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## United States Department of the Interior

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

1011 E. Tudor Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



**MAY 31 2012**

Agenda Item B-6: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report  
May 30, 2012

#### **Endangered Species Act Issues:**

Annual updates describing new information and changes in candidate species' status are underway and will be published this fall in the Candidate Notice of Review. Species covered in the upcoming Candidate Notice of Review will include the yellow-billed loon and walrus. The third candidate species under the jurisdiction of Fish and Wildlife Service, the Kittlitz's murrelets, will be considered for full listing in Fiscal Year 2013. Studies are underway to better inform that decision.

The Service is working to address public comments on the northern sea otter (Southwest Alaska Distinct Population Segment) draft recovery plan.

For further information on these issues, please contact Sonja Jahrsdoerfer, Endangered Species Coordinator at (907) 786-3323 or [Sonja\\_Jahrsdoerfer@fws.gov](mailto:Sonja_Jahrsdoerfer@fws.gov).

#### **Federal Subsistence Management:**

Many Alaskan Chinook salmon stocks are again anticipated to be in low abundance again for 2012. Of particular concern are anticipated poor returns to the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers. Generally, production since 1998 has been one-half of prior production. The 2012 outlook is among the lowest projections during this prolonged period of low production. Subsistence fishery management is a shared responsibility with the State of Alaska.

The 2012 Yukon River Chinook salmon run projection is 109,000 to 146,000. Management of the in-river fisheries has been severely restricted by federal and state managers in anticipation of a very poor return. Specific management actions include: reduced gill net mesh size; no directed commercial fishing for Chinook salmon; and closure of at least one subsistence fishing period to spread harvest over duration of the run and attain management objectives. Additionally, harvest opportunities for summer chum salmon will be restricted over concerns for Chinook salmon by-catch.

Similarly, the Chinook salmon return to the Kuskokwim River is anticipated to be low. The 2012 Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon run projection is 158,000 to 236,000. The Kuskokwim River

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supports the largest subsistence fishery for Chinook salmon in Alaska with an annual average harvest of 73,000 fish. Escapements in recent years have been very low and several important tributary escapement objectives have not been met. In-river fisheries will be managed conservatively in an effort to meet escapement objectives in 2012.

Chinook salmon returns to other Federal Conservation Units throughout southcentral Alaska are anticipated to be low in 2012; notable examples include the Kenai, Karluk, and Ayakulik rivers. For further information, please contact Jerry Berg, Subsistence Coordinator at (907) 786-3519 or [Jerry\\_Berg@fws.gov](mailto:Jerry_Berg@fws.gov).

**Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands Landscape Conservation Cooperative (ABSI LCC):**

The ABSI LCC is developing a draft Strategic Science Plan. This plan will take a comprehensive look at applied science needs within the ABSI LCC region. Once the draft plan is approved by the Steering Committee, there will be an opportunity for public review and comment.

The mission of this LCC is to promote coordination, dissemination, and development of applied science to inform conservation of natural and cultural resources in the face of climate change and other landscape-scale stressors. Commonly-identified conservation issues within the Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands region included climate change, fishery management, contaminants, oil spills, and invasive species. For further information on this or other LCCs in Alaska, visit: <http://alaska.fws.gov/lcc/index.htm>. For ABSI-specific information, contact Doug Burn, ABSI LCC Coordinator at: (907) 786-3807 or [Douglas\\_Burn@fws.gov](mailto:Douglas_Burn@fws.gov).