

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

1 (800) 315-6338 (MEET) Code: 58756# (KUSKO)

ADF&G Bethel toll free: 1 (855) 933-2433

Meeting Agenda

Date: May 28, 2024

Time: 9:00am–5:00pm*

Place: Bethel, AK

**The Group may choose to take breaks when needed.*

Time Called to Order:

Chair:

Time Adjourned:

ROLL CALL TO ESTABLISH QUORUM:

Upriver Elder:

Downriver Elder:

Commercial Fisher:

Lower River Subsistence:

Middle River Subsistence:

Upper River Subsistence:

Headwaters Subsistence:

QUORUM MET? Yes / No

Processor:

Member at Large:

Sport Fisher:

Western Interior RAC:

Y-K Delta RAC:

KRITFC:

ADF&G:

INTRODUCTIONS:

INVOCATION:

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: *the agenda may be amended at this time.*

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

A. 2023 Season Recap (Sean Larson, ADF&G)

- Assessment projects review
- Chinook salmon total run and drainage wide escapement estimate
- 2024 salmon outlook

B. 2024 Assessment projects

- a. ADF&G
- b. ONC
- c. NVN
- d. USFWS
- e. KRITFC

C. 2024 Fishery Management:

- ADF&G Management Discussion on Specific Management Actions For 2024, Subsistence Sections 4 & 5 (Chuck Brazil, ADF&G)
 - Date to begin early season closure
 - Tributary Management
 - Aniak River
 - Use of live release gear (fish wheels, dip nets, beach seines, and hook and line)
 - Sport Fishing (John Chythlook, ADF&G)
 - Subsistence (ADF&G)
- Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Spencer Rearden, USFWS)

D. WORKING GROUP BUSINESS:

- New Member Elections
- Election of Co-Chairs
- Working Group In-Season Meeting Schedule
- Nominate WG representative to serve at KRITFC inseason meetings

E. COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

NEXT MEETING DATE: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

Informational Packet

Information Packets *ARE*:

- Intended to help inform Working Group discussions.
- To be viewed and used in context with Working Group meetings only.

Packets *ARE NOT*:

- To be viewed as standalone documents.
- A final say on fisheries management decisions.

Please use this information responsibly:

Packet information is an incomplete snapshot of an ongoing discussion and changing conditions. Packet information should not be reproduced for any purpose other than to describe Working Group meeting discussions.

Misuse of Packet information can contribute to misunderstandings that can **cause harm to salmon users** and potentially **damage salmon resources**.

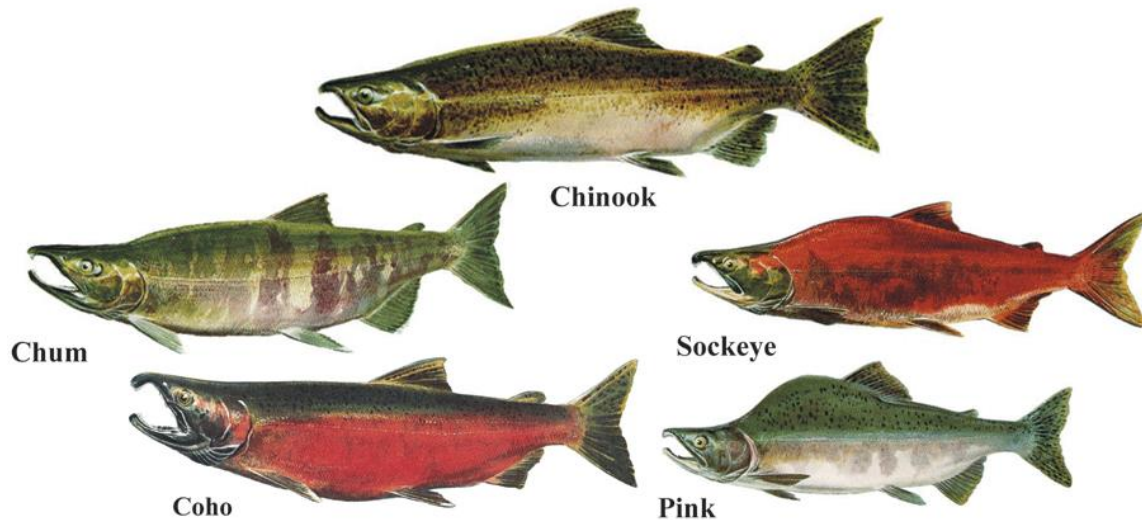
Ask Questions: ADF&G staff will be happy to answer biology and management questions. Please call **1-855-933-2433** to reach ADF&G Kuskokwim Area staff.

Attend Meetings: Each Working Group meeting is announced at least 48 hours prior to time and date of meeting. In addition, each meeting is recorded. Recordings can be found here:
http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyarea_kuskokwim.kswg

Viewing the information packet while listening to meetings/recordings will provide a better understanding of the information presented in this packet.

