



Advisory Announcement
For Immediate Release: June 3, 2023

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UPPER COOK INLET 2024 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL DRIFT GILLNET SALMON FISHING

Sockeye Salmon Forecast

In 2024, a run of approximately 5.72 million sockeye salmon is forecast to return to Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) with an estimate of 3.70 million available for harvest (commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence).

The Kenai River sockeye salmon forecast is approximately 3.38 million fish. The 2024 Kenai River forecast is 500,000 (14%) fish less than the historical (1986–2023) average run of 3.88 million fish, but 215,000 (6%) fish more than the recent 10-year (2014–2023) average run of 3.17 million fish.

The Kasilof River sockeye salmon run forecast is approximately 1.12 million fish. The 2024 forecast is 201,000 fish (20%) greater than the historical (1986–2023) average run of 0.91 million fish and 174,000 fish (17%) greater than the recent 10-year (2014–2023) average run.

Approximately 303,400 and 86,690 sockeye salmon are forecast to return to the Susitna River and Fish Creek respectively in 2024. The 2024 Susitna River sockeye salmon forecast is 127,400 fish (35%) below the historical (2002–2023) average run and 71,600 fish (21%) below the recent 10-year (2014–2023) average run. The 2024 Fish Creek sockeye salmon forecast is 25,450 fish (26%) below the historical average but the same as the recent 10-year average run size.

2024 Sockeye Salmon Forecasts and Escapement Goals

System	Forecast	Goals ^a
Kenai River ^{b,c}	3,380,000	1,100,000–1,400,000
Kasilof River ^{b,d}	1,120,000	140,000–320,000
Susitna River	303,400	
Larson Lake	N/A	15,000–35,000
Chelatna Lake	N/A	20,000–45,000
Judd Lake	N/A	15,000–40,000
Fish Creek	86,690	15,000–45,000
Unmonitored Systems ^e	829,910	N/A
Total	5,720,000	

^a Goals listed here are as follows: Kenai River: Inriver; Kasilof River: Biological Escapement Goal (BEG); Susitna River: SEG (weir goals); and Fish Creek: Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG).

^b Kenai River goal is DIDSON-based; Kasilof river is Aris-based.

^c Kenai River SEG is 750,000–1,300,000 sockeye salmon.

^d Kasilof River optimal escapement goal (OEG) is 140,000–370,000 sockeye salmon.

^e Unmonitored systems are estimated to be ~15% of monitored systems.

General Information for the UCI State of Alaska waters Drift Gillnet Fishery:

- All descriptions in this document will be for State of Alaska waters only (Figure 1).
- A drift gillnet vessel may not participate in the State of Alaska fishery and the federal fishery on the same day.
- For more information on commercial drift gillnet fishing regulations in the federal waters of Upper Cook Inlet see the link below:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/commercial-fishing/salmon-management-federal-waters-cook-inlet-cook-inlet-eez>

Status of the Upper Cook Inlet Offshore Test Fishery (OTF)

- Due to a lack of funding, OTF will not be operating for the 2024 season. With the loss of OTF, management will be based around commercial catch statistics, projections of escapement from enumeration projects around UCI, and the assessment of Kenai River sockeye salmon total run tier status will be less accurate as in the past.

Update to Upper Cook Inlet Statistical and Drift Areas

- Openings that include Drift Areas 1 and 4 will be in State of Alaska waters only (Figure 2). It is the responsibility of fishery participants to ensure they are fishing in legal areas.
 - Drift gillnet statistical areas have been updated to reflect the new jurisdictional boundaries and management strategies in UCI (Figure 1).
 - Statistical Area 244-60 will no longer be used.
 - UCI Federal waters (EEZ) will be identified under statistical code 244-64. *New*
- <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable-fisheries/cook-inlet-eez-area-maps>

- During State of Alaska fisheries, drift gillnet permit holders will be required to declare which specific statistical area or areas fish were caught in. If while fishing, a set crosses statistical area boundaries, then record harvest in the statistical area that the set ends in or where the majority of fishing time is spent for that set.
- Fishing in multiple statistical areas during a single period will require the permit holder to record the individual statistical areas and approximate a percentage of the catch that came from each statistical area on the fish ticket.
- Statistical areas in the corridors are unchanged.

