



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

PO Box 346

Bethel, AK 99559



Emergency Special Action No.: 3-KS-01-21

Issued at: Bethel, Alaska May 7, 2021

Effective Date: June 01, 2021 12:01 a.m.

The Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager determined that Federal management is necessary for the conservation and the continuation of subsistence uses for Chinook salmon within the Kuskokwim River drainage. This action is based on the provisions of Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and delegation of authority letter from the Federal Subsistence Board. Plans to manage the salmon fishery are intended to take an adaptive management approach while coordinating with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and local interest groups.

Regulation: 50 CFR 100.27(e)(4)(ii) is amended to read:

(4) 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, 2021:

(1) The Kuskokwim River main stem within the boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

(2) Tributary Details: Additionally, unless re-opened by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, the following Federal public waters within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge are closed to the harvest of Chinook Salmon and the use of all gillnets by all users effective June 01, 2021:

- **The Eek River;**
- **The Kwethluk River drainage beginning at its confluence with Kuskokuak Slough**
- **The Kasigluk and Kisaralik river drainages including Old Kuskokuak Slough to ADF&G regulatory markers at the confluence of Old Kuskokuak Slough and 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; and**
- **The Aniak box defined as: The waters of the Kuskokwim River main stem from the Yukon Delta NWR boundary at Aniak downstream to a line formed from the northwest corner of the runway (latitude 61° 35' 16" N, longitude 159° 33' 28" W), due north to a point on the southeast corner of the sandbar (latitude 61° 35' 37" N, longitude 159° 33' 16" W).**

Fishing from tributaries not listed above is restricted to fishing 100 yards upriver from the mouth of the river (confluence with the main stem Kuskokwim River).



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(3) Subsistence fishing in the main stem Kuskokwim River for Salmon with live release of Chinook salmon using dip nets, beach seines, fish wheels with live release wells, and rod and reel will remain open throughout the closure.

(4) Federally Qualified Subsistence Fishing Opportunities

Set gillnet opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users will be open in Federal public waters of the main stem in the Kuskokwim River during the following dates and times:

- **June 2, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM**
- **June 5, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM**
- **June 9, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 10:00PM**

During these three opportunities, gillnets are restricted to set gillnets with 6-inch or less mesh, 60 feet or less in length, and may not exceed 45 meshes in depth. Additionally, set gillnets must be attached to the bank, oriented perpendicular to the river and may not be operated more than 100 feet from the ordinary high-water mark. Set gillnets need to be spaced 150 feet apart from another set gillnet. The salmon bearing tributaries listed in section (A)(2) will remain closed to the use of all gillnets for all salmon and all methods and means for Chinook salmon to all users during these periods. During a set gillnet opportunity, Federally qualified subsistence users may retain Chinook salmon during these periods.

See Section (A)(2) Tributary Details

After each set gillnet opportunity expires, Kuskokwim waters revert to closed under section A.

(5) Gillnet (set or drift) opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users will be open in Federal public waters in the main stem of the Kuskokwim River during the following dates and times:

- **June 12, 2021 06:00 AM to 06:00 PM**
- **June 15, 2021 06:00 AM to 06:00 PM**

Gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or less mesh and may not exceed 45 meshes in depth and 50 fathoms (300-feet) in length below the Johnson River and 25 fathoms (150 feet) in length above the Johnson River. The waters listed in section (A)(2) will remain closed to all gillnets for all salmon and all methods and means for Chinook salmon to all users during these gillnet periods:

See paragraph (A)(2) Tributary Details

(6) After each gillnet opportunity expires, Kuskokwim waters revert to closed under paragraph (A).



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Additional opportunities with the use of gillnets by Federally qualified subsistence users may be announced by subsequent special action after assessment of run strength and coordination with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), the ADF&G, and other parties identified in the Delegation of Authority provided to the Federal in-season manager by the Federal Subsistence Board.

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Justification

The closure of Federal public waters to the harvest of salmon with gillnets beginning June 1 is based on conservation concerns and provisions of opportunity for subsistence uses. Based on the 2021 ADF&G pre-season forecast of 94,000-155,000 Chinook salmon, the depressed run in recent years, and the historical Chinook salmon harvest (67,200-109,800 for years 1990-2009), it is evident that restrictions will be necessary to meet tributary and drainage-wide escapement goals.

Restricting the use of gillnets during the timing of the Chinook salmon run (mainly in June) is intended to conserve Chinook salmon. It is understood that this will impact the harvest of other salmon species, namely chum and sockeye, present due to overlapping run timing but is considered necessary as gillnets are not selective.

For more information, see the KRITFC-USFWS 2021 Draft Management Strategy and 2021 Draft Harvest Strategy by contacting YDNWR at (907) 543-3151.

By delegation from the Federal Subsistence Board:

Boyd Blihovde, Refuge Manager
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

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