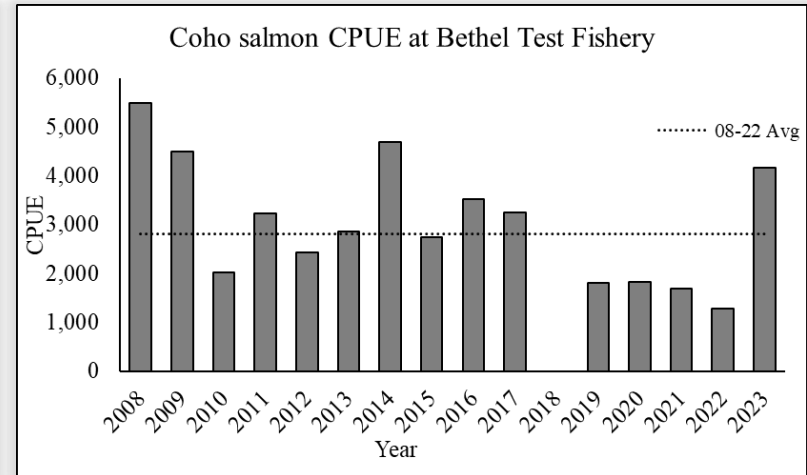
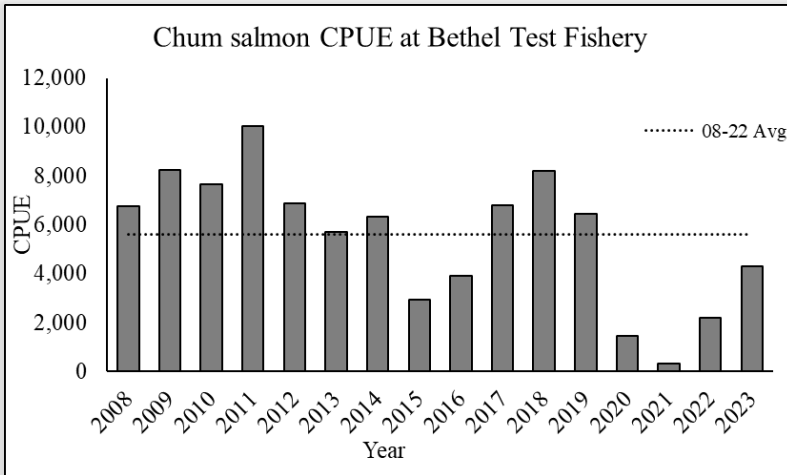
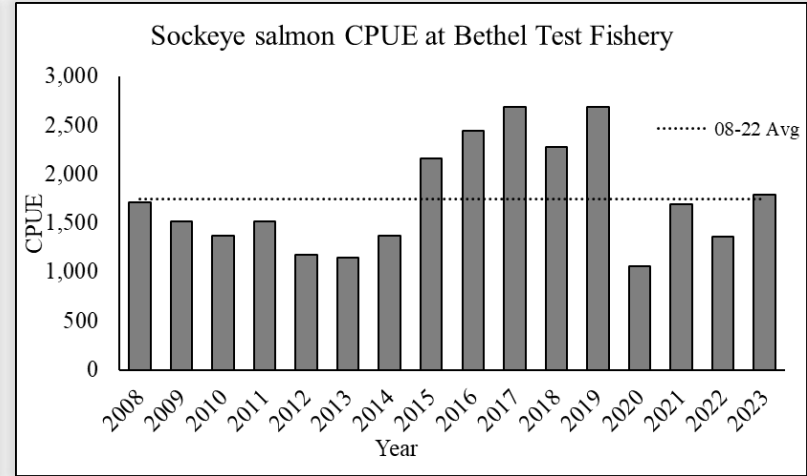
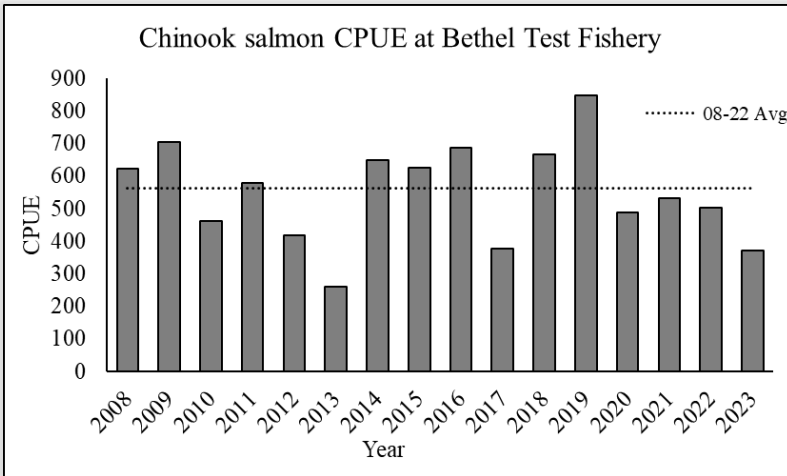
Thank you,
Savannah Hollingworth
Working Group Coordinator

