



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
 Bureau of Land Management  
 National Park Service  
 Bureau of Indian Affairs

## Federal Subsistence Board

1101 E Tudor Rd, MS 121  
 Anchorage Alaska 99503



Forest Service

# SUBSISTENCE FISHING

## SPECIAL ACTION

**Under Authority of** 50 CFR Part 100.10 and .19  
 36 CFR Part 242.10 and .19

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Special Action No.:	3-KS-01a-16	Issued at:	Bethel, Alaska June 3, 2016
Effective Date:	June 3, 2016 4:00 p.m.		
Expiration Date:	March 31, 2017 11:59 p.m., unless superseded by subsequent Special Action		

### EXPLANATION:

Federal waters of the Kuskokwim River will be closed to the harvest of Chinook and chum salmon by Federally qualified users to provide for escapement and continued subsistence uses. Fishing openings, closings, and fishing methods for Federally qualified subsistence users will be announced by subsequent special action, after consultation and coordination with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

For Species other than Chinook and chum salmon, subsistence fishing with gillnets is closed in the Kuskokwim River and select tributaries under State regulations on Emergency Order 3-S-WR-01-16.

### REGULATION

50 CFR 100.27(i)(4) is amended to add:

*Unless re-opened by the Yukon Delta National Refuge Manager, Federal public waters in that portion of the Kuskokwim River drainage within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge are closed to the harvest of Chinook and Chum salmon by Federally qualified subsistence users. Based on observed run strength and in consideration of conservation concerns and escapement goals, the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager may open Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River to the harvest of Chinook and Chum salmon by Federally qualified subsistence users identified under a ANILCA Section 804 analysis: residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefornek, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Kongiganek.*

JUSTIFICATION

The closure to the harvest of Chinook and chum salmon by Federally qualified subsistence users on Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River was issued to manage for healthy populations of Chinook and chum salmon and to provide for the continuation of subsistence uses of those populations. The Federal in-season manager will assess the run of Chinook and chum salmon and provide harvest opportunity with subsequent special actions. The decision to reopen Federal public waters to Federally qualified subsistence users will be made in consultation with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. This action is necessary to assure the continued viability of Chinook and chum salmon, including the allowance of adequate escapement to portions of the drainage upstream of Federal public waters, and to provide harvest opportunities to Federally qualified subsistence users.


On June 1, 2016, the Federal Subsistence Board closed Federal public waters to the harvest of Chinook and chum salmon except by Federally qualified subsistence users identified in the ANILCA Section 804 Subsistence User Prioritization analysis. When Federal subsistence harvest opportunities for Chinook and chum salmon are provided, Federally qualified subsistence users will include the residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefornak, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Kongiganek.

Since 2010, the Kuskokwim River has experienced poor runs of Chinook salmon, and 2013 was the lowest run on record. In 2015, the total run was estimated at 172,000 Chinook salmon. The subsistence harvest was estimated to be 16,000 Chinook salmon. The drainage-wide escapement for 2015 was estimated at 155,000 Chinook salmon. If the 2016 return is within the forecast of 125,000 to 219,000, there will be enough fish to meet escapement goals and provide for limited Chinook salmon subsistence harvest. However, a subsistence harvest at the level of the long-term average of 87,000 Chinook salmon would not be sustained at the lower end of the projected run. Thus, some harvest restrictions are warranted during 2016 to meet biological requirements, while providing limited subsistence harvest opportunity once the run has been assessed and the early portion of the run has been allowed to reach the middle and upper sections of the drainage.

The chum salmon run has been a concern for Federally qualified subsistence users and conservative harvest management is necessary to protect the continued viability of the population and provide for the continuation of subsistence uses. In 2015, the chum salmon run was smaller than anticipated and was a conservation concern. In 2014, based on the most recent available information, Federally qualified subsistence users relied more on chum salmon than in previous years, in response to low Chinook salmon returns and harvest restrictions.

FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD

By delegation to:

  
Vernon R. Born, Acting Refuge Manager  
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

DISTRIBUTION:

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