Central District Drift Gillnet fisheries Overview

- The department manages the UCI drift gillnet fleet primarily under the guidance of the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan (CDDGFMP)*. The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into Northern Cook Inlet drainages and to provide the department with management guidelines. All the following regarding the drift gillnet fishery is applicable to the waters of the State of Alaska only (Figure 1).
- The drift gillnet fishery opens the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later.
- The 2024 drift gillnet fishery may open June 19 by emergency order (EO) or June 20 by regulatory period.
- Drift gillnet openings follow regulatory Monday/Thursday fishing periods; 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- Drift gillnet fishing is closed within 2-miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline per stipulations in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan (5 AAC 21.382)* until the stock is delisted.
- Drift gillnet fishery openings are stipulated in the CDDGFMP by date and sockeye salmon abundance.
- Additional fishing time may be added based on sockeye salmon abundance.
- The 2024 forecast for Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon is projected to be 3.38 million fish.

Inseason Management

- **Prior to July 8,**
 - Regulations specify 12-hour State of Alaska waters District Wide Monday/Thursday fishing periods. These periods will coincide with the newly established federal periods. Under federal rules, drift gillnet vessels who participate in the federal fishery cannot participate in any State of Alaska water fisheries on the same day. This means that if a fishermen chooses to fish the federal waters they cannot move into state waters on the same day.
 - Additional time may be allowed District Wide or restricted as needed.
- **From July 9 through July 15,**
 - Drift gillnet fishing is restricted for both regulatory fishing periods to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections (Figure 1), and State of Alaska waters of Drift Gillnet Area

1 (Figure 2). For Kenai River sockeye salmon runs greater than 2.3 million fish, one additional fishing period **may** be opened in the Expanded Sections and Area 1.

- Any additional fishing time is allowed only in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections.
- **From July 16 through July 31,**
 - For runs of 2.3–4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, fishing during one regulatory period per week will be opened in one or more of the following areas: the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, the Anchor Point Section, and State of Alaska waters of Drift Gillnet Area 1. The remaining regulatory period will be restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections and Anchor Point section of the Upper Subdistrict. Any additional time shall be restricted to the Expanded Kenai Section, the Expanded Kasilof Section, and the Anchor Point Section.
- **From August 1 through August 15,**
 - Regular Mon/Thurs fishing periods will be restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Kenai Section, Expanded Kasilof Section, Anchor Point Section, State of Alaska waters of Drift Gillnet Area 3, or State of Alaska waters of Drift Gillnet Area 1. Any additional fishing time will be dependent upon meeting sockeye and coho salmon escapement objectives but is limited to the Expanded Kenai or Kasilof and Anchor Point Sections.
 - Two one-percent rules apply to drift gillnet fishing in August. If the entire ESSN fishery is closed per its own one-percent rule, or if the department determines that less than one-percent of the season total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period, for two consecutive fishing periods by drift gillnets, then regulatory fishing periods will be restricted to State of Alaska waters of Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 (Figure 2).
 - The department uses harvest from all (state and federal) open drift gillnet periods, regardless of the area(s) open to fishing, to calculate the drift gillnet one-percent rule.
- **From August 16 until closed by EO,**
 - State of Alaska waters of Drift Areas 3 and 4 are open for regulatory periods.
 - Chinitna Bay may be opened by EO only, based upon chum salmon escapement objectives being met or when the chum salmon run is complete.
- State of Alaska waters drift fisheries close for the season by EO, when effort ceases, which is generally mid- to late-September.
- Federal water drift gillnet commercial fisheries close per federal regulations. For further information on federal fisheries contact NOAA at the link above in the general information section.

General information and Contact Numbers

The UCI commercial fisheries information line will again be available by calling 262-9611. The most recent EO announcement is always available on the recorded message line and catch, escapement information is included whenever possible. The same recording may be accessed at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.main> and clicking on the UCI

Commercial Fisheries Information Recording player.

All EO announcements are also faxed or emailed to processors as quickly as possible and posted at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon>. If you would like all EOs and News Releases emailed to you as soon as they are released, you can subscribe at this website for that service. For very general information, the Commercial Fisheries web page is found at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingCommercial.main>.