Kuskokwim River Salmon Assessment

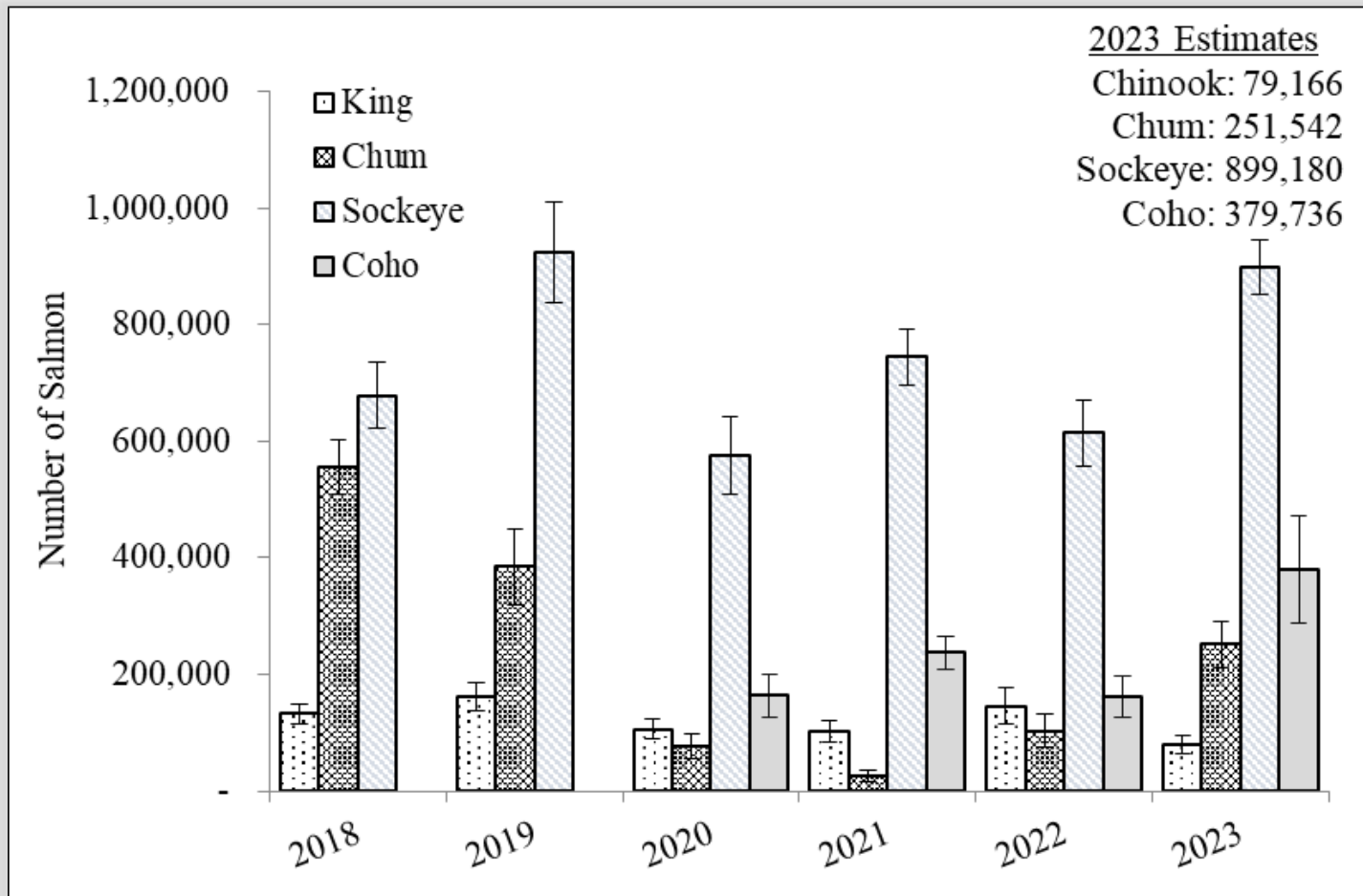


Spring 2024 Working Group
Sean Larson
Alaska Dept. Fish and Game

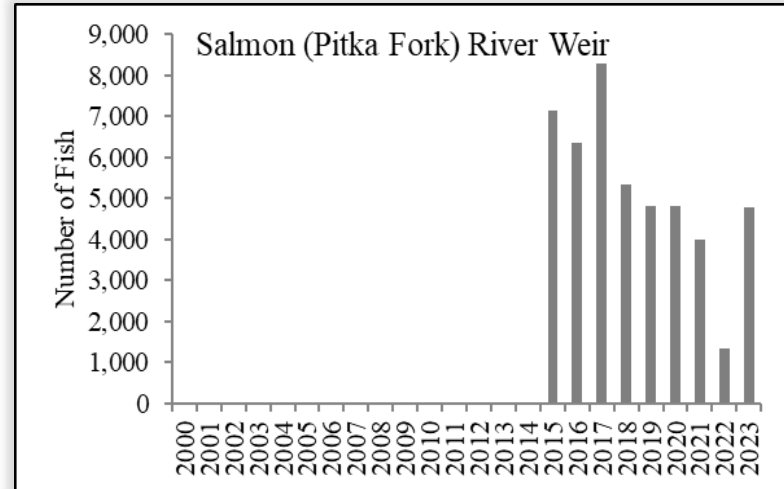
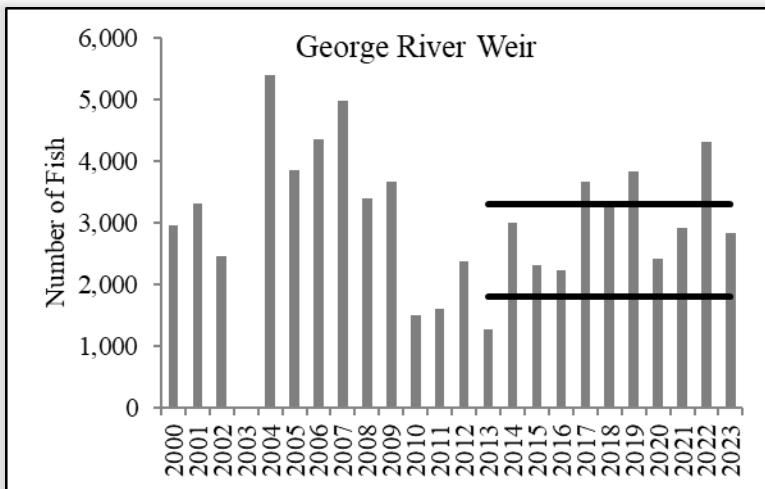
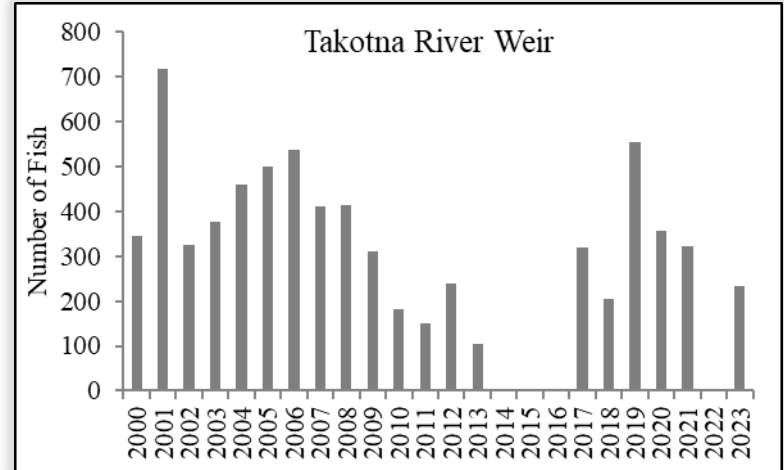
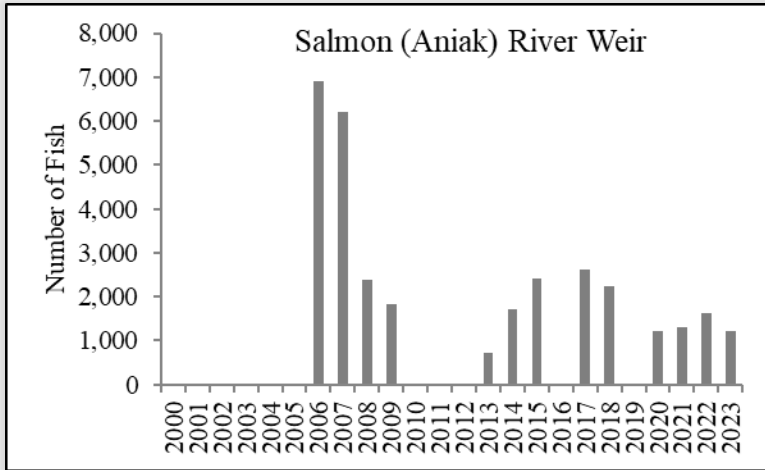
BTF Results



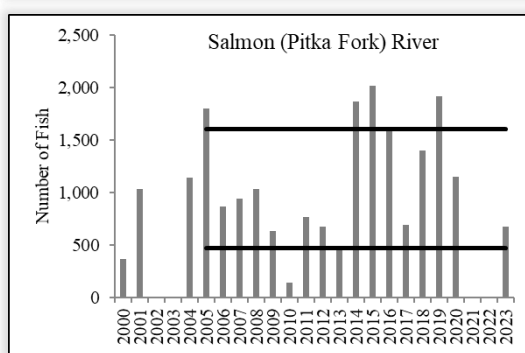
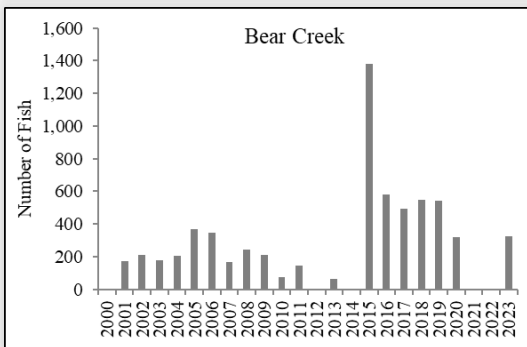
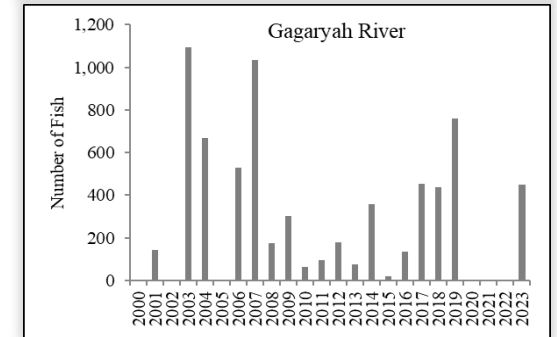
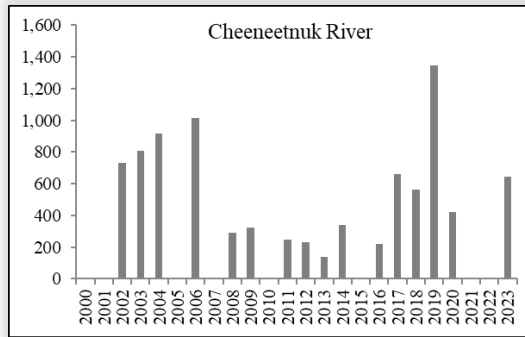
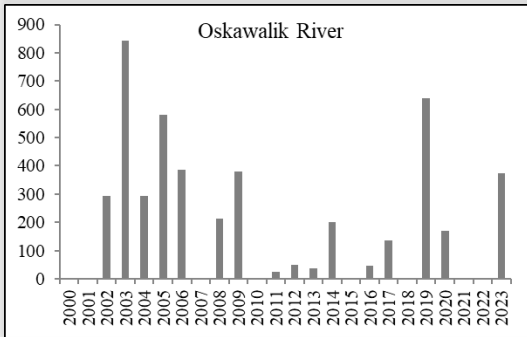
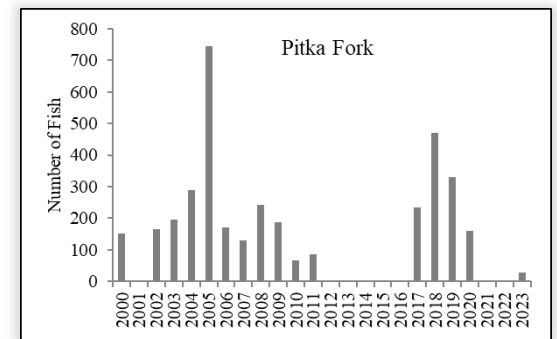
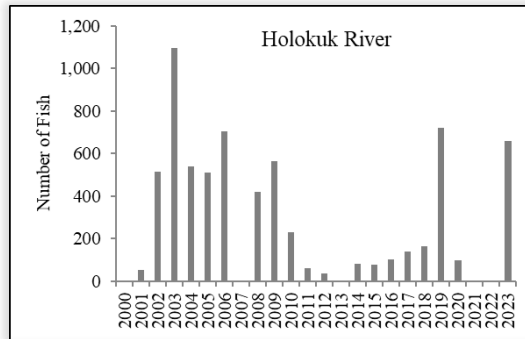
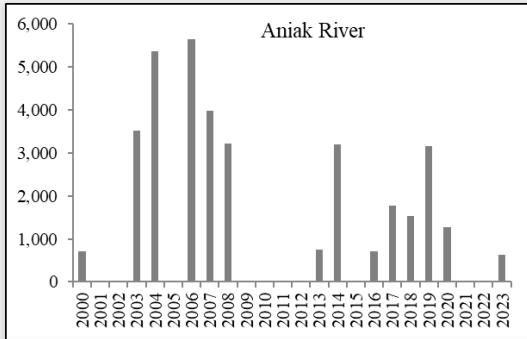
Sonar Results



