

Of the escapement assessment projects operated in 2017, 87% reported higher escapements compared to the recent five-year average, 67% exceeded their recent ten-year average, and 33% exceeded their long-term average. No commercial or sport fishery harvest of Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon occurred during the 2017 season. A total of 290 and 83 fish were harvested from the Bethel Test Fishery and Aniak Test fishery, respectively, which were donated for subsistence use. Significant restrictions were placed on subsistence harvest in 2017. A preliminary subsistence harvest estimate of 15,000 fish was generated using the best available inseason harvest data as well as input from fisheries managers, assessment biologists and stakeholders. The postseason total run estimate using these data inputs into the published run reconstruction model, and all published starting values, is 148,848 fish. However, biometric staff recommended changing the starting value for the commercial catch and effort component of the model from -10 to -8 to ensure that the model would properly converge across all ranges of likely harvest. The run reconstruction with the -8 starting value, which is what is recommended for proper model convergence, yields a **Kuskokwim River postseason run size of 165,102.**

Given the sum of the postseason run estimates from Unalakleet, Upper Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers, the 3-system index is 273,025 Chinook salmon. It should be noted that if the convergence problems with the Kuskokwim run reconstruction model were ignored and the -10 starting value were used for the commercial harvest and effort component of the model, the sum of the three systems would be 256,771.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MS Kelley', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Scott Kelley
Commercial Fisheries Division Director

cc: Glenn Merrill, NMFS AKR