If, during the summer, fishermen have information or questions concerning the commercial fishery, the Soldotna Division of Commercial Fisheries staff can be reached by phone at 262-9368, by fax at 262-4709, or by mail at 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Road, Suite B, Soldotna, 99669.

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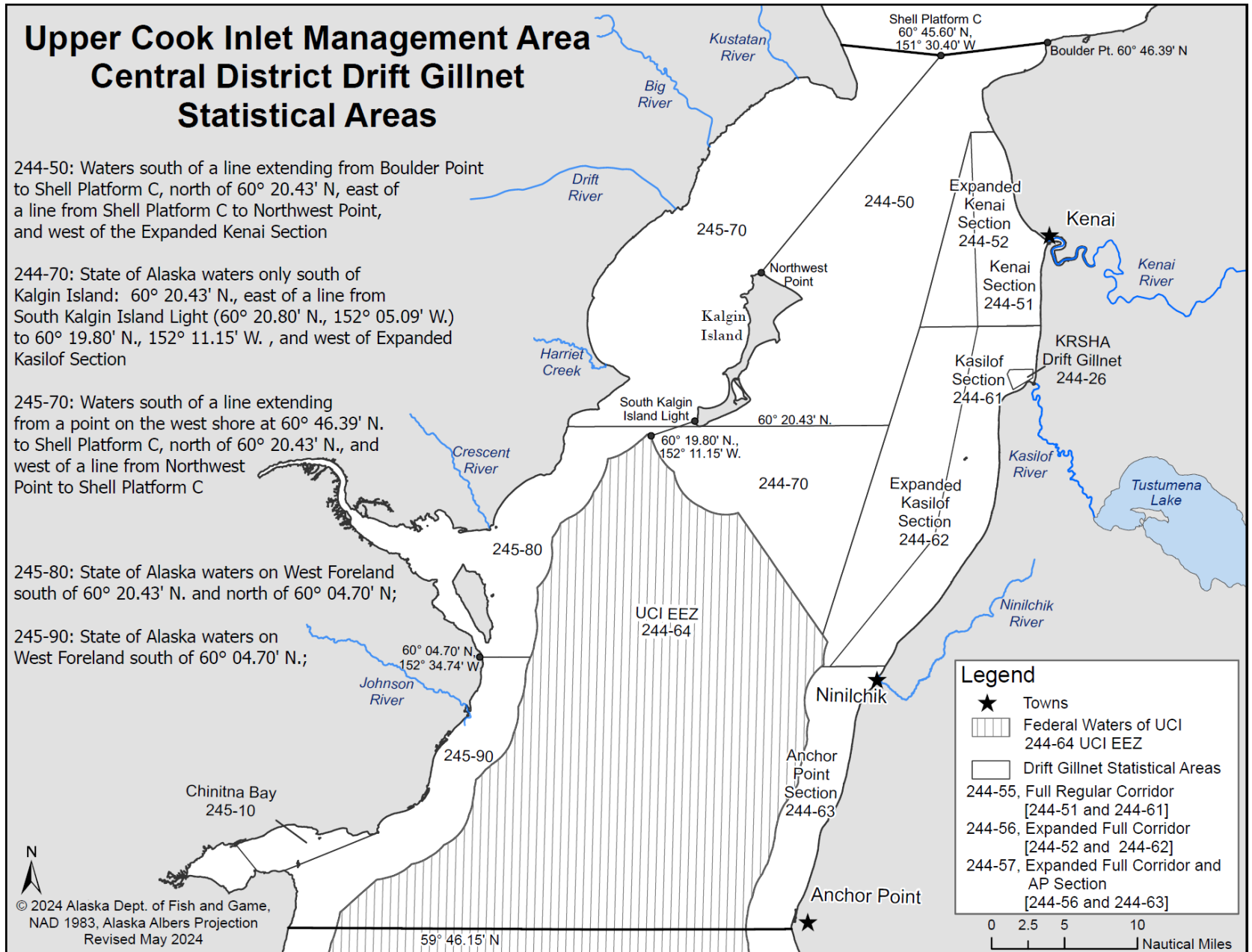


Figure 1. Map of Upper Cook Inlet Drift Gillnet Statistical Areas. Updated May 2024.