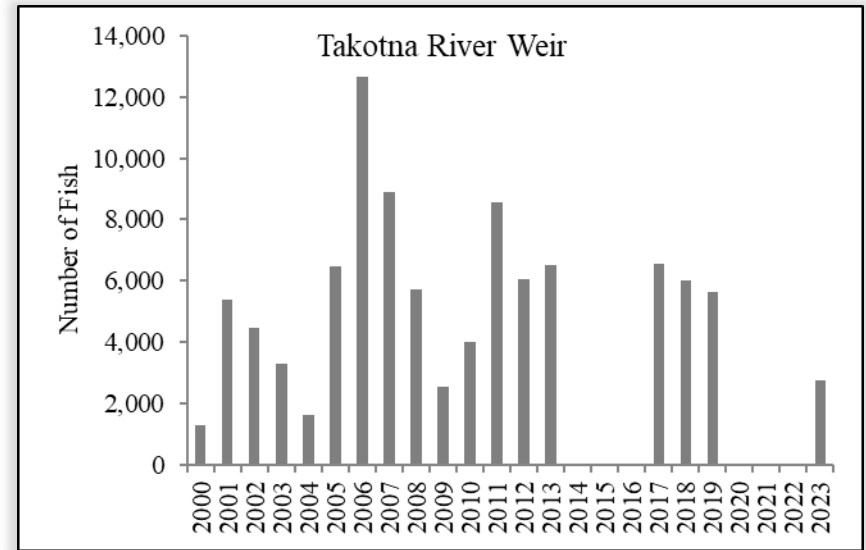
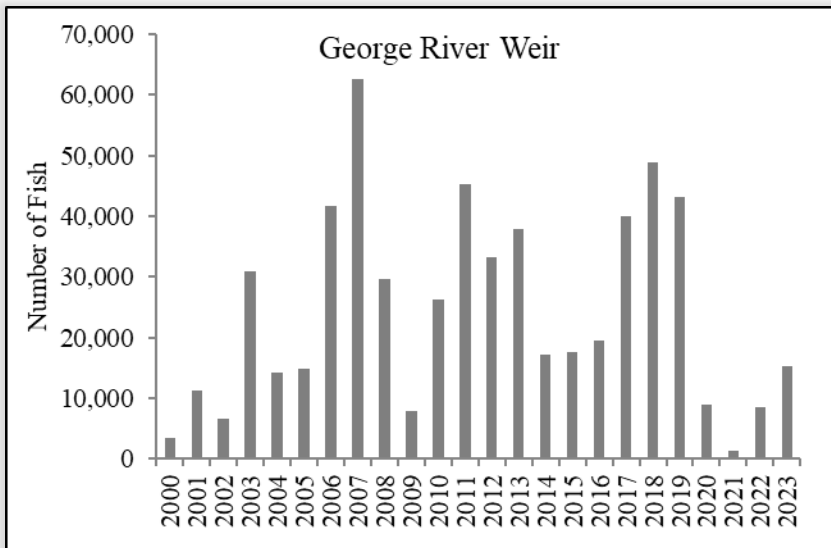
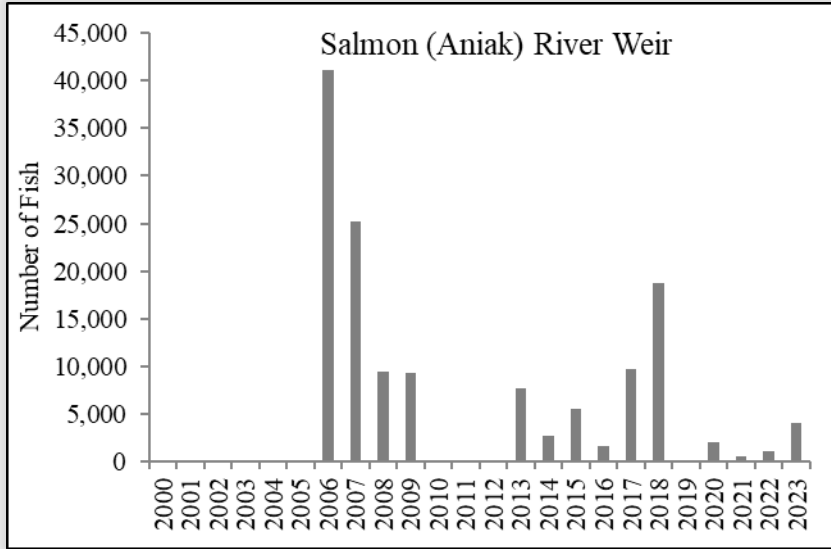
Weirs: Chinook Salmon



