

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



*Cora J. Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director*



Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Chuck Brazil, Area Management Biologist

Kuskokwim Area Office
P.O. Box 1467
Bethel, AK 99559
Phone: (907) 543-2433
Fax: (907) 543-2021

U.S. Department of Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Federal Subsistence Board
Geoffrey L. Haskett, Regional Director
Peter J. Probasco, Asst.
Regional Director Subsistence
Gene Peltola, Kuskokwim Area Inseason Manager
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 346
Bethel, AK 99559
Phone: (907) 543-3151
Fax (907) 543-4413

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**2012 Kuskokwim River Salmon Fishery News Release 2
Kuskokwim River Subsistence Fishing Restrictions
Emergency Order 1**

This is an announcement from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at Bethel for subsistence salmon fishermen in the Kuskokwim River Drainage.

The 2012 king salmon forecast is for a return of 197,000 fish (range 158,000 to 236,000) which is below the average total run of 260,000 fish. In 2011 the Kuskokwim River experienced the second lowest estimated total run of 132,000 and spawning escapement of 73,000 king salmon. In 2010 the Kuskokwim River experienced the lowest estimated total run of 123,000 and lowest spawning escapement of king salmon on record, 56,000. The Kuskokwim River supports the largest subsistence king salmon fishery in the state with an estimated average annual harvest of approximately 73,000 king salmon.

In 2011, the Kwethluk and Tuluksak rivers did not meet king salmon sustainable escapement goals (SEGs) for the fourth and fifth consecutive years, respectively. The George River has not met its SEG in three of the past four years. The Kwethluk River SEG is 6,000 to 11,000; the Tuluksak River SEG is 1,000 to 2,000; the George River SEG of 3,100 to 7,900 king salmon as monitored through weirs. In 2011 aerial survey indices on Aniak River tributaries, Kipchuk and Salmon rivers were among the lowest on record. Based upon recent low runs of king salmon and the 2012 forecast, the king salmon run will be managed conservatively in an effort to meet escapement goals in 2012.

Effective 12:01 a.m., Friday, June 1, 2012 until 11:59 p.m., Wednesday, July 25, 2012 subsistence king salmon fishing with hook and line gear is closed and subsistence fishing is restricted to the use of gillnets with 4-inch or less mesh not to exceed 60-feet in the following waters of the Kuskokwim River drainage:

- The Kwethluk River drainage including its confluence with Kuskokuak Slough and downstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located at the downstream mouth of the slough.
- The Kasigluk and Kisaralik river drainages including Old Kuskokuak Slough to ADF&G markers at the confluence of Old Kuskokuak Slough with Kuskokuak Slough.
- The Tuluksak River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately 1-mile to ADF&G regulatory markers.
- The Aniak River drainage to ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River.
- The George River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately a half mile to ADF&G regulatory markers.

ADF&G and USFWS have determined that restrictions to the Kwethluk River subsistence fishery would result in an increase in subsistence fishing effort and harvest of king salmon in the Kisaralik and Kasigluk rivers due to their close proximity. In order to meet escapement into the Kwethluk River and minimize the effect of conservation efforts on the Kisaralik and Kasigluk river king salmon stocks, it is warranted to restrict subsistence fishing in the Kisaralik and Kasigluk rivers, a portion of Kuskokuak Slough, and the Old Kuskokuak Slough. Subsistence restrictions on the Tuluksak, Aniak, and George river drainages are warranted to increase the probability of meeting king salmon escapement goals. Allowing use of 4-inch or less mesh size gillnets will provide opportunity to harvest other smaller fish in these waters. Subsistence fishing with hook and line gear for fish other than king salmon is still allowed.

Sport fishing for king salmon will be closed in these waters in conjunction with the subsistence restrictions by a separate emergency order.

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group) met on March 30, 2012 in Anchorage, to discuss preseason management strategies and actions jointly recommended by the ADF&G and USFWS in an attempt to conserve and meet king salmon escapement goals. The Working Group passed all motions supporting these actions with modifications, including the addition of the Aniak River, to ADF&G and USFWS recommended actions and these changes were accepted.

Additional inseason management actions may be implemented in response to a weaker than anticipated run of king salmon to the Kuskokwim River drainage.

Further announcements will be made from the Bethel Fish and Game office and through local radio stations. News releases will be faxed to area villages and local fish processing companies.

For additional information concerning this news release:

ADF&G: Chuck Brazil in Anchorage 907-267-2303 or Travis Elison 907-267-2379

USFWS: Gene Peltola in Bethel 907-543-3151

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