

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



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**2014 Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Run Reconstruction and  
2015 Outlook; Upcoming Public Outreach**

**2014 Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Run**

In the face of a weak run of Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon in 2014, sacrifices by subsistence fishermen provided for achievement of the drainagewide escapement goal. The preliminary estimate for the 2014 total run of Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon is 130,000 fish. While this indicated run size is an improvement over the 2012 and 2013 returns, it is still considerably smaller than the 25-year average run size of 243,000 fish.

The preliminary subsistence Chinook salmon harvest estimate is approximately 12,000 fish which is the smallest estimated Chinook salmon subsistence harvest on record. The 2014 subsistence harvest is well below the average annual Chinook salmon subsistence harvest of 84,000 fish. The 2014 Kuskokwim River drainagewide Chinook salmon escapement was estimated to be 118,000 fish. The 2014 escapement was within the drainagewide escapement goal range of 65,000–120,000 fish. Achievement of the drainagewide escapement goal was only possible through the sacrifices made by subsistence users in reducing their Chinook harvest during the 2014 season. Those sacrifices allowed adequate numbers of Chinook salmon to reach the spawning grounds and provided a necessary investment in the long-term sustainability of Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon and subsistence fishing traditions.

## **2015 Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Projection**

The 2015 Chinook salmon forecast for the Kuskokwim River is 96,000–163,000 fish. If the run comes back near the low end of the forecast range, then there may not be enough Chinook salmon to provide for escapement and subsistence needs. Given several consecutive years of low Chinook salmon runs to the Kuskokwim River, and the fact that two of our most important weir projects failed to reach their tributary-specific escapement goals in 2014, conservation measures are still warranted drainagewide in 2015.

### **Pre-season Outreach**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are collaborating on planning and scheduling pre-season outreach activities. We intend to begin village and tribal meetings in March to discuss last year's results and our developing strategies for the 2015 fishing season. In addition, a series of Preseason Salmon Fisheries Meetings are scheduled to be held in **Bethel, Alaska; March 25–27, 2015** at the **ONC meeting Hall**. Representatives from ADF&G, the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (KRSMWG), Bering Sea Fishermen's Association (BSFA), USFWS, and other researchers will be in attendance. Agendas and schedules will be provided closer to the scheduled meeting dates.

The general meeting schedule is as follows:

**March 25, Kuskokwim Interagency Meeting:** ADF&G will provide an opportunity for fisheries researchers working in the Kuskokwim Area to:

- Discuss current research.
- Identify research needs going forward.
- Coordinate efforts.

The Public is welcome to come and listen to presentations. Some limited question and answer time will be available. Those with further questions are encouraged to talk directly to the researchers during breaks and after the meeting.

**March 26, Kuskokwim Fishermen's Meeting:** ADF&G will host a public Fishermen's stakeholder meeting. Subsistence, Commercial, and Sport Fishermen, as well as other members of the interested public, are encouraged to come, listen and participate:

- State and Federal managers will present 2014 data and forecasts for 2015 and report on AK Board of Fish and Federal Subsistence Board Actions.
- There will be discussion regarding strategies to improve collaborative and cooperative management.
- Staff from Bering Sea Fishermen's Association will facilitate group discussions, Q/A sessions, and create opportunities for public comment.

**March 27, Spring Meeting of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group:** The KRSMWG, having listened to agency presentations and public testimony/discussion will come together to discuss the information shared during the last two meetings. The Working Group will:

- Discuss the information shared by agency staff and the public during the March 25 and 26 meetings.
- Discuss strategies for 2015 salmon fishery management.
- Provide recommendations to ADF&G regarding 2015 salmon management based on the information presented.
- Elect officers and new members as needed.

Please join us in Bethel.

**For additional information concerning this news release:**

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