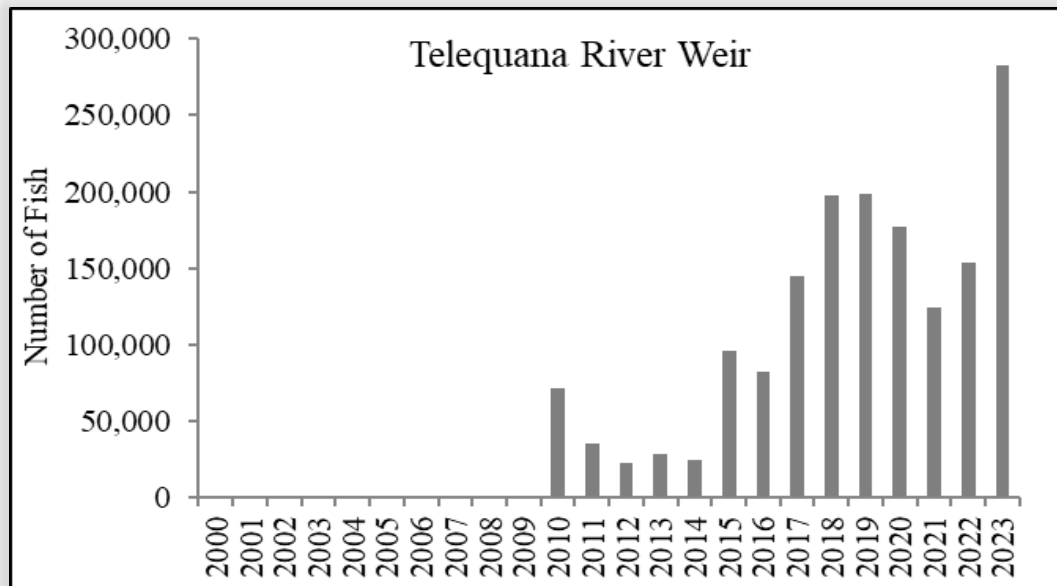
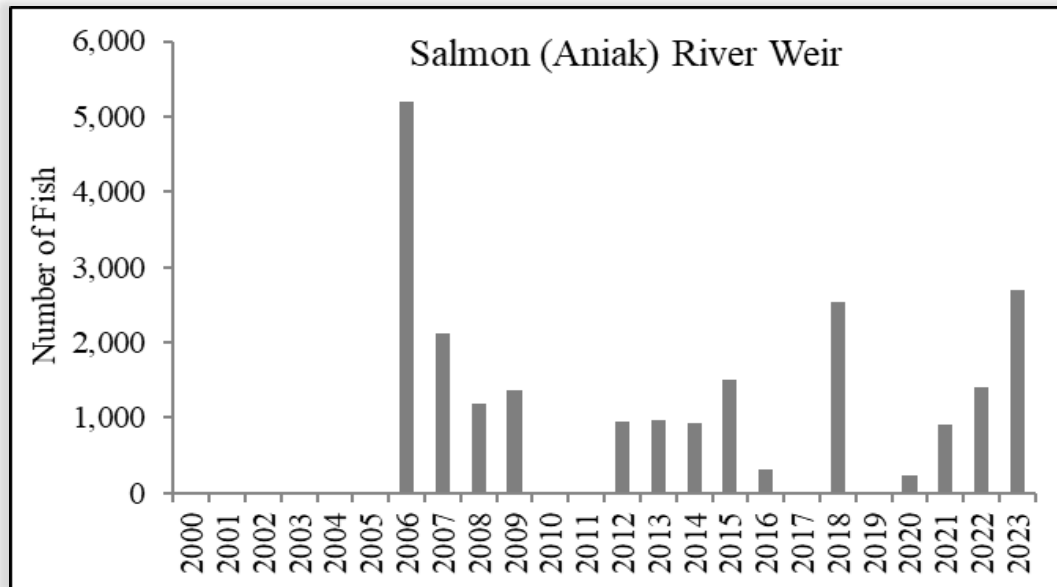
Aerial: Chinook Salmon



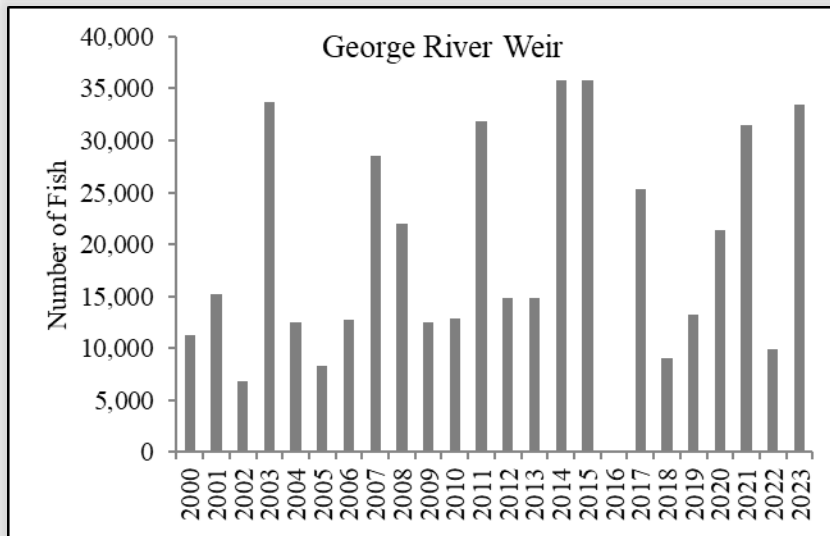
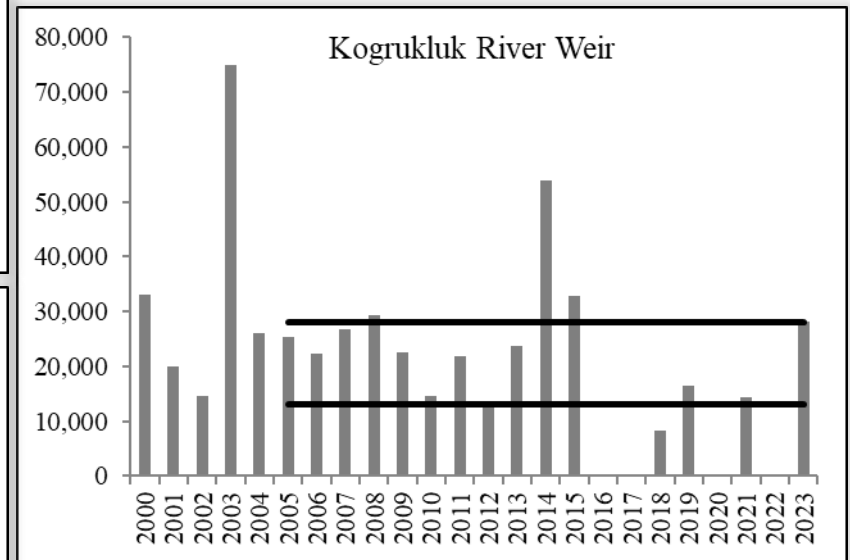
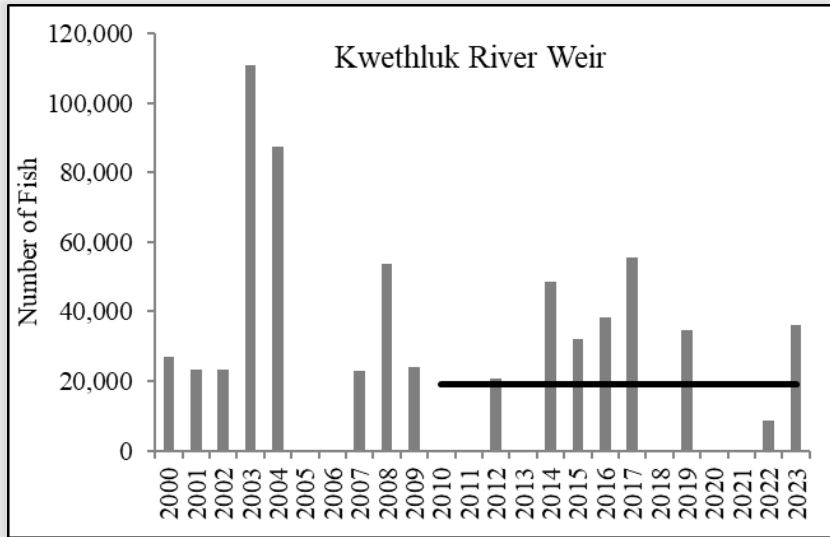
Weirs: Chum Salmon



