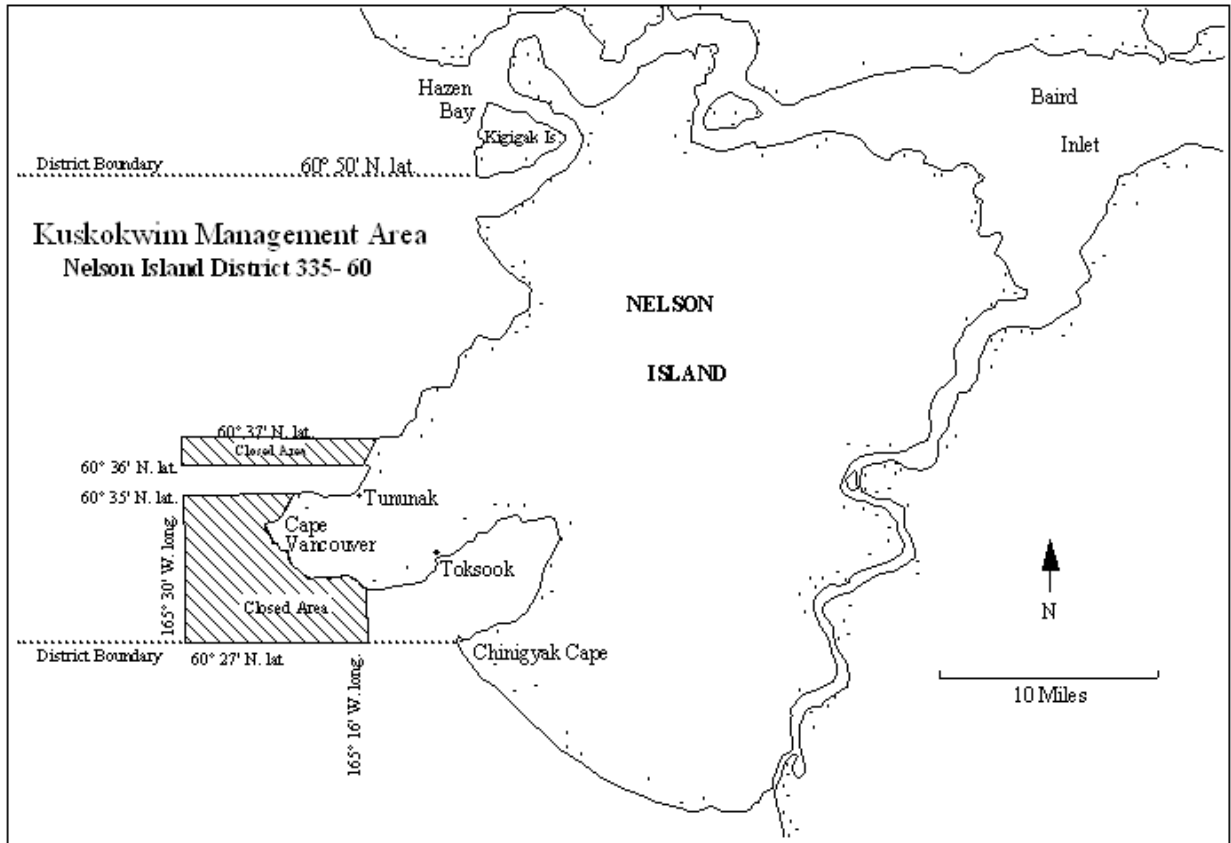


Figure 3. Nunivak Island and Nelson Island commercial herring districts.

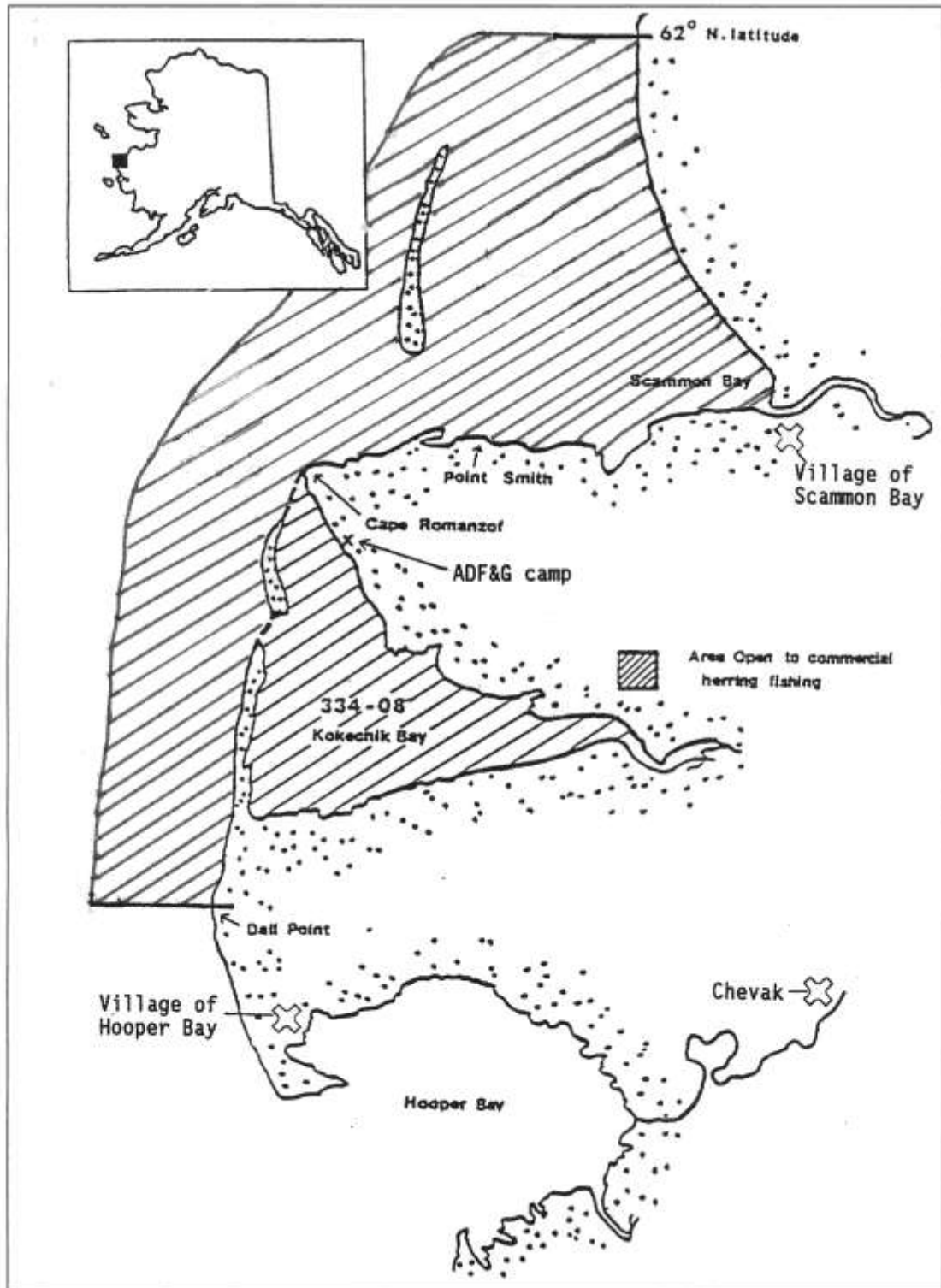


Figure 4. Cape Romanzof commercial herring district.