



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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Report # B-7: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, June 2022.

The following information is a summary of the major updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) that the Service is involved in related to the affairs of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (Council).

I. Migratory Bird Management

The Sea Duck Joint Venture, an international conservation partnership under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, has released the Sea Duck Key Habitat Sites Atlas. The Atlas is intended to heighten awareness of valuable sea duck habitats, aid in prioritizing habitat conservation and protection efforts, and help in conducting environmental assessments. This Atlas describes 85 sites throughout North America that constitute important sea duck habitats, including 16 sites in Alaska, some of which are marine areas also used by the fishing industry. Information in the Atlas may be used by the Ecosystem Committee, or other Council committees, to identify areas in need of additional conservation recommendations or monitoring/research. The Sea Duck Key Habitat Sites Atlas can be accessed at seaduckjv.org.

For more information, please contact Kate Martin, U.S. Sea Duck Joint Venture Coordinator, at kate_martin@fws.gov.

II. Federal in-river fishery management

In coordination with the State of Alaska, Alaska Native tribes, and the Canadian government, Service in-river fisheries managers are starting the 2022 fishing season with conservative management strategies for Chinook and chum salmon due to poor run projections, similar to 2021, for the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. The Federal Subsistence Board closed Federal public waters of the Yukon Northern Area to the harvest of Chinook, summer and fall Chum, and Coho salmon except by Federally qualified subsistence users, effective June 1, 2022, through September 30, 2022, with harvest opportunities to be determined by the Federal fisheries manager if fisheries run strength is sufficient to allow a Federal subsistence fisher.

Federal public waters of the Yukon Northern Area include all navigable and non-navigable freshwaters located within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks and Preserves, and National Conservation Areas, as well as those segments of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system located outside the boundaries of other listed Federal conservation units. Federal public waters also include all freshwaters flowing into the Bering Sea between the latitude of Point Romanof and the latitude of the westernmost point of the Naskonat Peninsula within the external boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

Recently, the Federal In-season Manager, pursuant to delegated authority from the Federal Subsistence Board under Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA Title VIII section 816), has issued an emergency special action (2-KS-02-22) closing Federal public waters (except for the Innoko River) of District 3, (which includes the communities of Russian Mission and Holy Cross and of the Yukon River to the harvest of Chinook and summer Chum salmon, effective 8 pm, Tuesday, June 7 until August 1.

The Federal In-season Manager has also issued an emergency special action (2-KS-01-22) closing Federal public waters of the Coastal District, (which includes the communities of Scammon Bay, Hooper Bay, and Chevak, as well as the Black River), and District 1, (which includes the communities of Emmonak, Nunam Iqua, Alakanuk, and Kotlik) of the Yukon River to the harvest of Chinook and summer Chum salmon, effective 8 pm, Thursday, June 2 until August 1.

Based on migration run timing, these same closures will occur in District 2, (which includes the communities of Mountain Village, Pitka's Point, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, and Marshall) effective 8 pm, Saturday, June 4, until August 1.

These actions are being taken because the 2022 Yukon River Chinook and summer chum salmon runs are forecasted to be poor with little to no harvestable surplus available for subsistence uses. ANILCA allows for the closure to subsistence uses "to assure the continued viability of a particular fish or wildlife population."

Additionally, unless re-opened by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, the following Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge are closed to the harvest of all salmon by using gillnets by all users effective June 01, 2022. Set gillnet opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users (as defined by an 804 analysis from Office of Subsistence Management) will be open in Federal public waters of the main stem in the Kuskokwim River during three 16-hour opportunities in early June. Gillnet (set or drift) opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users will be open again in Federal public waters in the main stem of the Kuskokwim River June 12 and 16th for two 12-hour opportunities with different mesh and depth requirements than the previous three openers to conserve Chinook salmon.

Service staff continue to receive comments during tribal consultations regarding frustrations with strict regulations on in-river harvest restrictions yet less restrictive commercial fishing on the Bering Sea fishery. The Service encourages the Council to continue its outreach and dialogue with federally qualified subsistence and other users on salmon conservation actions occurring in the marine environment and actions to reduce bycatch of Chinook and chum salmon.

For more information, please contact Boyd Blihovde (boyd_blihovde@fws.gov, 907-543-1002), Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager or Holly Carrol – Yukon River Federal Fisheries Manager (holly_carroll@fws.gov, 907-351-3029).