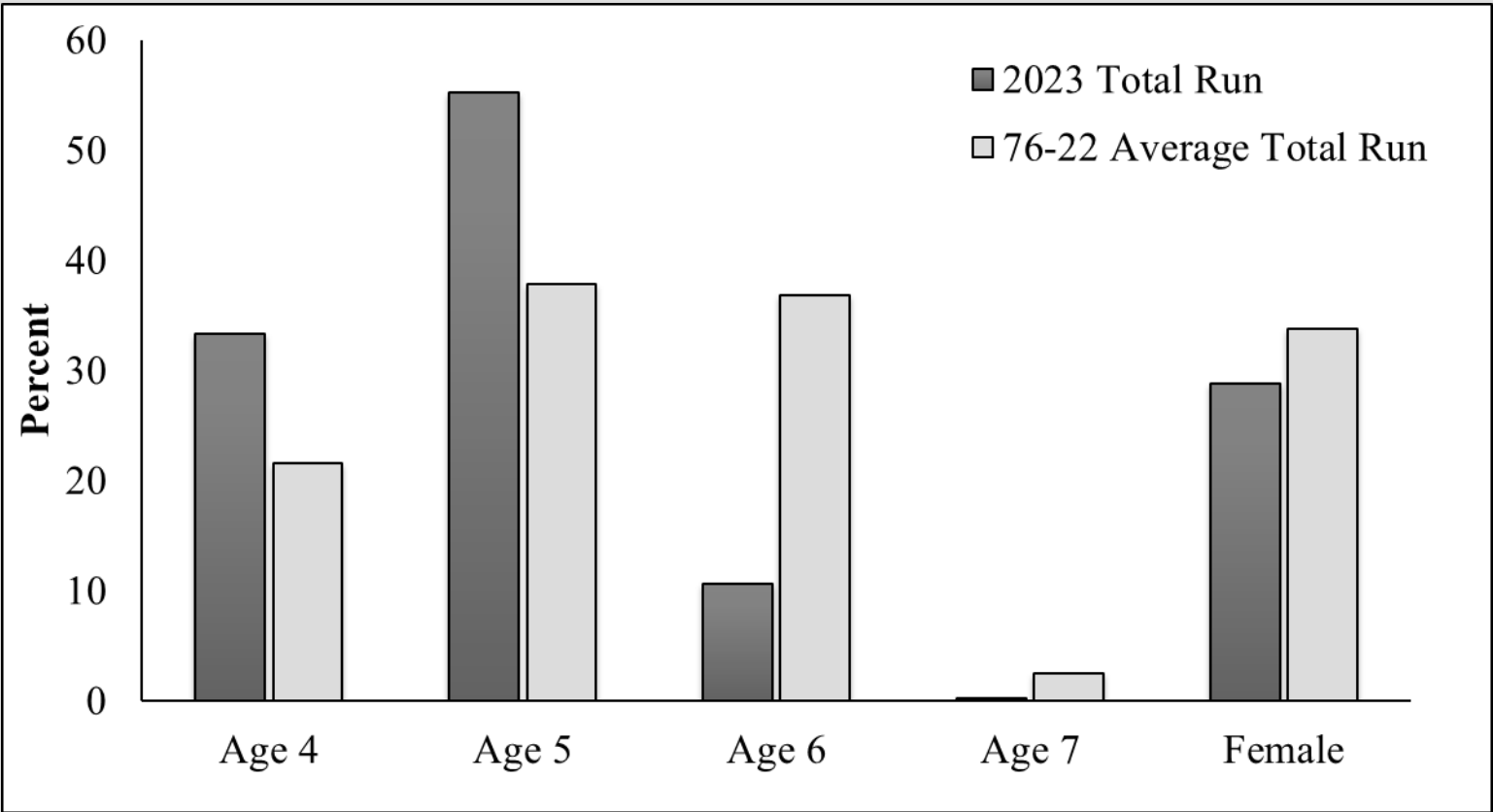
Weirs: Sockeye Salmon



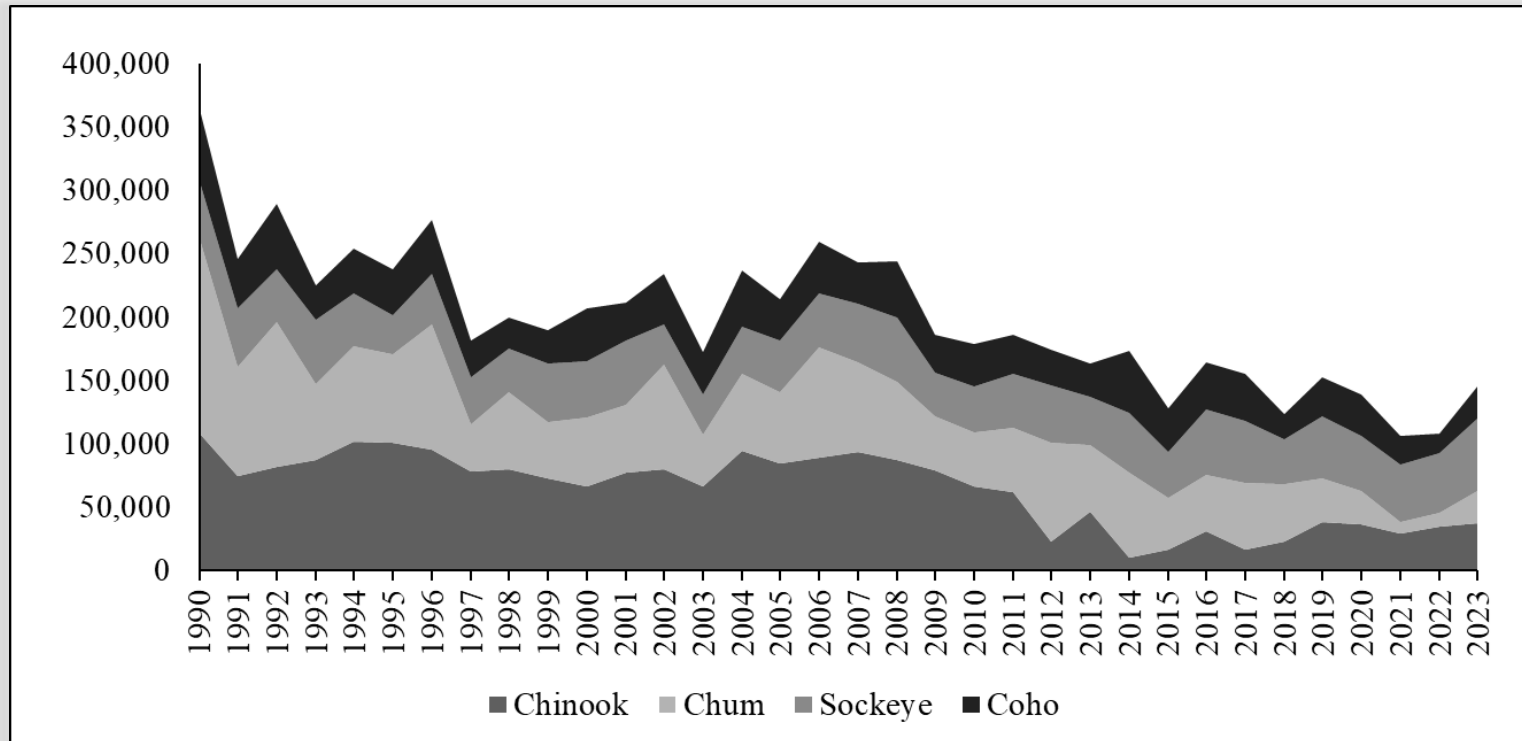
Weirs: Coho Salmon



Chinook Salmon - Age/Sex Composition

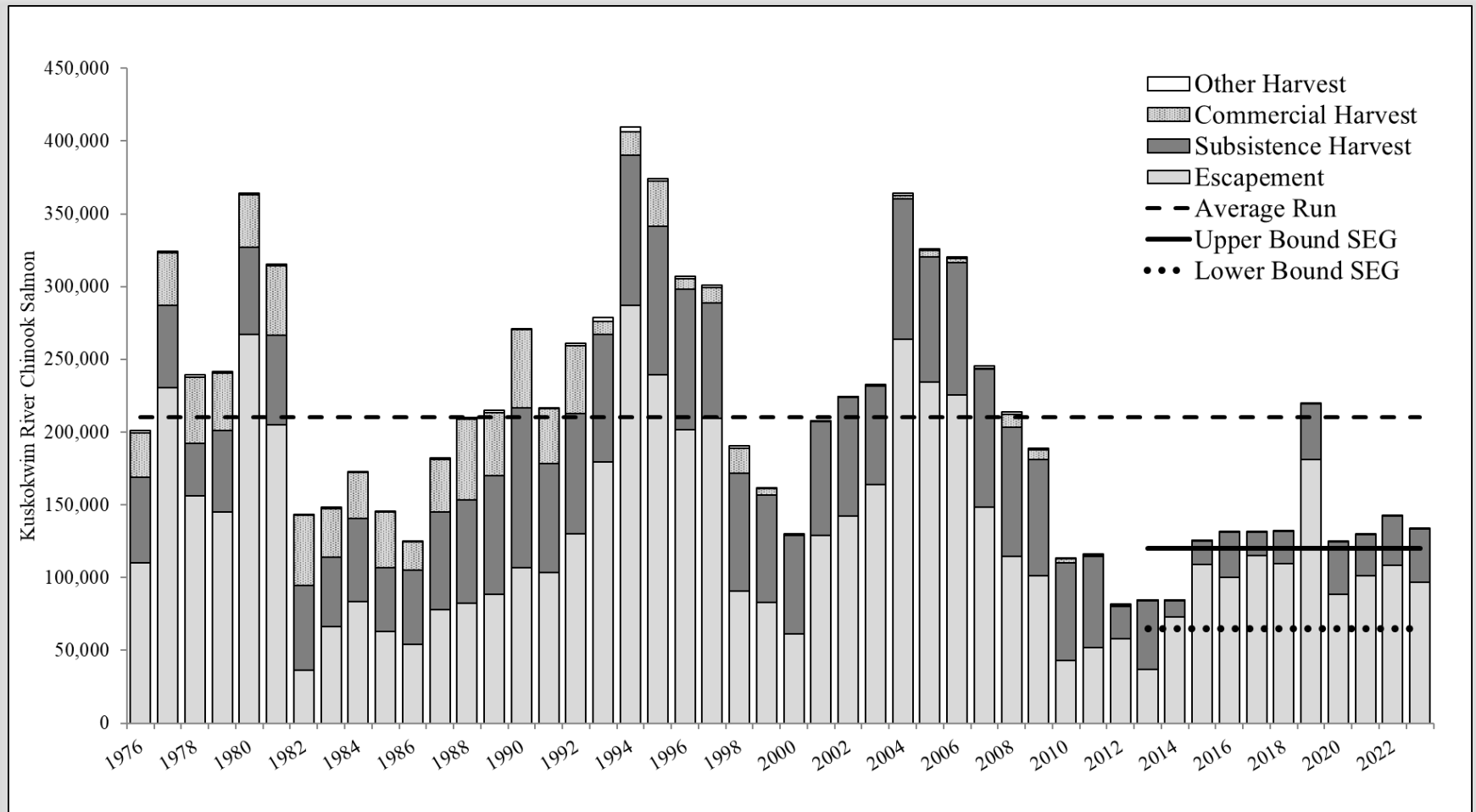