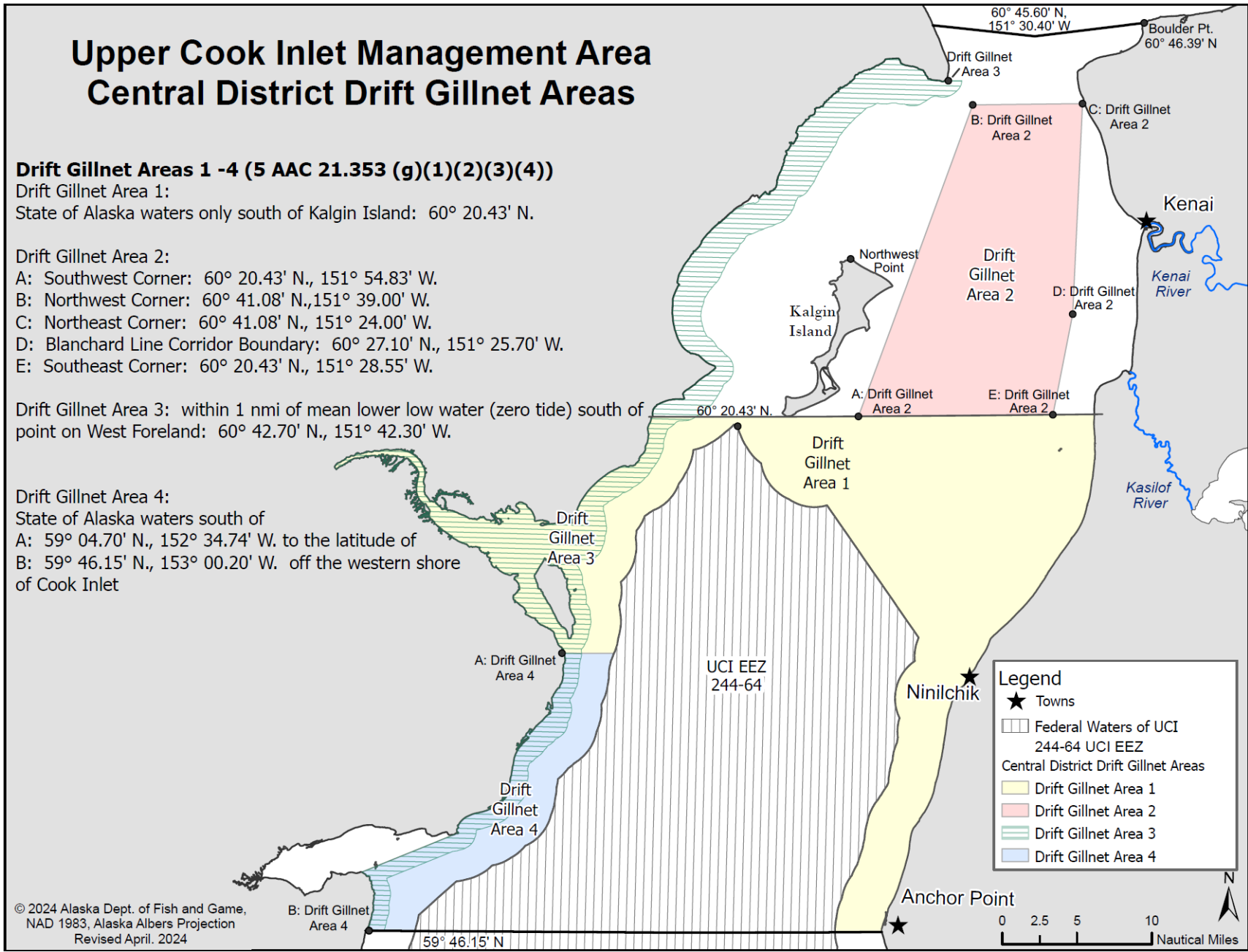


Figure 2. Map of Upper Cook Inlet Drift Gillnet Areas. Updated May 2024.