Kuskokwim River Subsistence Harvest



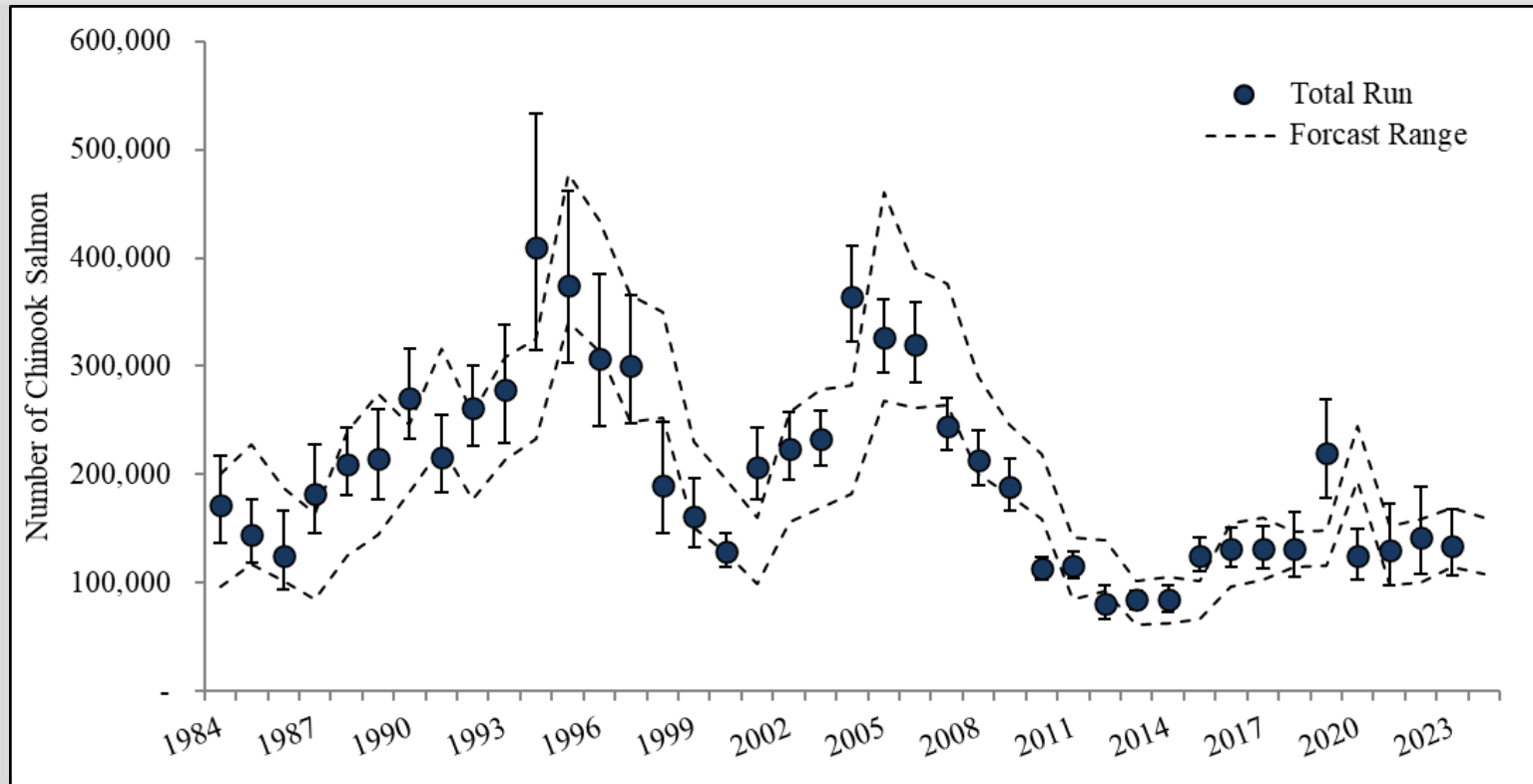
	2023 Harvest	90-22 Avg	ANS
Chinook	37,091	64,281	67,200-109,800
Chum	25,093	59,669	41,200-116,400
Sockeye	57,434	42,242	32,200-58,700
Coho	25,892	34,413	27,400-57,600

Chinook Salmon Run Reconstruction



- Total Run Size – 134,007 (95% CI: 107,000–168,000)
- Total Escapement – 96,630 (95% CI: 69,000–131,000)
- Total Harvest – 37,091 (95% CI 33,000–42,000)

Chinook Salmon Forecast



Forecast Range: 108,000–160,000

Summary

- Escapement goals
 - Chinook: All goals met
 - Chum and sockeye: Goals not assessed
 - Coho: All goals met
- Ages
 - Age-4 and age-5 Chinook salmon was above average
 - Age-6 and age-7 Chinook salmon was below average
- Total Run Size ~ 134,007
 - Below the 210,000 fish average
- Total Escapement ~ 96,630
- Total Harvest ~ 37,091
- Forecast Range ~ 108,000 – 160,000

2024 Kuskokwim River Assessment Projects

Overview:

Project	Location	Start Date	End Date	Species	Data Availability	Organization
<u>Test Fishery</u>						
Bethel Test Fishery	Bethel	June 01	August 24	K, C, R, S	Daily	ADF&G
Aniak Test Fishery	Aniak	June 01	July 15	K, C, R	Daily	NVN
<u>Mainstem</u>						
Sonar	Bethel	June 01	July 31	K, C, R, W, S	Daily	ADF&G/ONC
<u>Harvest</u>						
Subsistence Surveys	Bethel	May 29	July 15	K, C, R	Weekly	ONC/ADF&G
Subsistence Surveys	Lower River	June 12	Open	K, C, R, W	As needed	KRITFC
Subsistence ASL	Bethel	June 01	Open	K	End of season	ONC/ADF&G
Subsistence ASL	Lower River	June 02	Open	K	End of season	KRITFC
<u>Weir</u>						
Kwethluk River	Lower River	June 01	Sept. 10	K, C, R, S	Daily	USFWS/Kwethluk
George River	Middle River	June 15	Sept. 20	K, C, S	Daily	ADF&G
Kogrukuk River	Holitna River	June 26	Sept. 20	K, C, R, S	Daily	ADF&G
Telaquana River	Stony River	July 03	August 15	R	Daily	NPS/ADF&G
Takotna River	Upper River	June 24	August 15	K, C	Daily	KRITFC
<u>Air Survey</u>	Drainage	July 17	August 05	K	End of season	ADF&G

Species Key: **K** = "King" or Chinook; **C** = chum; **R** = "Red" or sockeye; **S** = "Silver" or coho; **W** = whitefish.

Daily Assessment Document:

- USFWS and ADF&G will continue to produce a daily assessment document summarizing the most relevant inseason data about Chinook, chum, sockeye, and coho salmon run timing and abundance.
- This document will focus exclusively on inseason data from Bethel Test Fishery, Aniak Test Fishery, harvest estimates, and mainstem sonar.
- The assessment documents will be publicly available via email and posted online. ADF&G will distribute the document to the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group email distribution list. Contact Sean Larson (sean.larson@alaska.gov) if you want to be added or removed from this list.

Project Descriptions:

- **Bethel Test Fishery** – ADF&G, Division of Commercial Fisheries will operate the Bethel Test Fishery in the same location and use the same methods as in prior years. This project will produce daily catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) for Chinook, chum, sockeye, and coho salmon. Data will provide information about inseason run timing, relative abundance (e.g., species ratios), and run strength. Data will be included in the daily assessment update and posted to the ADF&G Fish Counts webpage by 10AM, Monday through Friday:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.salmon#fishcounts>

Note: The top of the head will be removed from all Chinook salmon to collect otoliths (ear bones) for a separate study designed to determine where each fish was born.

- **Aniak Test Fishery** – Native Village of Napaimute will operate the Aniak Test Fishery. This project will produce daily catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) for Chinook, chum, and sockeye salmon. Data will provide information about inseason run timing and relative abundance (e.g., species ratios). Data will be included in the daily assessment update.
- **Kuskokwim Sonar** – ADF&G, Division of Commercial Fisheries will operate sonar upriver from Bethel near the upper end of Church Slough and just downriver from the Kwethluk “Y”. This project will produce daily inseason estimates of abundance for Chinook, chum, sockeye, coho, whitefish, and other species passing the sonar site. Total cumulative abundance with 95% confidence intervals will be estimated daily. Data will be included in the daily assessment update.
- **Subsistence Harvest Surveys** – There will be several overlapping and complimentary efforts to collect inseason information about subsistence harvest, catch, and effort. Information will be used to monitor fishing progress as the salmon run develops. In addition, detailed catch and effort information may be used by USFWS to estimate inseason subsistence harvest within specific areas of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge during specified fishery openers.
 - **ONC** – will conduct weekly fish camp surveys throughout the Bethel area similar to past years. Additional survey effort will be conducted at the Bethel boat harbor as needed and provided to USFWS for estimating inseason subsistence harvest. A summary of survey results will be presented weekly at scheduled Working Group meetings.
 - **Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission (KRITFC)** – will collect catch and effort information from several communities.
- **Subsistence Age-Sex-Length (ASL) Sampling** – As in past years, ONC will recruit and train subsistence fishers to collect scales, sex, and length data from Chinook salmon harvested by subsistence fishers in the Bethel area. KRITFC will also assist with collection of Chinook salmon ASL from lower river communities through their community monitoring program. ASL summaries will be generated post-season.
- **Weirs** – A total of 5 weirs will be operated (2 – ADF&G; 1 – USFWS; 1 – NPS; 1 – KRITFC) to monitor salmon escapement throughout the lower, middle, and upper portions of the Kuskokwim River drainage. Final estimates of escapement for each location will be made post-season. Daily

escapement counts will be updated on the ADF&G Fish Counts webpage daily by 10AM, Monday through Friday:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.salmon#fishcounts>

- **Aerial Surveys** – Surveys will be flown throughout select lower, middle, and upper river tributaries to index Chinook salmon escapement in late July. Aerial survey results will be provided post-season once surveys are completed.